Session 1: 12:30-1:45

1A. Religion: The Road to Mental Health and Not a Guilt Trip  Assisi Room

“A Posture of Confession: Paving a Middle Way Between Protestants and Buddhists,”
Kiki Sykes, St. Olaf College, MN  Sponsor: Jason Ripley, Ph.D.
This research paper explores a problem with Protestant practical theology especially in regards to the practice of confession. Using comparative theology, it examines how a Buddhist’s notion of mindfulness may strengthen the Protestant practice of confession, helping Protestants turn their mental confessions into continuous, lived prayers of grace and forgiveness.

“Jesus Loves Me This I . . . Know? Understanding the Origins and Healing of Religious Guilt in Children,”
Michael Burgdorf, St. Olaf College, MN.  Sponsor: Jason Ripley, Ph.D.
This paper integrates the lenses of psychology and religion to explore guilt in children from Christianity. Different types of guilt are learned through parenting styles and biblical scripture. I propose a model of forgiveness through love to heal detrimental guilt. This model is then shown in parenting and scriptural methods.

“Leadership, Mental Health and Spirituality of Women Religious,”
Jennifer Christopher and Tyler Murphy, Loyola University, Chicago, IL  Sponsor: Jennifer Fiebig, Ph.D.
This study focused on the intersection of Women Religious (Sisters/Nuns), leadership, mental health, and spirituality. Their leadership positions primarily concentrated on helping and creating solutions to social justice issues. These Women Religious have developed religious coping skills that assisted in their recovery from negative life events.


“Sinners! Shouldn’t We All be Wearing Headscarves in Church? Gender Reflections in Church and Mosque,”
Taylor Donaldson, Drake University, IA  Sponsor: Jennifer Harvey, Ph.D.
Some religious texts have been incorporated into cultural traditions, while others are not, including the adornment of headscarves. Through exploration of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and Surah 24:31, we can adequately reflect upon the current religious culture of the United States, as well as better include marginalized groups in our society.

“Determining the Significance of the Absence of ‘The Lesbian’ within the Leadership of the Catholic Church,”
Elizabeth Sextro, Loyola University, Chicago, IL  Sponsor: Colby Dickinson, Ph.D.
This presentation examines the exclusion of lesbian leadership within the Catholic Church by using existing feminist and Queer critiques of the Church to illustrate that patriarchal and heteronormative power dynamics that have often oppressed lesbian women.
“Shattering the Specular: (Discursive) Space for a Jewish Feminist Theology of Sex,”  
Kelly Banker, Carleton College, MN  
Sponsor: Kevin Wolfe, Ph.D.

This project draws upon the work of Jewish theologians and theorists to devise a constructive Jewish feminist theology of sex that imagines a heterosexual encounter as one that recognizes each lover as sacred and the differences between the two as wondrous, much like the simultaneously immanent and transcendent God.

Session 2: 1:55-3:10

2A. Reading the Scriptures in Contemporary Culture  
Assisi Room

“The Figures of Daniel’s First Vision (Daniel 7:1-14)”  
Hunter Thorpe, Central College, IA  
Sponsor: Terry Kleven, Ph.D.

This paper examines the figures of Daniel’s first vision in Daniel 7. To understand the overall purpose and message of the book of Daniel, the identity of these figures must be understood through careful analysis of the rich symbolism within the book.

“Human Emotions through the Psalter,”  
Daniela Rojas, College of St. Mary, NE  
Sponsor: Aline Paris, RSM, Ph.D.

The Psalms project a variety of feelings experienced by people throughout their lives. This presentation will examine the structure of the Psalter and provide a visual experience of four types of emotions found within the biblical psalms. The focus will be on the psalms of lament, praise, thanksgiving, and confidence.

“Trouble with the Tanakh,”  
Allen Engel, Wartburg College, IA  
Sponsor: Brian Jones, Ph.D.

Modern Christianity must acknowledge that the theological and ethical tenets of the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament are sufficiently in conflict and resistant to harmonization that Christians should no longer ascribe canonical status to the Tanakh.

2B. Scripture & Theology as a Key to Encountering God  
Clare Room

“Luther’s ‘Hidden God’ in the Book of Esther,”  
Nicole Hanson, Wartburg College, IA  
Sponsor: Brian Jones, Ph.D.

God is present and active in the biblical book of Esther, but not in an obvious way. God’s action is expressed through the story’s many coincidences. This God who operates behind the scenes can be understood through Luther’s theology of the cross, and this can in turn inform our interpretation of Esther.

“The Crucifixion Toward a Relationality: Hope in the Trinitarian Dialectic,”  
Mason Davis, Dordt College, IA  
Sponsor: Jason Lief, Ph.D.

Theology must break out of modernist, courtroom language of doctrine. In recognizing the risen Christ as the archetype of relationality and not as an inoperative mediator, our perspective of the crucifixion and resurrection becomes a dialectic that is resolved in the eschatological Kingdom of God.
“The Jesus of Philippians: Knowing Christ through His Suffering,”
Carolyn Wilson, Marquette University, WI  Sponsor: Michael Cover, Ph.D.
This paper will address Paul’s concept of knowing Christ in his epistle to the Philippians, with an emphasis on Christian participation in Christ’s suffering. I will argue that, for Paul, knowing Christ is a personal experience that results from sharing in Christ’s passion and the power of his resurrection.

Session 3: 3:20-4:35

3A. The Religious Worldview in the Secular Realm  Assisi Room

“Jesus as the Theotic Culmination of Creation: A Comparative Analysis of Neuroscientific Evidence, Buddhist Worldview, and Christian Emergentism,”
Dalton Neu, St. Thomas University, MN  Sponsor: Hans Gustafson, Ph. D.
This work explores the neuroscientific discoveries in meditation and mindfulness practices, and what perspectives these discoveries illuminate for the modern Christian believer. Using Buddhist understandings of Jesus’ person as well as a contemporary theory of the soul-body connection, it seeks a coherent stance embracing both empirical evidence and Christian theology.

“Atheism: Its Religious Tendency and Implications for Religious Practice,”
Rachel Calautti, St. Olaf, MN  Sponsor: Jason Ripley, Ph.D.
This project tackles the conflict between atheists and religious individuals by redefining Atheism through historical analysis, revealing its religious tendencies by utilizing a Durkheimian lens, and providing a framework for dialogue. A comprehensive definition of Atheism exposes its prophetic role and potential to advance the development of religious belief.

“Thomas Pangle’s The Ennobling of Democracy: An Evaluation of his Argument and its Theological Implications”
Dan Dankert, Central College, IA  Sponsor: Terry Kleven, Ph.D.
This paper summarizes and evaluates critically Pangle’s argument regarding 1) the inadequacy of postmodernism for sustaining the virtues of republicanism and 2) the type of education that would reinvigorate modern republicanism. Through this evaluation I endorse Pangle’s rejection of postmodernism and embrace his style of education which entails teaching the core texts of civilization.

3B. Scripture in its Cultural Settings  Assisi Room

“Paul’s Middle Way on Slavery and Cultural Engagement,”
Matthew Lange, Northwestern College, IA  Sponsor: John Bruegge Ph.D.
This paper will draw out the meaning of 1 Cor. 7:21 by examining issues in translation and by examining the social context at the time. This famous verse on slavery has an underlying meaning which tells the reader how Paul believes Christians should engage in the culture around them.
“Parallels Between the Book of Job and Plato’s Republic”
Matthew Wells, Central College, IA
Sponsor: Terry Kleven, Ph.D.
Despite the seemingly vast differences between the Book of Job and Plato’s Republic, striking parallels between these two texts exist in regard to their overall structure and development. This essay presentation will explore the similarities between these two historically unrelated works to reach a better understanding of both texts.

Session : 4:45-5:10  Plenary Address  Clare Room

“Finding a place for virtue today: A theological account of the need for putting proper things in their proper place”
Colby Dickenson, Ph.D.
Loyola University Chicago

Dinner: 5:15  Canticle Room
Pasta bar, salad, marinated vegetables, drinks, dessert