



**DEPAUL UNIVERSITY  
HONORS PROGRAM**

2026 Honors Council of the Illinois Region

# **SPRING SYMPOSIUM**

Saturday, March 7  
DePaul University

# WELCOME TO THE 2026 HCIR SPRING SYMPOSIUM

Hosted by DePaul University

DePaul University is proud to welcome you to the 2026 Honors Council of the Illinois Region Spring Symposium. Thank you for joining us in this celebration of Honors undergraduate research.

## DEPAUL UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM STAFF

**Jennifer Conary, Ph.D.**  
Director

**Priscilla Bautista**  
Assistant Director

**Keith Mikos, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Director

**Mary Kate Turek**  
Assistant Director

**Melanie Doweiko**  
Program Assistant

## OPENING REMARKS

9:15-9:30 AM - First Floor Lobby

**Dr. Jennifer Conary** - DePaul University Honors Program  
Director

**Dr. Andrea Radasanu** - Honors Council of the Illinois Region  
President

## PANEL SESSION I

9:30-10:20 AM - Second Floor Classrooms

## POSTER SESSION I

10:30-11:20 AM - Second Floor Atrium

## PANEL SESSION II

11:30 AM-12:20 PM - Second Floor Classrooms

## LUNCH

12:30-1:30 PM - Lincoln Park Student Center

*The HCIR Directors Luncheon will be held in the Honors Lounge, located in Arts & Letters Hall 210-11.*

Registered students are invited to join us for lunch in the Blue Demon Dining Hall, located on the second floor of the Lincoln Park Student Center.

## POSTER SESSION II

1:30-2:20 PM - Second Floor Atrium

## CLOSING REMARKS

2:20-2:30 PM - First Floor Lobby

*Information regarding parking garage validation and connecting to DePaul University's Wi-Fi is located at the back of this program.*

**POLICY, POLITICS, & PUBLIC HEALTH**

Arts &amp; Letters 207

Moderator: Dr. Eulalie Laschever

***Reimagining Immigration: The Legacy of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act on 21st-Century U.S. Policy*****Danna Gonzalez** – College of DuPage

Faculty Sponsors: Trina Sotirakopulos, David Goldberg

***The Roadblocks to Climate Action: Partisanship, Corporate Influence, and Strategic Political Framing in U.S. Environmental Policy*****Hannah Campbell** – College of DuPage

Faculty Sponsor: Michelle Moore

***The Sociological Impact on the Comorbidity of Dental and Systemic Disease*****Kassandra Rodriguez** – Elmhurst University

Faculty Sponsor: Rohan Mehta

**THE ART OF EMBODIED DIFFERENCE**

Moderator: Professor Jennifer Finstrom

Arts &amp; Letters 209

***Notes From a Restless Mind: A Collection of Poems*****Alexis Burke** – Governors State University

Faculty Sponsor: Laura White

***Learning to Be Heard: A Personal Narrative of Microtia Atresia, Self-Esteem, and Social Experience*****Hannah Stroh** – Governors State University

Faculty Sponsor: Amanda Athon

***Dance and Ballet with Disabilities*****Kyla Hunt** – Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Faculty Sponsor: Darryl Clark

## GLOBAL AND TRANSNATIONAL SHIFTS

Moderator: Dr. Keith Mikos

Arts & Letters 211

*Beyond Regime Type: National Identity, Institutional Capture, and the Divergent Paths to Same-Sex Marriage in Taiwan and Thailand*

**Olga Shalaeva** – Northeastern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jon Hageman

*The Price of Giving Up the Bomb: Disarmament, Trust, and Power After the Cold War in the Post-Soviet States*

**Taras Mytrofanyuk** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Yuki Miyamoto

*Freebird or Free Trade: How the NHL Grew to an International Business and How the Current Tariffs Between the United States and Canada Could Affect the League*

**Karley Sweer** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Gil Gott, David Wellman

## CONNECTION, WELL-BEING, AND THE COLLECTIVE

Moderator: Professor Nancy Grossman

Arts & Letters 212

*Third Places and the Hope for Connection*

**Marissa Parchim** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Stephanie Horton

*“I Swear I’m Happy for You”: The Link Between Malicious and Benign Envy and Prosocial Behavior*

**Anabelle Jimenez** – Northeastern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsor: Amanda Dykema-Engblade

*Self-Care Is Not a Luxury: Well-Being, Environment, and Public Health Responsibility*

**Lisa Rodriguez** – Northeastern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jon Hageman

***The Effects of Food Insecurity and Poverty on Child Development***

**Amatul Ahad** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Alicia Tomasian

***Italy's Political Climate: The Relationship Between Right-Wing Populism and EU Satisfaction***

**Emma Aiello** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Eulalie Laschever

***Bugs in the Mud: Examination of Benthic Foraminifera in the Pleistocene Cool-Water Carbonates of the Southern Tasman Ocean***

**Max Bruggman** – Eastern Illinois University  
Co-Author: Katherine Lewandowski  
Faculty Sponsor: Katherine Lewandowski

***The Design Process Behind Medical Animation***

**Maile Fidale** – Elmhurst University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jason Eppink

***Disabling the Disabled: Medical Misconduct and Mistreating Those with Disabilities***

**Georgia Glikis** – Governors State University  
Co-Author: Lyndsay Jemar  
Faculty Sponsor: Laura White

***The New Digital Rapture: The Relationship Between Technology and Religion***

**Jorja Jackson** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Eulalie Laschever

***Novel Cell Penetrating Peptides Derived from a Bacterial Protein, Rusticyanin***

**Mohammed Kamal** – University of Illinois Chicago  
Co-Authors: Trieu Phong, Duy Binh Tran, Tohru Yamada  
Faculty Sponsor: Tohru Yamada

***Impaired MAPK/ERK Signaling in the BDNF Pathway  
Contributes to Depressive Symptoms***

**Abdul-Rahman Kassak** – College of Dupage  
Faculty Sponsor: Liane Cochran-Stafira

***Exploring Perceptions of Autism Spectrum Disorder  
Accommodations***

**Daniela Katlabi** – Elmhurst University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jessica Sim

***The Effectiveness Mentally and Physically of a Classroom  
Environment***

**Marlee Keck** – Southern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsor: Corinne J. Dekkers

***Love or Entitlement: Masculinity and Boundaries  
("The Husband Stitch" by Carmen Maria Machado)***

**Manaar Manha** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Maggie McKinley

***Older Adults and Emerging Technology Fraud in the AI  
Deepfake Era***

**Thiago Neves** – Governors State University  
Faculty Sponsor: Christopher White

***Genetic Data, Consent, and Sovereignty: Legal Gaps  
and Biocolonialism in the Havasupai Case***

**Ashley Noel** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Alexis Guilbault

***Biochemical Defenses Against Oxidative Stress: The Power  
of Antioxidants***

**Ayesha Patel** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Andy Kidwell

***Utilizing Artificial Intelligence to Detect Cancerous Cells***

**Kevin Philip** – Harper College  
Co-Author: Darwin Appleby  
Faculty Sponsor: Kyle Knee

***Does Short-Form Media Lead to Long-Term Desensitization?***

**Inaya Rahman** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Margaret Poncin Reeves

***Visualizing Mathematics: A Graphing Calculator in C++***

**Cesar Rivero Figueroa** – College of DuPage  
Faculty Sponsor: Michael Henson

***Moss Biobags as an Affordable & Accessible Bioindicator of Air Pollution***

**Blake Sommer** – Northeastern Illinois University  
Co-Authors: Esate Tadesse, Isabella White  
Faculty Sponsors: Thomas Campbell, Matt von Konrat

***Toward the Significance of Crevasse Orientation in Low and High Crevassed Regions on the Kennicott Glacier***

**Claire Sturm** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: James Montgomery

***Paranormal YouTube Videos and How They Reflect the Spread of False Information and the Erosion of Our Critical Thinking***

**Kathleen Van Geem** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Margaret Poncin Reeves

***A Related-Rates Problem With an Unexpected Twist***

**Charlie Vazquez Acosta** – Northern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsor: Sien Deng, Steven Kifowit

***Predicting Applicant Acceptance of AI in Hiring***

**Avaion Viverette** – Elmhurst University  
Co-Authors: Joseph Barber, Catrina Notari, Jessica Sim  
Faculty Sponsors: Jessica Sim

***How Different Parenting Styles Affect Child Development and Behavior***

**Jessica Youssef** – Governors State University  
Faculty Sponsor: Laura White

## **SUBCULTURE, IDENTITY, AND ECONOMICS**

**Moderator: Professor Nancy Grossman**  
**Arts & Letters 207**

### ***Capitalism and Identity: Tracing Economic Foundations in 20th-Century Liberation Theory***

**Mohammed Ayman** – College of DuPage  
Faculty Sponsor: Joshua Price

### ***Punk vs. Fast Fashion and Consumerism***

**Elizabeth Back** – Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
Faculty Sponsor: Corinne Dekkers

### ***A New Stadium. A Reborn Franchise. A Revitalized Community.***

**Luke Shamoon** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Alicia Tomasian

## **COMMUNICATION IN A CHANGING WORLD**

**Moderator: Professor Jennifer Finstrom**  
**Arts & Letters 209**

### ***Is Computer Science Really Kicking the Bucket?***

**Muhammad Bazil** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Alicia Tomasian

### ***Rewriting Placement and Teaching: Neurocognitive Frameworks for Multilingual Students in First-Year Composition***

**Justina Rodriguez Carrozzo** – College of DuPage  
Faculty Sponsor: Steven Accardi

### ***Informed Curiosity: A Culturally Attuned Approach to Mental Health Communication***

**Ruju Rai** – College of DuPage  
Faculty Sponsor: Marybeth Mulcahy

**ACTIVISM, RESISTANCE, AND MEDIA POWER**

Moderator: Dr. Eulalie Laschever

Arts & Letters 211

*Racialized Surveillance in Bridgeview (Little Palestine), Illinois*

**Emma Higgins** – DePaul University

Faculty Sponsor: Jesse Mumm

*The Prison Industrial Complex: How the Rise of Prisons Enabled White Supremacy to Become Further Interwoven into American Society*

**Izabela Ratajewski** – Harper College

Faculty Sponsors: Maggie McKinley, Alicia Tomasian

*A Sociological Analysis of Mainstream Media's Complacency in Legitimizing Elite Deviance*

**Jose Maravilla-Benitez** – Northeastern Illinois University

Faculty Sponsor: Aneta Galary

**TRACES OF THE PAST**

Moderator: Dr. Clement Adibe

Arts & Letters 212

*What Are the Psychological Effects During, Before, and After World War II?*

**Gabrial Kruse** – Harper College

Faculty Sponsor: Alicia Tomasian

*A Tale of Two Mutinies: The Fame's Revenge and the Fall of Atlantic Piracy's Golden Age*

**Sofia Wardzala** – Loyola University Chicago

Faculty Sponsor: Michelle Nickerson

*Power, Patronage, and Production: The Art and Economy in Pompeii and Herculaneum*

**Morgan Avery Mucha** – DePaul University

Faculty Sponsor: Clement Adibe

***How do UI/UX Design Choices Influence Human Behavior, and What Ethical Responsibility Do Designers Have?***

**Amatullah Amatullah** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsor: Alicia Tomasian

***Optimizing Healthcare Experiences: Key Strategies for Supporting Autistic Individuals in Healthcare***

**Nicoletta Boik** – Elmhurst University  
Faculty Sponsor: Breighanna Carey

***Maladaptive Sleep Cognitions Are Associated with Poorer Sleep Quality in African American Pregnant Women***

**Lillian Borbas** – University of Illinois Chicago  
Co-Authors: Genesis Alameda, Bilgay Balserak, Simrah Faheem, Nicole Genao, Rashmika Maganuru, Nisaa Nazeer, Mahrukh Shah, Lila Siwakoti, Aashna Shah  
Faculty Sponsor: Bilgay Balserak

***Assimilation Experience***

**Andrea Castro** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Tricia Hermes

***Jurisdictional Disparities in ICE Detention: A Two-Proportion Analysis and Critique***

**Eduardo Contreras** – College of DuPage  
Faculty Sponsor: Trina Sotirakopulos

***Outward Constructions of the Muslim Identity***

**Jordan Daniels** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Kalyani D. Menon

***Identifying Age-Group Mortality Spikes in Graceland Cemetery (1885, 1918, and 1960)***

**Rida Fatima** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jessica Jerome

***Social Anxiety Disorder: How It Impacts Relationships***

**Ana Garcia** – College of DuPage  
Faculty Sponsor: Michelle Moore

***Wired for Connection, Struggling to Connect: Social Anxiety in Gen Z***

**Yoselin Gomez** – Governors State University  
Faculty Sponsor: Laura White

***Singing for Freedom: The Voice and Vision of Nina Simone***

**Simone Graczyk** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jennifer Finstrom

***Inat: Trials of Resilience, Perseverance, and Strength Historically***

**Adella Hukic** – Harper College  
Faculty Sponsors: Kaveh Aenehzodae, Michael Bentley Jr., Eric Bohman, John Garcia, Maggie McKinley, Alicia Tomasian

***Quench Propagation on Rare-Earth Barium Copper Oxide (REBCO) Tape Stacks***

**Han Ju** – Northern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsors: Maria Baldini, Nicholas Pohlman

***The Role of Social Workers as Secondary Responders in Natural-Disaster Affected Communities Amidst the Climate Crisis***

**Xycara Leshenka Juariza** – National Louis University  
Faculty Sponsor: Natasha Kohl

***The Rainbow Connection: The Muppets as Tools for Self-Exploration***

**Rose Kaiser** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Jennifer Finstrom

***The Importance of Music in Special Education***

**Alexandra Krieger** – Elmhurst University  
Faculty Sponsor: Joshua Rodriguez

***Different Brain Regions Predict Depression Symptoms in ADHD and Non-ADHD Adolescents***

**Lauren Liening** – Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
Co-Authors: Nicole Greenwood, Michelle Kibby, Connor Watkinson  
Faculty Sponsor: Michelle Kibby

***How Nike Turns Criticism into Community***

**Briana McElroy** – Governors State University  
Faculty Sponsor: Amanda Athon

***Living Archaeology, Artifacts, and Implications in the Thais in Illinois Oral History Project***

**Alia Moran** – Northern Illinois University  
Faculty Sponsors: Dana Bardolph, Kanjana Thepboriruk

***Comparisons of Cortical EEG Power Spectra During Sleep in Humans and Mice***

**Daisy Muñoz** – University of Illinois Chicago  
Faculty Sponsor: Anne M. Fink

***Not So Glamorous: The Downsides of Fame***

**Kaylee Piszro** – Governors State University  
Faculty Sponsor: Laura White

***Bf vs Gf: An Analysis of Perceived Romantic Relationship Success Among Bisexual+ Women Across Gender Pairings***

**Ximena Rangel O'Donoghue** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsors: Verena Graupmann, Susan Markunas

***Polylactic Acid (PLA): Chemical Breakdown of a Plant-Based Plastic to Enable More Effective Recycling Efforts***

**Numa Syed** – Elmhurst University  
Co-Authors: Nathan Bradshaw, Sameer Khan, Colleen Munro-Leighton  
Faculty Sponsor: Colleen Munro-Leighton

***Ozone in Response to Precipitation***

**Lexi Tomaszewski** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Mark Potosnak

*Identification of New Genes Involved in Epithelial Basement Membrane Protein Deposition*

**Anna Wiginton** – Northern Illinois University  
Co-Author: Hemin Shah  
Faculty Sponsor: Olivier Devergne

*Opening Japanese Borders to the United States*

**Iman Williams** – DePaul University  
Faculty Sponsor: Kerry Ross

*History of Graphic Design: A Stylistic Survey*

**Ana Zulkoski** – Elmhurst University  
Faculty Sponsor: Andrew Sobol

## PARKING VALIDATION

**Validated parking rates are available at all campus garages, including the Sheffield Parking Garage and the Clifton Parking Deck.**

Both registered participants and guests are eligible to receive a validated rate of \$15 to park for 12 hours at either garage. To receive the validated parking rate, simply park your car in either garage, then scan the QR code below before exiting the garage. Follow the prompts to pay the validated rate, and then exit the parking garage as normal.



## CONNECT TO WI-FI

**Step 1:** Select “DePaul” from the list of available Wi-Fi networks on your device. The network is open with no password.

**Step 2:** Open any web browser, and you will automatically be directed to the network sign-in page. Select the “DePaul Guest Wi-Fi” option.

**Step 3:** Under the “Conference Guest” option, click “Register.”

**Step 4:** Enter the Conference ID: **hcir**

**Step 5:** Click the checkbox to agree to the Acceptable Use Policy and click “Proceed”.

**Step 6:** Enter your name and email address and click “Proceed.”

**You are now connected to the DePaul Guest Wi-Fi Network.**

