

FORDHAM COLLEGE  
AT ROSE HILL  
HONORS PROGRAM



YEAR in REVIEW  
2025-2026



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## Program Overview

The Fordham College at Rose Hill (FCRH) Honors Program is a community of outstanding students who are passionate about the pursuit of knowledge and social justice. With a total of over 140 students, approximately 35 per cohort, the program brings together majors in humanities, social sciences, and STEM. Honors students come from across the United States and abroad, representing a diverse body of students from various backgrounds.

Since its inception in 1950, the Honors Program has continued to grow and innovate, from hosting twice the annual meeting of the Honors Network of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities to launching a justice-centered curriculum in 2023 and establishing its first endowment in 2024.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the FCRH Honors Program is to forge a community of scholars committed to justice.



## 75 Years of the Honors Program

Founded in 1950, the Honors Program at FCRH celebrated its 75th anniversary during the 2025-2026 academic year. To mark this milestone, an exhibit showcasing the program's rich history was on display in the Special Collections Exhibit Hall of the Walsh Library from March to May 2026.

**Emily Caro** (FCRH '28), part-time Program Administrator and an Honors student, worked alongside **Gabriella DiMeglio**, Archives and Special Collections Manager, to retrieve items from the University's Archives and Special Collections and curate the exhibit, showcasing how the program has grown over time. In particular, the exhibit demonstrates how the Honors Program's student body evolved from a select group of male students in the 1950s to a diverse community of students from across the United States and around the world in the 2020s. In 1974, Fordham became a co-ed university, and female students now represent more than half of the student population in the FCRH Honors Program.

Exhibition items ranged from Fordham University yearbooks and *Fordham Ram* newspaper articles to Honors Program print material and photographs. Following the selection of exhibit items, Emily wrote captions and arranged items by theme. "My favorite item from the collection was an image of Honors students, alongside their Jesuit professor, on a steamship in the 1950s to study abroad in France," she said. Following in the footsteps of earlier cohorts of Honors students, Emily is planning to spend her junior year in Spain.

For her outstanding work as an archivist, Gabriella DiMeglio received a Women's Luncheon award, recognizing woman leaders in the Fordham community, on March 26, 2026.





On March 2, a panel, bringing together Honors faculty and former program directors, marked the opening of the exhibition in the Walsh Library. Dr. **David Swinarski**, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Senior Associate Dean at FCRH, made the opening remarks, reflecting on his own experience as an Honors undergraduate student at the University of Notre Dame. The panelists included Dr. **Stephen Holler**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Physics and Engineering Physics, Dr. **Eve Keller**, Professor of English and Director of the FCRH Honors Program (2015–2023), Dr. **W. David Myers**, Professor of History, and Dr. **Harry P. Nasuti**, Emeritus Professor of Theology and Director of the FCRH Honors Program (1993–1999, 2004–2013). The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. **Olena Nikolayenko**, Professor of Political Science and the current director of the FCRH Honors Program.

An evening reception with the Honors alumni presented another opportunity for reminiscing about the program's rich history. On March 2, alumni shared their favorite memories of the Honors Program and met with a few current students in the Cafe Atrium on the 2nd floor of Leon Lowenstein Building.



The digital collection of items from  
 the exhibit "75 Years of the Honors Program"  
 is available in the Fordham Research Commons at  
[https://research.library.fordham.edu/honorsprogram\\_fcrh\\_75/](https://research.library.fordham.edu/honorsprogram_fcrh_75/)

## Maroon Yearbook (1953)

### HONORS PROGRAM

THREE years ago the Honors Program was set up for a group of Sophomores. The members are selected on the basis of scholastic standing and their ability and willingness to do more than the amount of work required for their degrees.

For the privilege of belonging to the Program,

the sophomores attend three art lectures a week, one talk on music appreciation and a weekly seminar on certain major works of world literature. A term paper, based on the seminar subjects, is required each quarter.

The members of the Program attend a weekly seminar. The juniors submit a term paper based on their field of concentration each semester. The senior members write an extended thesis, which must be defended before a faculty committee.

The Junior Year in Paris was an innovation never before seen on Rose Hill. Nine members of the Class of '53 have already returned from Paris and six juniors are presently leading the life of the *student parisien*.

In the midst of all this intellectual and cultural activity, the social life has not been neglected. Dinners, parties and hour-long gatherings in Keating 216 are all part of the three year old Honors Program tradition.

Seniors Ray McNally, Bob Maroney, and Luke O'Neill chat with Mr. Lacey.



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## Maroon Yearbook (1959)

### Junior Year Abroad

"You have asked me to describe a year in Europe — 'Junior Year Abroad.' I have tried honestly, and perhaps sentimentally, to recall the year in what follows.

"There are three impressions concerning any one event. The first impression comes before the actual occurrence. The imagination pictures what is to take place and draws a vivid picture.

"The first time a year of study in Europe becomes a possibility, all types of images and pictures flash through one's mind. The *Europe of books* is brought out from the pages and given life in the mind. The names of the cities and countries take on a new light; they will soon become real. Paris — Rome — London — Bavaria — Spain — France all meet to form one tempting, but confusing whole.

"The second impression comes when you see Europe for the first time. After being on the ocean for several days with the changing forms of the water as the only scenery, the seagulls start to appear. Then before long land is seen off to one side. Gradually it draws nearer and nearer until you can make it out clearly. This you are told is England.



The Attention in Brussels



Dennis Kelly, Rob Imbelle and Joe Grecco, junior in a street in Leuven, Belgium.

## AJCU Network of Honors Programs: 2026 Meeting at Fairfield University



In February 2026, four Honors students - **Nicholas Bianco** (FCRH '26), **Emily Caro** (FCRH '28), **Domenick Fedele** (FCRH '29), and **Sonia Weliwitigoda** (FCRH '29) - and the Program Director, Dr. **Olena Nikolayenko**, attended the annual conference of the Honors Programs network, organized by the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) and held at Fairfield University in Connecticut. Margaret McNamara McClure, Vice Provost for Research and Scholarship and the Co-Director of the Honors Program at the host university, was herself an alumna of the FCRH Honors Program. The conference provided a forum for an exchange of ideas and networking among Jesuit honors programs across the country.

This conference experience reaffirmed the significance of the cohort size and such special space as Alpha House. Nick Bianco considered the small size of Fordham's Honors Program as important in creating a sense of community, something that larger programs at the conference found challenging to build.

## AJCU Network of Honors Programs: 2026 Meeting at Fairfield University



Dom Fedele found the conference's focus on interdisciplinarity helpful in thinking about the program's curriculum. The Honors Program at Fairfield showcased their interdisciplinary courses, with professors from multiple disciplines jointly working to co-teach Honors courses. Dom said that presentations highlighting such courses "offer a blueprint for our program that can inform conversations about Interdisciplinary STEM."

Emily Caro also appreciated a focus on global issues. One of the takeaway messages for her was the importance of an increasingly global perspective to tackling global challenges. Incorporating such topics as climate change, migration, and artificial intelligence use is vital to make sure that education stays relevant to students' lives.

Overall, the AJCU conference provided important insights on strategies for program development. Ensuring that Honors students are able to attend the conference is vital – the opportunity to learn from other Jesuit Honors programs can positively shape the FCRH Honors Program for years to come.

## Fellowships and Awards



Many Honors students were granted awards at Encaenia, an awards ceremony celebrating the achievements of graduating seniors.

### **American Studies**

The Orestes Brownson Award is granted to a senior who has majored and excelled in American Studies. The award is given to: **Valerie Arnold**

### **Art History and Music**

The Art History Award is granted to a graduating student with a major in art history who has shown excellence in coursework and interest in the activities of the department. The award is given to: **Malena Sullivan**

The James L. Kurtz Award in Music is granted to a graduating senior who has majored and excelled in music and has been significantly involved in the department and the musical life of the University. The award is given to: **Natalie Loo**

### **Biological Sciences**

The William Steinbugler Prize is awarded to the student who has attained the best record of achievement. The award is given to: **Aria Lee-Varan**

## Fellowships and Awards

### Chemistry and Biochemistry

The Leo K. Yanowski Award is bestowed on a graduating senior who has demonstrated excellence in analytical chemistry. The award, established by his family, colleagues, and alumni of the college, is given to honor and perpetuate the memory of a devoted teacher, advisor, and friend of Fordham students. The award is given to:  
**Emma Elsdon**

### Classical Languages and Civilization

The Rev. Richard E. Doyle, SJ, Memorial Award in Classical Languages is given to a student who has demonstrated excellence in the study of Latin or Greek. The award is given to:

**Malena Sullivan**

### English

The Alumni English Literature Prize is granted to the student in Fordham College at Rose Hill who has written the best essay. The award is given to: **Aria Lee-Varan**

The Margaret G. Amassian Award, made possible by the generosity of Amassian's family, friends, and former students, honors the memory of a beloved member of the English faculty and is given to the English major who has achieved the highest grade point average. The award is given ex aequo to:

**Reese Dains, Alexander Kim, and Natalie Loo**

The Bernice Kilduff White and John J. White prizes, which recognize excellence in the study of English literature and outstanding achievement in creative writing, have been endowed by the White family to honor the memory of their parents. This year's winners are: **Allison Schneider** (Literature) and **Adithi Vimalanathan** (Creative Writing)

### History

The Mooney History Award is granted to a student who has shown excellence in historical studies. The award is given to:

**Eleanor Smith**

### Latin American and Latino Studies

The Bernardo Vega-Rigoberta Menchú-Tum Award is granted to a graduating senior in Latin American and Latino Studies who has shown excellence in this course of study. The award is given to:

**Isabella Alcantara**

## Fellowships and Awards

### Political Science

The Political Science Endowment Award honors a graduating senior whose career at Fordham University has been marked by both high intellectual achievement and demonstrated understanding of the ideals of Jesuit education. The award is given to: **Nicholas Bianco**

### WFUV

The Rev. Laurence J. McGinley, SJ, Memorial Award is granted to the graduating student who has performed the most outstanding service to WFUV (90.7 FM). The award is given to:

**Adithi Vimalanathan**

## 2026-2027 Fulbright Awards

Three Honors students and recent graduates were selected for participation in the 2026-2027 Fulbright US Student Program. The Office of Fellowship Advising and Fordham faculty played a vital role in this process.

The English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Programs place Fulbrighters in classrooms abroad to help teach English language while serving as cultural ambassadors for the U.S.

**Katherine Caceres Bravo**  
(FCRH '25 Biological Sciences)  
Colombia ETA

**Amy Herd**  
(FCRH '25 International Studies  
and History)  
Georgia ETA

**Natalie Loo**  
(FCRH '26 English and Music)  
Taiwan ETA



## Senior Leadership Awards



Each year, the Office for Student Involvement presents awards to members of the Senior Class who have made outstanding contributions to our community. The 2026 award ceremony was held in the McShane Campus Center on May 11.

### **Reverend Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J. Award**

This recognition is awarded to one senior who exhibits a deep passion for and commitment to social justice and awareness within the Fordham community as well as within the Greater New York community. Reverend Fitzpatrick valued the importance of these characteristics and the recipient of this award must uphold and exemplify these traits. Such an award demands a comprehensive presence of social justice in the life of the student and living the Ignatian value of *cura personalis*. This award is given to: **Reese Dains**

### **Senior Leadership Award**

This recognition is awarded each year to a few seniors who exhibit the ability to lead, organize, empower, and inspire fellow students. Recipients possess a high degree of commitment, creativity, innovation, initiative, and integrity. The award is given to: **Valerie Arnold** and **Isaac Forson**

## Spotlight on Presidential Scholars

**Sydney Sternagel**  
(FCRH'29, International Studies)



Sydney participated in the Global Outreach project in Kenya in the spring of 2026. As a member of the GO! Kenya team, she lived, learned, and worked alongside members of the Maasai tribe. Sydney subsequently spoke about indigenous rights at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

*Our days started with morning greetings from outside our windows, storytime around the bonfire, and many spontaneous hikes. But it was our daily activities that really tied us to the community. Every day, we did activities that united us, from building a garden together to dancing and singing; the language barrier never stood in our way.*

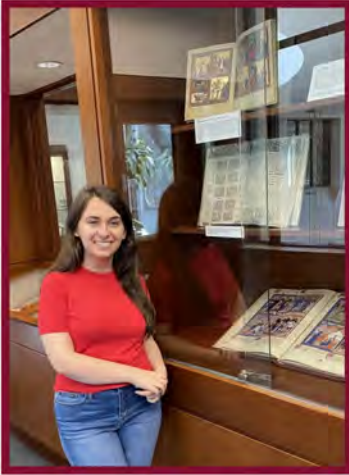
*While the safari was amazing, one thing that really stood out to me on this trip was the opportunity for students to meet with a UN representative from London. After discussing the Maasai's medicinal and agricultural practices, the UN official shifted the conversation to sustainability. I especially enjoyed asking questions about finding a solution that integrates modern scientific testing into cultural practices.*

*As an International Studies student, this conversation and trip will shape my career for years to come. It has opened my eyes to a region of the world I have never experienced and made me realize how important it is to ensure that indigenous tribes are protected and that their cultural practices are preserved. Thanks to this trip, I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to speak on Indigenous Tribes at the United Nations this April.*

## Spotlight on Presidential Scholars

### Malena Sullivan

(FCRH '26, Classical Languages, Art History, and Visual Arts )

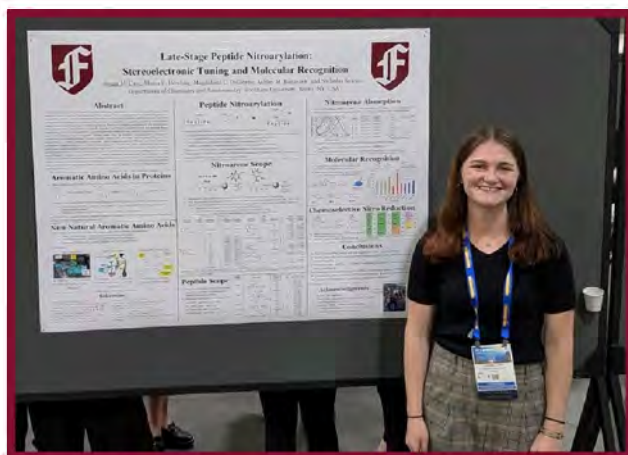


With the help of Cunniffe funding, Malena completed a summer internship in Special Collections at Fordham's Walsh Library. Majoring in Classical Languages (Ancient Greek and Latin), Art History, and Visual Arts, Malena hopes for a career working in conservation and museum curation.

*Volunteering at the library has definitely enhanced my studies at Fordham, and it has also given me a deeper understanding and guidance for my future career goals. I got to go behind the scenes and help set up for upcoming exhibits as well as learn about conservation and restoration. This was applied to circulating books as well as to rare documents and books that needed preservation.*

This spring, Malena had the Visual Arts Senior Capstone Show, titled "Eve: Live from Eden," at the Susan Lipani Gallery, Fordham University at Lincoln Center. The project explored Eve within Catholic and popular culture, reimagining her through 1960s style concert posters where she can finally take center stage. Dr. **Stephan Apicella-Hitchcock**, Director of the Visual Arts Program, was an advisor for Malena's project.

## STEM Research



**Jenna Cain** (FCRH'27, Engineering Physics) was awarded the Goldwater Scholarship to conduct research on thin film materials for solar sails, a powerful spacecraft propulsion technology, at the University of Pennsylvania's Laboratory for Research on the Structure of Matter.

Being a high school student from Westchester, NY, Jenna did research in Dr. **Nicholas Sawyer's** bioorganic chemistry lab. In the summer of 2023, she began leading a project to design and synthesize new amino acid variants to identify peptide drug candidates, which has resulted in a co-authored article, "Late-stage Peptide Nitroarylation: Stereoelectronic Tuning and Molecular Recognition," in *Organic and Biomolecular Chemistry*, a top peer-reviewed journal published by the Royal Society of Chemistry (United Kingdom). Her research was supported by the Ambassadorial Grant awarded by the FCRH Honors Program and multiple FCRH grants for undergraduate research grants. After her undergraduate studies at Fordham, Jenna intends to pursue a Ph.D. in chemical engineering to work towards a career researching renewable energy technologies.

## STEM Research



**Julia Gudis** (FCRH'26, Biological Sciences) made a poster presentation, titled “The Role of  $\delta$ -Containing GABAA Receptors in Modulating Experimental Kainic Acid-Induced Seizures in Adult Mice,” at the 2026 National Conference on Undergraduate Research. Bringing together undergraduate students in all disciplines from across the country, NCUR was held on April 13-15, 2026 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, VA.

Attending NCUR 2026 in Virginia was one of the most meaningful experiences of my undergraduate career. Presenting my thesis, “The Role of Hippocampal  $\delta$ -Containing GABA<sub>A</sub> Receptors in Modulating Experimental Seizures in Adult Mice,” I found myself reflecting not only on the months of research that led to this moment, but also on the broader journey of growth, curiosity, and community that defined the experience.

Preparing for the conference required me to think about my work in a new way. In the lab, my research often felt highly technical and narrowly focused, but at NCUR I was challenged to communicate its significance to a diverse audience. Explaining complex neurobiological mechanisms to students and faculty from a wide range of disciplines pushed me to step back and consider the “why” behind my work. Why do these receptors matter? How might this research contribute to our understanding of neurological disorders? These conversations ultimately deepened my own understanding and appreciation of the project.

## FCHR Summer Research Grants

Eight Honors students were selected for participation in the 2026 Summer Research Program at FCHR. This program enables Rose Hill students to pursue original, meaningful research for an eight-week period under the guidance of a faculty mentor, in community with other student scholars. Whether the research takes place in the lab, the field, the hospital, or the archive, students advance their research skills and subsequently present their work.

**Adam Abdel-Razek** (FCHR '28, Engineering Physics)

Project Title: "Aerosol Collection-Module Design and Integration"

Mentor: Dr. Stephen Holler

**Katherine Calhoun** (FCHR '27, Psychology)

Project Title: "University Student Stress and Anxiety Under Trump's Second Term"

Mentor: Dr. Celia B. Fisher

**Natalie Carpenter** (FCHR '28, Political Science)

Project Title: "The Power of Friendship: How the Foundational Friendships of the Women's Health Movement Lead to Successes for Our Nation (1960s-1970s)"

Mentor: Dr. Grace Shen

**Katherine Conjalka** (FCHR '27, Chemistry)

Project Title: "Illuminating Bacterial ADP-Ribosylation: Chemical Tools to Study Bacterial PTM"

Mentor: Dr. Meng Zheng

**Gabriella Freire** (FCHR '27, Physics)

Project Title: "Assessing PM2.5 Pollution in New York City Using a Tethered Weather Balloon System"

Mentor: Dr. Camelia Prodan

**Isaac Jabaley** (FCHR '27, Biochemistry)

Project Title: "Identifying the DnaE-SSB Binding Site in *Bacillus Subtilis*"

Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Thrall

**Atacus Jarrett** (FCHR '28, History)

Project Title: "The Shadow of the Cross-Bronx: A History of Mobility Infrastructure and Corridor Placemaking on East Tremont Avenue (Webster Avenue to Southern Boulevard), 1975-2019"

Mentor: Dr. Mattie Armstrong-Price

**Theda Wilkens** (FCHR '28, Integrative Neuroscience)

Project Title: "Effects of Lighting, Color Temperature, and Biophilic Design on Pain Perception in Virtual Reality"

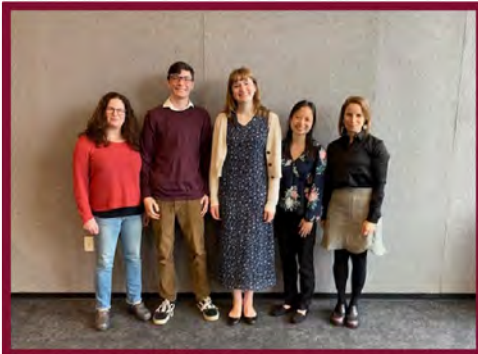
Mentor: Dr. Elissa Aminoff

# The Undergraduate Research Symposium at FCRH

The Annual Fordham College at Rose Hill Undergraduate Research Symposium is a hallmark of the academic year, showcasing original research and creative work by undergraduate students. This April, twenty-one Honors students presented their research at the Nineteenth Annual FCRH Undergraduate Research Symposium, held in the Joseph McShane Campus Center. Many Honors students also attended the symposium to learn about their peers' projects.

Ariana Sebourne (FCRH '28, English and Political Science)

Attending the Fordham Undergraduate Research Panel was a very rewarding experience. I was able to both present and view my peers' presentations. Watching the abundance of effort and knowledge each student had acquired through their arduous work proved to be very insightful. My own personal work on art activism in Nicaragua, as adapted from Cuba, has taught me that art is not just a form of decoration; it is a call to action. A method of overcoming injustices by touching the people who are affected by such injustices the most.



## Presenters at the Undergraduate Research Symposium

**Neeha Ahmed** (FCRH '26)

“Examining the Effectiveness of Sanitizing Wipes on Gym Equipment at the Ram Fitness Center”

Mentor: Dr. Marly Katz

**Neeha Ahmed** (FCRH '26)

“Effects of Congestion Pricing on Air Quality using PM 2.5 and Bioindicators”

Mentor: Dr. Mia Wrey

**Nicholas Bianco** (FCRH '26)

“The Mob as Melodrama: Negotiating Italian American Identity in 20th Century Hollywood”

Mentor: Dr. Annika Hinze

**Jenna Cain** (FCRH '27)

“Late-Stage Peptide Nitroarylation: Stereoelectronic Tuning and Molecular Recognition”

Mentor: Dr. Nicholas Sawyer

**Katherine Conjalka** (FCRH '27)

“Illuminating Bacterial ADP-Ribosylation: Chemical Tools to Study Bacterial PTM”

Mentor: Dr. Meng Zheng

**Madison Cossaboom** (FCRH '28)

“Creative Uprisings: Protest Art and the Influence of Gender-based Violence in the Chilean Social Outburst”

Mentor: Dr. Olena Nikolayenko

**Moira Dowling** (FCRH '27)

“Late-Stage Peptide Nitroarylation: Stereoelectronic Tuning and Molecular Recognition”

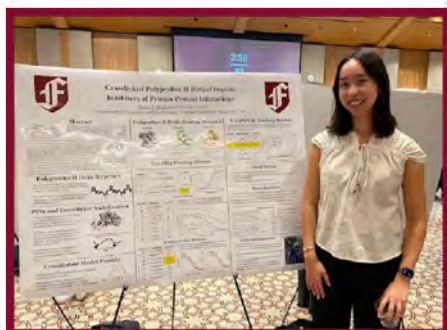
Mentor: Dr. Nicholas Sawyer

**Adriana Durán Luciano** (FCRH '26)

“The Role of Agentic Artificial Intelligence in Fostering Human Psychological Autonomy”

Mentor: Dr. David Marcotte

## Presenters at the Undergraduate Research Symposium



**Emma Elsdon** (FCRH '26)

“Crosslinked Polyproline II Helical Peptide Inhibitors of Protein-Protein Interactions”

Mentor: Dr. Nicholas Sawyer

**Isaac Forson** (FCRH '26)

“An Oppressed Nation in a Nation: The Republic of New Afrika and Black Separatism”

Mentor: Dr. Mark Naison

**Julia Gudis** (FCRH '26)

“The Role of  $\delta$ -Containing GABAA Receptors in Modulating Experimental Kainic Acid-Induced Seizures in Adult Mice”

Mentor: Dr. Kaoutsar Nasrallah

**Julia Gudis** (FCRH '26)

“Chimeric Antigen Receptor Macrophages for Glioblastoma Immunotherapy”

Mentor: Dr. Gregor Hutter

**Isaac Jabaley** (FCRH '27)

“Characterizing the DnaE-SSB Interaction in *Bacillus subtilis*”

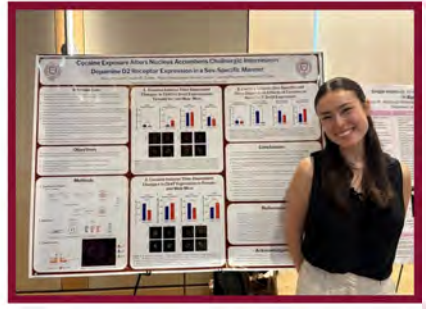
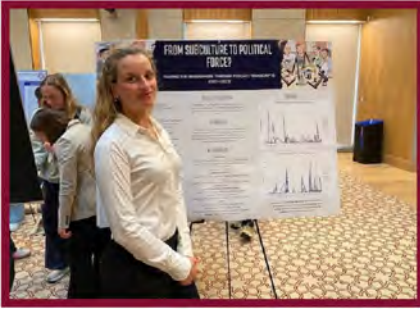
Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Thrall

**Isaac Jabaley** (FCRH '27)

“Dissecting the Interaction Between Griselimycin and the *Mycobacterium Smegmatis* Sliding Clamp Protein”

Mentor: Dr. Nicholas Sawyer

## Presenters at the Undergraduate Research Symposium



**Eve Leeser** (FCRH '26)

“From Subculture to Political Power: The Transformation of the Manosphere”

Mentor: Dr. Monica McDermott

**Aria Lee-Varan** (FCRH '26)

“Cocaine Exposure Alters Nucleus Accumbens Cholinergic Interneuron Dopamine D2 Receptor Expression in a Sex-Specific Manner”

Mentor: Dr. Eduardo Gallo

**Jenny Lockel** (FCRH '26)

“The Role of Big Five Personality Traits in Formal Mentoring Duration and Quality”

Mentor: Dr. Elizabeth Raposa

**Natalie Loo** (FCRH '26)

“On Stage and Under Scrutiny: Asian American Performance and Identity in the San Francisco Chinatown Nightclubs of the 1940s and 50s”

Mentor: Dr. Eric Bianchi

**Siddhanth Ravi** (FCRH '26)

“The Messiah America Has Been Waiting For!': The Rajneesh Movement & The De-Easternization Of Hinduism In The West”

Mentor: Dr. Daniel Soyer

## Presenters at the Undergraduate Research Symposium



**Kirsten Rosas** (FCRH '28)

"Framing Identity, Mobilizing Resistance: Cultural Identity in the Chicano and Zapatista Movements"

Mentor: Dr. Olena Nikolayenko

**Allison Schneider** (FCRH '26)

"Body and Blood: The Black Catholic Imagination in Toni Morrison's Novels"

Mentor: Dr. Angela O'Donnell

**Ariana Sebourne** (FCRH '28)

"Artivism as a Catalyst for Regime Change: The Role of Art in Mass Mobilization during the Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions"

Mentor: Dr. Olena Nikolayenko

**Eleanor Smith** (FCRH'26)

"Buried Identities: Addie Bundren and the Vanishing Rural South"

Mentor: Dr. Jennifer Moorman

**Malena Sullivan** (FCRH '26)

"Eve: Live from Eden; A Confrontation with Her Cultural Reputation"

Mentor: Dr. Stephan Apicella-Hitchcock

## Three-Minute Thesis Presentations

On May 15, graduating seniors in humanities, social sciences, and STEM made short presentations, showcasing the results of their research. Presenters covered a wide range of topics, ranging from the Black Catholic imagination in Toni Morrison's novels and the symbolism of denim across social movements to the rise of the Indian American electorate and the dynamics of the US-China relations. STEM students had a superb opportunity to present their impactful research to non-specialists. Furthermore, some students displayed their creative work.

**Reese Dains** (FCRH'26, English), for example, read an excerpt from her novel, titled *Fifteen Seconds at the Snake River Stampede*. Set in an early 2000s rodeo circuit, the novel explores the complexities of career pressures and unfulfilled familial expectations faced by a young lesbian protagonist. According to Reese, this novel seeks to "occupy a growing space for stories that centralize queerness without sidelining it."

**Hannah Darnell** (FCRH'26, Sociology, Art History), discussed the significance of restorative justice programs as alternatives to some of the United States' traditional criminal court procedures. In her thesis, she examined the role of emotional expression in restorative justice programs.



## Outstanding Thesis Mentor Awards

As a part of the Three-Minute Thesis event, the FCRH Honors Program recognized Fordham faculty for their outstanding commitment to mentoring and supporting undergraduate researchers.



### **Dr. Kaoutsar Nasrallah** **Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences**

*Her mentorship goes far beyond that of a principal investigator; she is deeply invested in the growth and well-being of her students. She fosters an environment where questions are encouraged, challenges are met with support, and progress is celebrated. She treats her lab members like family, cultivating a supportive and collaborative atmosphere that makes it easy to learn, grow, and thrive.*

*From the very beginning, she took a chance on me by allowing me to initiate a new project in her lab focused on epilepsy—an opportunity that was both challenging and deeply meaningful. Rather than rushing me into the work, Dr. Nasrallah ensured that I spent an entire semester in training, equipping me with the skills and confidence I needed to succeed. Because of this thoughtful preparation, I have never felt uncertain in my work. Her belief in her students inspires confidence, and her dedication ensures that we are never navigating our academic journeys alone.*

## Outstanding Thesis Mentor Awards

### **Dr. Eric Bianchi** **Associate Professor of Music**



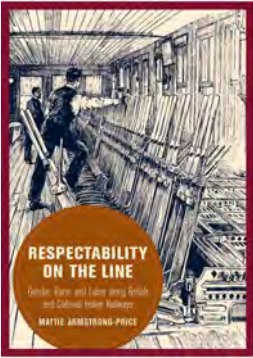
*Throughout the entire process of working on my thesis, Dr. Bianchi maintained an ideal balance between encouragement and criticism—giving me space to guide the direction of the project, while also pushing me in valuable new directions. He frequently met with me, constantly helping me analyze the feasibility of my research scope, and new possibilities to explore. When I entered the writing process, Dr. Bianchi met with me weekly, arriving at each meeting with a printed copy of my writing, carefully annotated with in-line suggestions and bigger picture notes. His thorough comments at each stage of the process helped hone everything from the quality of my analysis to the organization of my paper, and the clarity of my prose.*

### **Dr. Johanna S. Quinn** **Assistant Professor of Sociology**



*She was always available throughout the semester and even once I "completed" my thesis she provided detailed notes and edits so I could strengthen it to become even better. We began working together in the fall of 2025, and she helped me develop my diverse ideas into one manageable research question. From there, she helped me identify existing literature and narrow down specific features of the election to further refine my idea. Her kindness throughout the process helped me immensely.*

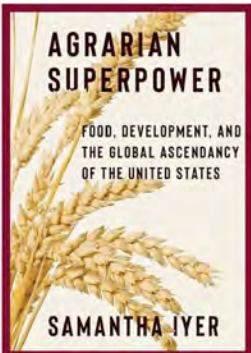
## Faculty News



**Dr. Mattie Armstrong-Price**, Assistant Professor of History, published the book, *Respectability on the Line Gender Race and Labor along British and Colonial Indian Railways* (University of California Press, 2026). The book offers a social and cultural history of railway labor in Britain and colonial India from the 1840s through World War I. The book treats the railway industry as a microcosm through which to study the history of capitalism in the liberal imperial era.



**Dr. Stephen Holler**, Professor of Physics, delivered talks about air quality and facilitated the installation of sensors at many schools across the city through the Fordham Regional Environmental Sensor for Healthy Air (FRESH Air). Dr. Holler gave an invited talk, “FRESH Air: Hyperlocal Urban Pollution Monitoring - Insights and Implication,” at the Optica Laser Applications Congress in Prague (Czechia) in October 2025 and made a presentation at the American Association of Physics Teachers in Las Vegas in January 2026.

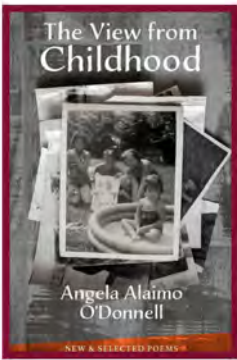


**Dr. Samantha Iyer**, Associate Professor of History, published the book, *Agrarian Superpower: Food, Development, and the Global Ascendancy of the United States* (Columbia University Press, 2026). Through the lens of food and agriculture, this book offers new ways to understand the roots of the post-Second World War global order and the US position in it.

## Faculty News



**Dr. Olena Nikolayenko**, Professor of Political Science, received the 2026 Distinguished Research Award in the Social Sciences on University Research Day in April. Her recent book, *Invisible Revolutionaries: Women's Participation in Ukraine's Euromaidan* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), examined women's engagement in civil resistance. She published an article about the impact of emotions on mass mobilization in the April issue of *Comparative Politics*.



**Dr. Angela Alaimo O'Donnell**, Associate Director of the Francis and Ann Curran Center for American Catholic Studies, published a collection of poems, titled *The View from Childhood: New and Selected Poems* (Paraclete Press, 2026). As a grandchild of Italian immigrants, granddaughter of coal miners, and author of twelve published poetry collections and thousands of poems, Dr. O'Donnell tells the stories about childhood.



**Dr. Nicholas Tampio**, Professor of Political Science, published the article, "Poetry and Democratic Education," in the 2026 May issue of the journal, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. The modern education reform movement insists that students be able to answer questions citing specific textual evidence. In practice, this means that American public education focuses on standardized testing and gives students few opportunities to say something new. In the essay, Dr. Tampio analyzes how the constitutive-expressivist theory of language makes a case for poetry in the public-school curriculum.

## Last Lecture by Dr. Diane Detournay

Each year, Honors seniors nominate a faculty member they deem to have been most influential in their Honors experience to deliver the Last Lecture. This April, Dr. **Diane Detournay** delivered the Last Lecture, titled *Feminist Visions of the University: Lessons for Authoritarian Times*, to a classroom full of Honors students.



This lecture explored feminist models of radical hope and imagination as resources for surviving the brutal forms of violence that define our political moment. Turning to W.E.B. Du Bois and Virginia Woolf, two scholars who reflected on the role of the university in a time of institutionalized white supremacy and emergent fascism, Dr. Detournay suggested that both offer ways of relating to institutions that courageously imagine their radical transformation. Reading their work in dialogue with feminist politics rooted in collective solidarity and mutual aid reminds us that freedom dreaming is an ongoing practice that is critical to remaking the world otherwise.

Dr. Detournay is a senior lecturer in English and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and the current director of the American Studies Program at Fordham. Her current book project explores the institutionalization of feminist politics in the university.

## Examining Wealth and Poverty in the United States

Americans have long debated the meaning of wealth and poverty, questioning whether such conditions are natural and thus acceptable, or alterable, the product of exploitative practices, corruption, or biased governmental policy. Taught by Dr. **Kirsten Swinth**, Professor of History and author of the book-length manuscript, *Working Family: The Birth and Triumph of a New American Ideal, 1970-2020*, the Honors course HPRH 2201 Justice I explored these and other questions surrounding the meaning of wealth and poverty in America, focusing on the post-Civil War period. The class took an intersectional perspective that brought questions of race and gender, as well as social class, to bear on the topics in order to better understand how various inequalities impact individuals and communities.



For the final assignment, sophomores identified a contemporary problem related to wealth and poverty in the United States and proposed a solution to the problem that is informed by historical understanding of the issue at hand. One group of students, for example, analyzed patterns of discrimination in the workplace. Another group examined structural failures in the US foster care system. Furthermore, a group of students explored the depiction of the rags to riches trope in US films. Students observed that many Hollywood movies framed poverty as a fault of the individual, rather than a structural problem in society. As a solution, students proposed greater emphasis on media literacy skills in schools. Through collaborative learning, students conceived new solutions to contemporary problems and presented them during the last week of classes.

## Interdisciplinary Seminars in the Spring

Each semester, Honors first-year students and sophomores engage in a cohort-wide discussion on a topic of interest from an interdisciplinary perspective. This semi-annual event brings together Honors faculty and students for an exchange of ideas over pizza.

The first-year interdisciplinary seminar held in March 2026 focused on vaccination policy from a historical, multidisciplinary perspective. Dr. **W. David Myers**, Professor of History, made the opening remarks and commented on the history of the smallpox inoculation in China and India and the Boston's smallpox epidemic of 1721. As noted by Dr. **Susan Greenfield**, Professor of English, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu learned from women in the Ottoman Empire a technique that could stop smallpox in its tracks in eighteenth-century England. Dr. **Justin Pool**, Senior Lecturer of Biological Sciences, addressed the debate over balancing scientific knowledge and cultural values. **Alp Kanibir** (FCRH'29, Political Science) facilitated a student-led discussion on the topic.



## Interdisciplinary Seminars in the Spring



The sophomore interdisciplinary seminar focused on intellectual journeys of the faculty and students. At the beginning of the seminar, Dr. **Mattie Armstrong-Price**, Assistant Professor of History, Dr. **Samir Haddad**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Dr. **Olena Nikolayenko**, Professor of Political Science, and Dr. **Laura Specker Sullivan**, Associate of Philosophy, shared their paths to a career in academia. Dr. Nikolayenko, for example, described how the collapse of communism and the emergence of independent Ukraine influenced her high-school experience and stimulated her interest in learning English as a foreign language. Then, students broke into small groups to share their own intellectual journeys. This discussion provided students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences and consider various career trajectories in this volatile climate.



## New York Experience

With the support from the FCRH Dean's Office, the FCRH Honors Program offers diverse course enrichment activities for undergraduate students.



### HPRH 2202 Focused Study: Philosophy Visit to MoMA

In April 2026, Dr. **Samir Haddad**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, and a group of Honors students enrolled in HPRH 2202-R01 Focused Study: Philosophy visited the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) to see "When I Don't Sleep, I Dream", an exhibition of the work of the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam (1902-1982). With the expert help of a MoMA guide, Honors students learned about this artist's fascinating life and remarkable art. Lam's evolving engagement with African sources and themes was of particular interest to students, as it intersected with the course's focus on Languages and Identities and their own study of authors from Africa, and Europe, and the Americas. "We were also intrigued by his longstanding collaborations with poets, including Edouard Glissant, whose work we had read," Dr. Haddad said. "Lam's unique style gave us new insight into what Glissant's concept of creolization as an ongoing process of Relation can mean."

## HPRH 2201 Justice II: Global Contexts

### Visit to the Museum of the City of New York

As a course enrichment activity in the Honors course taught by Dr. **Olena Nikolayenko**, sophomores visited the Museum of the City of New York to view the exhibition *Activist New York*, documenting the city's history of activism and the people who have propelled social change from the 1600s to today. Students subsequently discussed in class how New Yorkers mobilized to tackle such issues as civil rights, religious freedom, immigration, gender equality, environmental advocacy, and rising rents.



The interplay between art and activism was a salient feature of the exhibition. In reflecting on this museum experience, one of the students wrote:

*I was especially struck by the exhibit highlighting artists who opposed war. The bold graphics, urgent language, and emotional imagery made it clear that these artists were not just expressing opinions...they were actively resisting government policy. Many of the works criticized the draft, the loss of young American lives, and the devastating impact of U.S. military action on Vietnamese civilians. Rather than fighting with violence, they fought with paint, music, photography, and public performance. The Antiwar exhibit demonstrated that in New York, art and activism have long been intertwined, with creativity serving as a powerful tool for civil resistance.*

## HPRH 1206 Music History Watching the Broadway Musical *Ragtime*

On April 10, first-year Honors students had the opportunity to watch the Broadway musical *Ragtime* at the Lincoln Center Theater. Dr. **Eric Bianchi**, Associate Professor of Music, regularly teaches the Honors course on the history of music, and he selected *Ragtime* as a theater experience for the class of 2029. As a musical adaptation of E.L. Doctorow's novel, *Ragtime* revolves around three families from different backgrounds and explores how their lives intersected in New York in the early twentieth century. This performance raised a broad spectrum of issues that are related to the program's focus on justice. All the students enjoyed attending the Broadway show, and could be heard excitedly discussing the performance afterwards alongside fellow Honors students.



## Study Abroad: Spotlight on the University of Deusto

### Jolie Robison

(FCRH '27, Computer Science, Spanish Language and Literature)

As a junior, Jolie spent the 2025 fall semester at the University of Deusto, one of the oldest universities in Spain. The University of Deusto, along with Fordham University, is a co-founder of the Global Research Alliance of Jesuit Universities.



*My time in Bilbao was an experience that completely changed the way I see the world. I chose to study abroad at the University of Deusto because I was really interested in the unique history of the Basque Country and wanted to challenge myself as a language learner. Since Spanish Language and Literature is one of my majors, studying in Spain felt like the perfect opportunity to improve my speaking skills through immersion. I lived with a host family outside the city, where my dinners usually rotated between lentil and squash soup. Bilbao honestly reminded me a lot of Alaska because of the mountains and rainy weather, with the sole exception that Bilbao also had beautiful beaches just a short train ride away.*

*Some of my favorite classes were Literatura Hispanoamericana and Basque Language and Culture. I found it really interesting that no one fully knows the origins of the Basque people or Euskera, which is believed to be one of the oldest languages in Europe. Even though I was only there for one semester, both the professors and students were so welcoming and made me feel included from the start.*

*Through one of Deusto's partner programs, Happy Erasmus, I was able to meet other international students and travel with them throughout Spain and the Basque Country. While I loved reconnecting with friends from home and meeting other students at Deusto, one of the best parts of studying abroad was meeting people from all over the world. I made friends from Czechia, Estonia, France, Greece, Poland, Sweden, and many others whom I'll never forget. I loved my time abroad so much that I'm about to embark on the Camino de Santiago, and I couldn't be more excited.*

## GO! Honduras

In the spring of 2026, a group of twelve Honors students participated in the Global Outreach (¡GO!) project in Honduras. Rooted in Fordham's Jesuit mission, this Honors-only project was co-led by two seniors: **Isabella Alcantara** (FCRH '26, Latin American and Latino Studies, Political Science) and **Julia Gudis** (FCRH '26, Biological Sciences). This international experience has enriched students' education and fostered their personal growth.



### **Isabella Alcantara**

(FCRH '26, Latin American and Latino Studies, Political Science)

*This experience has reshaped how I think about the kind of impact I want to create through my future career in the humanitarian field. For the past few months, I have been grappling with whether I would feel more fulfillment in providing immediate humanitarian relief or in contributing to long-term development work. After this trip, I find myself still torn, but with a deeper understanding that both are necessary and deeply interconnected. I witnessed how limited government funding leaves schools to rely on creativity, external support, and persistence to meet basic educational needs, while also highlighting the urgency of building more sustainable systems that address inequality at its roots. I learned that education is a pathway to pursuing and sustaining social justice.*

**Olivia Sacks**  
(FCRH '28, Communication and Culture)

*Participating in the GO! Honduras trip this spring was one of the best experiences I have ever had. It is such a wonderful opportunity presented by Fordham and the Honors Program to be immersed in another culture that you otherwise may never have been in contact with. Generally, when you travel to a foreign country, you see the best parts of it. You see the locations that are primed for tourism. However, a GO! trip shows you a different side of things. In traveling to Honduras, we were able to see how everyday people live their lives and provide for their families. This trip connected to tons of things that my classmates and I have previously discussed in our Honors classes and things we experience every day in New York City.*



**Julianna Wottawa**  
(FCRH '29, International Studies)

*This past spring break, I traveled internationally for the first time, embarking on the Global Outreach trip to Honduras alongside eleven other Honors students at Fordham. While in Honduras, we partnered with the Oloncho Aid Foundation and immersed ourselves in three different schools, working alongside the students at each one. Having that first-hand experience through the Global Outreach program equipped me with knowledge regarding how educational systems abroad function that my classmates were not aware of. Despite the limited resources in the schools, the students and teachers came together to foster a sense of community that made school feel like home.*

## YEP Mentorship Program

The Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) is a mentorship initiative connecting students from the FCRH Honors Program with scholars from Jonas Bronck Academy (JBA), a public middle and high school near the Rose Hill campus. Proposed in 2021 by JBA Principal **Brenda Gonzalez** and Dr. **Eve Keller**, director of the FCRH Honors Program from 2015 to 2023, YEP is the first holistic mentorship program designed to help middle and high school students plan and achieve both their academic and personal goals. Rooted in the Honors Program's mission as a Community of Scholars for Justice, the mentorship program reflects a mutual commitment to community engagement, with mentors recognizing they have just as much to learn from their mentees as they have to offer. This program had a profound impact on Honors students who participated in it.



**Andres Caballero**  
(FCRH '26, Psychology)

*My involvement in YEP has grown considerably since I began as a mentor in September 2022, providing weekly one-on-one support to a JBA student across academic, social, and emotional dimensions. "In June 2024, I also stepped into a coordinator role, where I now co-lead the program, managing funds, overseeing mentor-mentee matching, and coordinating events for 60+ participants while facilitating monthly mentor meetings and ensuring a supportive environment for all involved.*

*This experience has been deeply formative, strengthening my commitment to community service and clarifying my career path. Witnessing the resilience and growth of the students I serve has inspired me to pursue a Master of Social Work in the near future, with the goal of working in schools to support teenagers facing academic and social challenges. I also hope to contribute to policy reform efforts that create more equitable educational environments. YEP has shown me that meaningful change begins with meaningful relationships.*

## Student Activities Council, 2025 -2026

Student Activities Council (SAC) gives Honors students an opportunity to shape the program in meaningful ways. This student-led council is made up of various committees that focus on the development of the program and extracurricular engagement. Student leaders collaborate with the director and the program administrator to create programming for the Honors community.

### Alpha Home

Madison Cossaboom and  
Em Sauget

### Arts and Entertainment

Nina Collins and Emma Reiter

### Bronx Engagement

Natalie Loo, Siddhanth Ravi,  
Allison Schneider, and  
Eleanor Smith

### Health and Wellness

Reese Dains and Emma Reiter

### Manhattan Explorations

Andrra Kryeziu and Kate Turnbull

### Outreach and Recruitment

Emily Caro and Kate Stover

### Sports

Nicholas Bianco, Sean Huynh

### Professional Engagement

Madison Cossaboom and Em Sauget

### Web Presence

Lucia Redling and Natalie Loo



## SAC Events

Over the course of the 2025-2026 academic year, SAC organized a wide array of activities and events for Honors students.

### Watching a Game at the Yankee Stadium



Come every April, Honors students put down their textbooks and pick up their baseball hats to rally behind the pride and joy of the Bronx: the New York Yankees. This year, seventeen Honors students walked together to the D train to see one of the team's first games of the season. We had a fairly even split of first years, sophomores, and seniors, and with our loud support from the nosebleeds, the Yankees beat the Athletics 5-3!

Organized by the SAC Sports Committee under the leadership of **Nicholas Bianco** (FCRH '26, Political Science), the Honors Yankee Game is always a great opportunity for students across cohorts to socialize and to visit one of the Bronx's most popular landmarks. "The Sports Committee that organized this event is just one of the committees in the Honors Student Activity Council," Nick pointed out. "So, if baseball isn't your thing, make sure to look out for the dozens of events that other committees host throughout the year!"

## SAC Events

**Winter Party**  
**December 2025**



**Volleyball Team**  
**April 2026**



**Hike to Bear Mountain State Park**  
**November 2025**



**Hike to Harriman State Park**  
**April 2026**



Honors events included

- Arts and Crafts Night
- Trip to the Lit Bar in the Bronx
- Bronx Night Market Walkover
- Botanical Gardens Pastries Event
- Chinatown Food Tour
- Ice Skating in Bryant Park
- NYC Marathon Watch Party
- End of Year Yankee Game
- Career Center Headshots Event



## Class of 2026 in Photos

Fordham University's 181st Commencement Ceremony, as well as the Diploma Ceremony for Fordham College at Rose Hill, was held on Edwards Parade on May 16. Hoda Kotb, a renowned journalist and a former co-anchor of the NBC morning show *Today*, addressed the Class of 2026. "Believe in your ability to make it anywhere...Figure out what you love and find a way to get paid for it," she said in her commencement speech.

***Warmest Congratulations, Class of 2026!***



# Class of 2026 in Photos



## Alumni Spotlight:

**Natalie Kinnear**  
**(FCRH '22,**  
**International Political Economy)**



***Which career path have you pursued since graduating from Fordham?***

I started my career working as a Business Development Associate at Openbox, a design research firm that focuses on designing for equity and justice. Then I ended up taking some time to fulfill some travel dreams that got put on hold due to my year abroad being cancelled during the pandemic. I traveled around Europe and then decided to get my certificate to Teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). I moved to Busan, South Korea to teach kindergarten and first grade! I taught for almost two years before moving back to the United States. I recently started working at S&P Global in the Market Intelligence division as a Client Services Associate and have really enjoyed this pivot into finance.

***What advice would you give to students who aspire to hold a job like yours?***

Much of my advice is actually rooted in the idea of *cura personalis*. I think that companies are often looking to hire people who are well-rounded and whole human beings, with varied interests and passions and personalities alongside those critical job skills and potential for growth. I work in finance despite not having an academic background in it, which I partly credit to having some of the soft, people skills that are necessary for my job and demonstrating that I learn quickly. Being confident in who you are, what excites you, and what you want to do, and being able to express this concretely and truly, is critical.

## Honors Faculty, 2025 -2026

### **Art History**

Eric Bianchi  
Magdalene Breidenthal

### **Biological Sciences**

Justin Pool

### **Chemistry**

Fariborz Firooznia

### **Computer Science**

Nikitas Kounavelis

### **Economics**

Mary Beth Combs

### **English**

Diane Detournay  
Shonni Enelow  
Moshe Gold  
Susan Greenfield  
Eve Keller  
Corey McEleney

### **History**

Mattie Armstrong-Price  
Maria Bruno  
Samantha Iyer  
W. David Myers  
Nicholas Paul  
Grace Shen  
Kirsten Swinth

### **Mathematics**

Cris Poor

### **Philosophy**

Samir Haddad  
Judith Jones  
Lauren Kopajtic  
Bligh Somma  
Nicholas Smyth  
Laura Specker Sullivan

### **Physics**

Stephen Holler

### **Political Science**

Olena Nikolayenko  
Nicholas Tampio

### **Sociology**

Orit Avishai

### **Theater**

Michael Zampelli

### **Theology**

Rufus Burnett  
Brenna Moore  
Michael Peppard  
Alexander Perkins  
Margaret Mary S. Smith

## FCRH Honors Program Advisory Council

The FCRH Honors Program Advisory Council, comprising Fordham faculty, staff, and students, will support the mission of the FCRH Honors Program by providing strategic counsel to the Program Director and advocating for the program and its initiatives at the University and within the broader community. Council members offer their professional expertise and unique perspectives to enhance the undergraduate experiences for Honors students at Fordham College at Rose Hill. Specifically, the Advisory Council will

- provide general advice on curriculum and programmatic development;
- identify experiential learning opportunities;
- offer guidance and ideas for strategic opportunities and synergies;
- strengthen the external support of the program.

Members of the FCRH Honors Program Advisory Council

**Dr. Eric Bianchi**

Associate Professor of Music

Co-Director of the Matteo Ricci Seminar

**Emily Caro** (FCRH '28, Political Science)

SAC member

**Dr. Stephen Holler**

Professor and Chair of the Department of Physics and Engineering Physics

**Sean Huynh** (FCRH '27, Math and Computer and Information Sciences)

SAC member

**Dr. Olena Nikolayenko**

Professor of Political Science

**Dr. Lorna M. Ronald**

Director of the Office of Fellowship Advising

## FCRH Honors Program Team

**Dr. Olena Nikolayenko** is the FCRH Honors Program Director and Professor of Political Science. She is also a member of the University Research Council, the Study Abroad Council, and the International Studies Program Committee. She received her PhD in political science from the University of Toronto in 2007 and was a post-doctoral fellow at Stanford University before joining Fordham in 2009. Her current research focuses on civil resistance and labor activism in Eastern Europe.



**Emily Caro** (FCRH'28, Political Science and Spanish Language and Literature) is FCRH Honors Program Administrator and a student leader in the Student Activities Council. Outside of Honors, she serves as a campus tour guide and is a part of the *Fordham Political Review*, *Spes Nova*, and the Urban Plunge team.



**Ashlyn Abate** (Gabelli '27, Finance) is a student worker who provides administrative support for the FCRH Honors Program. Specifically, she produced the weekly electronic newsletter *What's Going On, Honors?* and worked on the digital collection of the Honors Program in the Fordham Research Commons.



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### **Honors Blog**

[rosehill.honors.blog.fordham.edu](http://rosehill.honors.blog.fordham.edu)

### **Honors Instagram**

@fordhamhonors

FCRH Honors Program  
*Year in Review: 2025-2026*

