

Proposal for Senior Honors Thesis

HONS 497 Senior Honors Thesis Credits 2 (2 minimum required)

Directions: Please return signed proposal to the Honors Office at least one week prior to your scheduled meeting with the Honors Council. This proposal must be accepted by Honors Council the semester before presentation.

Student's Name: Jonathan Borton

Primary Advisor: Professor David Sherwin

Secondary Advisor: Dr. Vanessa Corredera

Thesis Title: The Boricua Dialogues: Puerto Rican Identity Through Conversation & Photography

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Expected date of Graduation: May 2020

I. Provide goals and brief description of your project or research.

The Boricua Dialogues was born out of a desire to challenge and engage with my identity as a Puerto Rican who does not speak Spanish, does not know how to make *arroz con gandules* or *pasteles*, and who was not raised in a Puerto Rican cultural atmosphere. I have always been vaguely uncomfortable in Latinx environments, perhaps due to the perception that I should feel more at home than I actually do; this thesis therefore pushes me out of my comfort zone, both emotionally and artistically.

Building off of my personal history as someone who has wrestled with their Puerto Rican identity, then, this research project uses both photography and interviews to construct and articulate aspects of the shared cultural narrative of Puerto Rico between Puerto Ricans on the island and those in America. The goal of this project is not to establish a set definition of being "Puerto Rican," but rather to bring together a group of Puerto Rican voices into a final photo book and gallery show that highlight the lived experience of being Puerto Rican.

II. Outline your methodology. Please be specific. How does this achieve your goals and how reliable is it?

The design of this research is as follows: I contact self-identifying Puerto Rican individuals and request an interview with them. Then I ask them a defined set of questions pertaining to Puerto Rican identity; finally, I take a portrait of them at that time. After that, parts of their story and their photograph may be included in the final book and/or gallery show. The study questions will be answered through interviews with Puerto Rican individuals. I will then select parts of their narratives that add to the project and answer the question: "What does it mean to be Puerto Rican?" This does not mean that I will take quotes out of context or misrepresent people's stories, but rather that I will be selective about what I include in the service of this project's message.

Because my thesis involves interviewing individuals to ascertain cultural information, my project does not use sampling in the scientific sense. My selection of interviewees is as follows: I will utilize family and community connections to find potential interviewees. My hope is to talk to and photograph 30 individuals who self-identify as Puerto Rican. Individuals that have lived in Puerto Rico but do not consider themselves Puerto Rican (such as someone who may have married a Puerto Rican but is a different ethnicity) will be excluded. Puerto Ricans, like many in the Latinx world, are known for having tight-knit connections with others in their community, meaning that this way of finding individuals is legitimate. In addition, a crucial aspect of this project is the tracing of my own identity through these broader Puerto Rican connections; therefore, the method of using my personal connections to find potential interviewees is sound.

I will collect observations through face-to-face interviews, utilizing an audio recorder to ensure that everything said is retained in a easily-accessible archive. The interviews include a mix of English and Spanish; as I do not speak Spanish, my father acts as a translator to facilitate conversation. When the interviews are transcribed, I will make sure to cross-reference the Spanish parts with several trustworthy individuals to ensure accuracy and proper translation, such as members of Andrews University's Languages Department. Each subject signs an informed consent document, in their language of choice, to show that they understand what their words and portrait would be used for, which is not to test a hypothesis, but rather to assemble a cultural narrative. The timeline of subject participation is as follows: I or my father contact potential subjects and explain the project to them; if they consent, we arrange a time according to their schedule and then follow our set of questions during interviews. The single copy of the informed consent forms are kept by me, in my room. The audio interviews are kept by me as well on an external hard drive that only I can access. Subject data will be kept forever, as per standard photographic protocol.

III. Explain in what sense your project is original, unique, or beyond normal senior expectations. How does it relate to current knowledge in the discipline?

In the Photography department, Bachelor of Fine Arts majors are required to craft and present a photographic thesis as the capstone of their college years. Part of this process requires students to take Senior Thesis Fall Semester of their senior year, culminating in a proposal for a potential project that takes place in November. Senior exhibitions are held in April of Spring Semester, so this gives the students about four months to create their body of work. In this regard, therefore, I have already exceeded normal senior expectations, as I have been working on this project since Spring Semester 2019, my junior year. By the time I present my work at the Honors Thesis Symposium in April of 2020 I will have spent a full year working on my thesis, giving me time to create a more comprehensive body of work that more fully answers my research questions.

Another way *The Boricua Dialogues* surpasses normal senior expectations is in the background research conducted prior to the creation of the photographic work. Visual art majors are encouraged to create a visual thesis that connects to them personally. For example, a graphic designer may choose to create a series of book covers for books that highly influenced them growing up. However, what many of these projects lack is a solid theoretical background or philosophical foundation. Essentially, these projects may not be considered "scholarly." This distinction is not always necessary; many artists are successful through purely personal art. But I see that having a scholarly basis for my work can only strengthen it, as now my art can be informed by various interdisciplinary sources, including political discourse, poetry, and visual art of all types. Not only is

this beyond normal BFA photography major requirements, but it establishes that I can work in many different scholarly environments, opening up more possible opportunities for employment in the future.

Finally, this project is unique in the photography department in that it is being conducted under the auspices of the IRB, as required of all URS recipients. Many documentary projects have been conducted in this department, but most of them have not received approval from the IRB. This is not necessary for the type of work with human subjects that documentary photography requires, as there is no risk to human subjects and no testing involved. However, I feel that getting my project approved by the IRB gives my work an extra level of professionalism that can only benefit my project as I seek to present it to various interdisciplinary conferences and galleries. By demonstrating that I have taken the proper paths to ensure that I am acting ethically towards my photographic subjects, I can inspire a level of trust in my work among other creatives that I might not otherwise have.

In relation to my fellow creatives, my thesis engages with several modern trends in photography. I situate my work within a recent increased focus on historically marginalized individuals and groups, as well as a movement to reexamine who gets to tell such stories. As a mixed-culture individual, I feel that I can authentically address some of these questions through my photography. In addition, the aesthetic of using traditional 35mm film to achieve a certain visual style has come back in vogue, and my project fits within that style, as I have shot my work on photographic film. This dovetails with a parallel conversation taking place in the art world about the manipulation of images and what constitutes truth in photography. As I am seeking to portray the stories of my subjects in the most honest light, using 35mm film to limit my editing and manipulation choices makes sense from both the thematic and aesthetic perspectives.

Include a substantive annotated bibliography of similar or related work.

Photography Books & Projects

**Blinder, Alan, and Gray, Jerry. "The Triumphs and Trials of Memphis." *The New York Times*, 02 April 2018,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/02/us/martin-luther-king-memphis.html>
Accessed 28 April 2019.**

Contributing photos to Alan Blinder's story about the state of Memphis 50 years after Dr. King, Miranda Barnes subtly underlines the "trials and triumphs" of a city caught in the struggle of progress and tradition. In photos that range from the Civil Rights Museum to run-down, dusty neighborhoods, she highlights the duality of Memphis, which Blinder points out has seen both national companies and the tourist industry rise in success at the same time that the city has become "the poorest metropolitan area in America." Relying on the physical places to speak for themselves, Barnes unflinchingly portrays the often desolate city in its decay; however, she finds a beauty in this space as well, suggesting that the dignity of Dr. King has not been entirely lost in the intervening years. This balance between harsh reality and the aesthetics nevertheless found within that reality is something that I aim to achieve in my project as I photograph places that may not always be conventionally beautiful.

Cromwell, Rose Marie. *El Libro Supremo de la Suerte*. TIS Books/Light Work, 2018.

Photographer Rose Marie Cromwell engages with her Cuban heritage in her work *El Libro Supremo de la Suerte* (the Book of the Supreme Luck). Named after a common Cuban pamphlet that deals with numbers in relation to luck and everyday activities, Cromwell's photos similarly present the "everyday rituals" that make up the lives of Cubans in Havana. A mix of street photos and portraits are tied together by Cromwell's eye for the aesthetics of day-to-day life in Havana; color and light intermingle to allow something beyond human sensibilities to peek through the images. Her portraits are unconventional; rarely do her subjects meet the gaze of the viewer, nor do they always appear to know that they are being photographed. However, this demonstrates the Supreme Luck again, as the images seem to appear almost random, a "lucky shot" or twenty. Cromwell's perspective on engaging with her Cuban heritage through photography, as well as her ability to humanize her subjects, informs the way my thesis engages Puerto Rican identity, providing one way I could approach the endeavor.

Eggleston, William. *The Democratic Forest*. Doubleday, 1989, New York.

William Eggleston conjures an aesthetic vision of the American South, and elsewhere, in his seminal 1989 photo book *The Democratic Forest*. Utilizing a particular eye for composition, light, and color, Eggleston employs his notion of the "democratic picture" to capture everyday, unassuming moments in the American landscape—often without the people that presumably inhabit such a landscape. He points his lens towards famous places—such as the Texas State Book Depository—and random spots on the road alike, all brought together and unified by his artistic vision. The photos are seemingly ordered randomly; a photo from Kentucky might sit alongside a shot from Mississippi, the two not appearing to be connected except through the contrast in the colors of each image. This apparent randomness, paired with the leveling of all places and moments through the camera, helps support Eggleston's thesis of the "democratic picture:" everything equally has the potential to be photographed, and the photographer makes the decision to photograph or not. Eggleston famously said that he likes all of his photos equally; if he chose to take the photo, then it was a good one. This radical thinking is evident in his book, and it is what makes it so powerful: all of these various places and experiences are put forth to the reader as equal, and as such the work succeeds at demonstrating the nature of the "democratic picture." I wish to use this notion of the "democratic picture" as I photograph places in Puerto Rico and New York City that are not seen as equal to more famous locations but still have meaning to Puerto Ricans.

Jordano, Dave. "Marktown." *Dave Jordano Photography*,

<https://davejordano.com/marktown/marktown-2003-04> Accessed 29 April, 2019.

In his photo series *Marktown*, large format photographer Dave Jordano focuses his camera on the East Chicago community that was, in his words, "doomed since the day it was conceived." In a series of portraits and street photos, Jordano reveals both the economic poverty of the streets and the quiet humanity of the people that make up this place. With an eye for composition, Jordano turns the angles and lines of streets and houses into orderly grids, underlining the intentionality of the inhabitants to make their residence a true community. His subjects do not always smile—in fact, they rarely do—but Jordano presents them in such a way that they show a dignity that is also evinced by their homes. Most of the photos are shot in soft light, which once again emphasizes the quietness of this town. The decades may not have been kind to the residents of Marktown, but they appear to have weathered years of slow decay, and they look as if they will survive, perhaps under the radar, in their own way, but survive nonetheless. Jordano's sense of composition and use of color informs my

photographs, as his way of allowing the viewer to see something beyond the normal is something that I would like to accomplish in this thesis.

Academic Sources

Duchesne-Winter, Juan. "Beyond the Binational Colonial State." *Revista*, Spring 2008, <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/national-identity-politics-puerto-rico> Accessed 29 April, 2019.

Juan Duchesne-Winter, professor of literature and cultural studies at the University of Pittsburgh, discusses what he calls the "binational colonial state" in which Puerto Rico has found itself, where "the Puerto Rican subaltern nationality is embedded in an American dominant nationality." He tells of his own growing-up years, how he found himself joining the *independentista* group in high school and consciously rejected things that fell within the confines of the binational matrix. Duchesne-Winter goes on to discuss the problems and struggles inherent to this state of being, including the problematic status of America as a "*telenation* and a *macronation*" to Puerto Rico; the *Latinoization* of Puerto Rico as a way to join the American ethnocracy; and the ever-present discussion of Puerto Rico's final status, whether as an independent nation or as a American state. He speaks specifically to this last issue, noting that this discussion is one that helps define the Puerto Rican community, implying that they would lose something if this issue were to truly be resolved. He concludes by stating that "[in Puerto Rico] colonial nationalism has displaced anti-colonial nationalism." Duchesne-Winter sees this a positive step, one that could lead to an "independence that transcends nationalist ideology." His analysis is useful to me, as an understanding of some of the politics at work in Puerto Rico is essential to more fully empathizing with the Puerto Ricans I engage with in my project.

Gimenez, Martha E. "Latinos/Hispanicas...What Next!: Some reflections on the politics of identity in the U.S." *Hunter College*, http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/BLPR102_PIMENTEL/latinos10.html Accessed 29 April 2019.

Martha E. Gimenez, of the Sociology Department at the University of Colorado at Boulder, writes for an issue of *HERESIES* and offers an alternative perspective on the use of the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino/a" in the discourse on identity in America. She asserts, contrary to popular notions, that these terms actually erase cultural identity more than they help define individuals, as they homogenize the experience of Latin Americans, the "historically oppressed populations of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin," those with Spanish or other European heritage, those with Native American heritage, and second- or third-generation individuals in America into one government-assigned identity, despite the many cultural and historical divisions between these peoples. In particular, Gimenez incisively points out that many "Hispanics" were historically discriminated against because of their Native American blood. She goes on to argue that many of the issues that these Spanish-speaking peoples in America have cared about are issues related to class politics, things like jobs, health care, etc. But these class politics are silenced; only as a matter of identity or race can "Hispanics" use their voice in the political sphere. Ultimately, Gimenez concludes that "clarity" about these issues of identity is needed in order to fully achieve "unity and strength." As someone who has no given much thought to the labels used for Spanish-speaking

individuals, this article provided a perspective that is helpful to me as I talk with individuals who may feel more strongly about these labels than I do.

Puerto Rican Art

Barahona, George. "Bay Area filmmaker is using his art to help Puerto Rico rebuild." *El Tecolote*, 14 February 2019,

http://eltecolote.org/content/en/arts_culture/bay-area-filmmaker-is-using-his-art-to-help-puerto-rico-rebuild/ Accessed 29 April, 2019.

George Barahona profiles filmmaker Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi for *El Tecolote*, showcasing his various films and projects that help raise awareness and funds for Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Jacobs-Fantauzzi talks about raising money for affected people after Irma in 2017, which blossomed out of his multimedia project "Defend Puerto Rico." He says that he felt in October 2017 that Puerto Rico was where he needed to be, and so he has been there ever since. He speaks to the lack of aid Puerto Ricans received from FEMA, and how he saw firsthand (through his uncle and aunt) the destruction of the hurricanes. Jacobs-Fantauzzi has been able to showcase his work via Apple, and said that he was excited to "share the stories" of Puerto Ricans. He ended up presenting pieces of three films, one focused on Cuba, another on Afro-Latino culture, and finally one about the community coming together to help rebuild a hard-hit area of Puerto Rico. He concludes by emphasizing the need for individuals to find their passion and use it to help others, that that is "our responsibility." Although my project is not directly helping raise awareness for victims, it is still situated within this tradition of telling the stories of Puerto Ricans, and thus it is helpful to find other artistic projects with that aim.

Cooley, Ryah. "Excess showcases the art and practices of Puerto Rico." *New Times*, 07 February 2019,

<https://www.newtimeslo.com/sanluisobispo/excess-showcases-the-art-and-practices-of-puerto-rico/Content?oid=7592158> Accessed April 29, 2019.

Ryah Cooley, writing for the *New Times*, reports on the *Topologies of Excess: A Survey of Contemporary Practices* exhibit at the Harold J. Miozzi Gallery at Cuesta College. This gallery featured the work of eight artists and focused on "emerging practices and happenings in Puerto Rico." Cooley highlights the artwork of fiber artist Zaida Balmesada, whose pieces include large soft sculpture installations made from materials from the island. She speaks to the community focus that she wants to emphasize in her artwork, noting how art can be "shared processes and shared practices." Finally, the co-curator of the show, Mariola Rosario, talks about the intention of the gallery and how it is supposed to challenge stateside perceptions of Puerto Rican life. I find this article useful because *Topologies of Excess* highlights new and innovative styles of art coming out of Puerto Rico; as my research would be incomplete without acknowledging the current artistic practices of the country I am focusing on in my work, this helps me gain a fuller picture of my area of study.

Feliciano, Ivette. "I will fight for my island' — Puerto Rican artists on territory's future." *PBS*, 18 March 2017,

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/puerto-rican-artists-future> Accessed 29 April, 2019.

Reporting for PBS, Ivette Feliciano attends the CitiCien exhibit at the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Educational Center in New York City, a gallery celebrating the work of Puerto Rican artists and specifically assembled for the 100th anniversary of the Jones Act, which made Puerto Ricans citizens of the U.S. in 1917. These 100 artists each address questions of statehood and identity in their own way, through various mediums. Speaking with many of the artists, Feliciano shares some of their stories, from Vagabond Beaumont, whose work focuses on his nationalist grandfather, to Daniel Alago, who remembers his mother telling him about a conflict between Puerto Rican nationalists and the U.S. National Guard that she became caught in. All the artists share a concern for the well-being of the island, and the hope that their artwork can raise awareness of things happening there that those on the mainland, even those of the Puerto Rican diaspora, may not be aware of. Through their engagement with personal and political histories, the artists of CitiCien truly tell the stories of the last 100 years, and carry on the legacies that they recount in their work. I too intend to engage with personal and political histories through art; this exhibition demonstrates multitudinous ways Puerto Rican artists are doing this, which helps me situate my work within this larger tradition.

Jackson, Jhoni. "This Puerto Rican Artist Is Radicalizing Austin's Queer Scene." *Paper*, 26 February 2019, <http://www.papermag.com/jeva-puerto-rico-austin-texas-2630015306.html> Accessed 29 April 2019.

Jhoni Jackson sits down with Puerto Rican artist Jeva for *Paper*, discussing their art, influences, and experience. Jackson first notes that Jeva and their mother had to leave Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria, leading to Jeva's eventually settling in Austin, TX. Jeva speaks to many topics, particularly their experience in the Puerto Rican queer community and the way their art is influenced by ongoing issues there. They talk about how they feel that the queer nightlife scene in PR has improved considerably from when they lived there, how there are more options and people are more open. They discuss how they have had problems with feminism and female spaces, which intersect with their memories, both good and bad, of Puerto Rico. Jeva also talks about their performance art in the U.S., how they are specifically trying to address questions of oppression, sexism, and colonial attitudes towards Puerto Ricans through "really chaotic" pieces. They end by talking about their mission, which they feel is to critique colonialism, celebrate queerness and femmeness, and talk about the "struggles of Latin America." Jeva is engaging with Puerto Rican culture in a unique way, which shows me that there is more than one way to go about my project, pushing me to think beyond standard artistic practices as I seek the best way to artistically represent the stories I am collecting.

Jackson, Jhoni. "Puerto Rico's iLe Confronts Misogynist Violence in 'Temes.'" *Paper*, 05 March 2019, <http://www.papermag.com/ile-temes-premiere-2630669609.html> Accessed 29 April 2019.

Jhoni Jackson interviews Puerto Rican artist iLe for *Paper*, discussing gender-related violence in Puerto Rico following the release of iLe's song *Temes* which addresses violence against women. iLe tells how she came to be aware of this issue recently, in the wake of the murder of a woman in Guaynabo, and how she felt that she had to talk about this topic in some way, which eventually manifested in the song and music video. Jackson and iLe talk about police indifference to violence against women in Puerto Rico, to the point that someone may be on the line with 911 calling about a

case of abuse happening at that moment, and the police still do not come. iLe also speaks about the actual process of making the music video, and how she wanted to be careful to portray this sensitive topic without being insensitive or unethical, but still getting the point across. They conclude by noting that the day they released the video, a woman was killed in New York, driving the point home that this is indeed a relevant and necessary discussion to have, and that awareness of the problem is essential. iLe's work and music reminds me of the need to represent all stories and experiences authentically, rather than just focusing on one perspective or life story that fits a stereotype of what I think Puerto Rican experience should look like. Therefore, this article helps me build an ethical foundation for my project that should help me avoid sticking to a homogenous narrative of Puerto Rican identity.

Morales, Aurora Levins and Rosario. "Ending Poem." *Anthology*, 29 April 2008,

<http://carissasanthology.blogspot.com/2008/04/aurora-and-rosario-morales-ending-poem.html> Accessed 29 April 2019.

In their forcefully personal poem, mother and daughter Aurora Levins and Rosario Morales craft a complex vision of Puerto Rican identity that transcends simple definition. With simple "I am" sentences, they declare their connections to Puerto Rico, America, New York, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Structurally opposing these "I am's" are a series of "I am not," in which they note their roots to Africa, to the Taíno people of Borinquen (Puerto Rico), and to Europe, while not claiming any of these as their true identity. The Morales take the reader through history and demonstrate how they are the product of many cultures interacting, the "child of many diasporas." However, they do not leave the reader to feel that they do not know who they are; the last lines of the poem assert that "History made us/We will not eat ourselves up inside anymore. And we are whole," a declaration of purpose and identity that ties the poem together. Although I am a visual artist, it benefits me to observe the ways in which Puerto Ricans may express themselves through words, as my thesis does involve words and stories alongside photographs. A project like mine cannot stand on the strength of the photographs alone; I must therefore be proficient at pairing stories and words with my visual imagery in order to make the strongest narrative possible.

Puerto Rican Politics

Denis, Nelson. "After a Century of American Citizenship, Puerto Ricans Have Little to Show for It." *The Nation*, 02 March 2017,

<https://www.thenation.com/article/after-a-century-of-american-citizenship-puerto-ricans-have-little-to-show-for-it/> Accessed 29 April, 2019.

Nelson Denis, writing for *The Nation*, explains in excruciating detail the injustices continually leveled on Puerto Rico during its 100 years of American rule. Using official statistics as well as historical examples, he parades a legacy of racism, mismanagement, and corruption before the reader, stretching from the first US-appointed governor utilizing his position to gain a sugar empire to the egregious tax abatement deals and municipal bonds allowing Wall Street investors to make quick money at the cost of the Puerto Rican residents, who already make less than half the per capita income of Mississippi. Nelson highlights the recent actions of the Obama Administration in 2016, which confirmed Puerto Rico's colonial status and established a fiscal oversight board (PROMESA) to oversee the island's economy. He denounces what has become popularly known as "Junta Colonial" and points out just how much power the board has over all aspects of Puerto Rico.

Nelson ends with examples of the recent protests against La Junta, demonstrating that Puerto Ricans have been pushed to their limit by one bad decision on America's part after another, and he suggests that there may be an "explosion" of resentment due to the century of injustices wrought on Puerto Rico. Nelson paints a dark situation for Puerto Rico, and although he does not say what this "explosion" might look like, he intimates that it could be detrimental to everyone. Understanding this brew of national passion and political mistreatment benefits me as I interview Puerto Ricans, as it gives me insight into the events that they may discuss during our talks.

Latham, Kailey. "Statehood Issue Stirs Passions About Puerto Rican Identity." *Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University*, 29 October 2012, <https://cronkite.asu.edu/buffett/puertorico/identity.html> Accessed 29 April, 2019.

Kailey Latham, writing for the Cronkite Borderlands Initiative, describes the conflicts of identity and politics in modern-day Puerto Rico. Interviewing a number of Puerto Ricans, mostly students and faculty from the University of Puerto Rico, she demonstrates how this notion of identity has been a troubled one for many Puerto Rican individuals. Through these interviews, individuals have a chance to speak to Puerto Rican issues, including the symbolism of the Puerto Rican flag, the difficult connection to America, Puerto Rico's cultural identity (including in relation to the rest of the world), the so-called "Taino revival," the race question, and the possibility of statehood. Many people assert their frustrations with the U.S., noting how they do not feel represented or heard in various ways, such as the Taino people not being federally recognized. Latham appropriately does not offer a final solution to these questions; these issues are large and opinions are disparate, meaning that there may not be just one answer or conclusion to this discussion. This paper directly speaks to the central question of my thesis--what it means to be Puerto Rican, especially considering the multiplicity of backgrounds Puerto Ricans can claim.

Peña-Pérez, Diana. "Understanding Ethnic Labels and Puerto Rican Identity." *Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute*. <http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/2000/1/00.01.05.x.html> Accessed 29 April, 2019.

Diana Peña-Pérez writes a curriculum unit for discussing Latinx identity in the classroom. She first notes the questions surrounding the Spanish-speaking populations in the U.S., acknowledging that this discourse is important in a multicultural setting. She first defines her meanings of "culture" and "identity," then moves on to discuss the meanings of different labels used for these groups in America, including "Hispanic," "Latino," "Hispano," and "Chicano." She cites Gimenez to challenge the notion of "Hispanic" as a proper label in this context. She then goes on to talk about the history of Spanish-speaking Americans, the unique status of Puerto Ricans (citing the *Ending Poem*), and the entwined questions of identity and race. She ends with a series of Objectives and Lessons to help teachers organize these discussions in their classes, including a wealth of primary texts to help students understand these issues from the perspective of individuals' experience. This lesson plan has helped me understand the terminology central to my thesis, particularly the difference between "Hispanic" and "Latinx," an important distinction for the Spanish-speaking world.

Picó, Jaime E. "Junta colonial." *El Nuevo Dia*, 30 March 2016,

<https://www.elnuevodia.com/opinion/columnas/juntacolonia-columna-2180194/>

Accessed 29 April, 2019.

In a short column for *El Nuevo Dia*, Jaime Picó argues that the then-proposed fiscal oversight board, known as PROMESA, would violate the autonomy of Puerto Rico and hinder the Puerto Rican government's agency. Specifically, he asserts that if PROMESA were to take effect, it would compromise the power and authority of the Puerto Rican governor, and would in time prevent Puerto Ricans from choosing their own leaders and representatives. Picó acknowledges that Puerto Rico's current administration is not perfect, but he feels that handing over authority to the fiscal oversight board (and it would not even be the Puerto Rican people who give that authority, but Congress) would cause Puerto Ricans to lose their right to self-government and eventually lose other rights as well. He concludes by stating that "This, of course, is the natural consequence of colonialism and constitutes a consolidation of imperial power on the island," implying that the entire handling of Puerto Rico by America has led to this inevitable outcome. This tension between Puerto Rico and the United States is an area that I have been led to explore naturally, as nearly every individual I have talked to has feelings about those connections and an opinion about what the future relationship should be between the two countries.

IV. Provide a statement of progress to date and list the research methods coursework completed.

As a photography major, there are no specific research courses required for my discipline; however, I have developed my photographic and research skills throughout my various classes. In particular, I would like to highlight three visual art classes that helped my artistic development get to where it is now. In PHTO220, Color Photography I, which I took from Professor David Sherwin in the fall of 2018, I grew to realize the importance of color in my own work, and it has been a focus of my photography since then. I was able to develop the specific skills I needed to shoot and develop my own color 35mm film in PHTO305, Alternative Photographic Processes, which I took from Professor Marc Ullom in the spring of 2019. And taking ARTH440, Art Since 1945, from Dr. Stefanie Elkins-Bates in the spring of 2019 allowed me to investigate the history of my medium and more accurately assess the influences on my work. Finally, although this is not a visual art class, I found that auditing Dr. Vanessa Corredera's spring 2018 class ENGL415, Gender Studies in Literature, has given me a strong foundation from which to interrogate notions of identity, especially in the intersection of gender and race.

My thesis has not progressed straightforwardly due to unfortunate circumstances within my department. In spring 2019, as I was preparing to apply for the Undergraduate Research Scholarship, I found out that my intended thesis mentor, Professor Marc Ullom, had been let go from the school. Although I was able to find another great mentor in Dr. Vanessa Corredera and did receive the URS, our inexperience with Honors photography theses meant that we did not complete the IRB application, which I needed to "test" human subjects through interviews, until this semester. In the meantime, during the summer, I spent two weeks photographing and interviewing subjects, one week in Puerto Rico and one week in New York City. Therefore, almost all of my principal photography is complete, with only a few interviews left to conduct this semester. I have also conducted the background research needed to put my thesis on a strong foundation of scholarly research.

As a BFA photography major, I will be presenting my work as a gallery show in Harrigan Hall, ideally in March of 2020. I will also be applying to present my work as a poster at the 2020 MASAL conference, as well as seeking out other avenues through which I can present my thesis.

Department Chair Approval

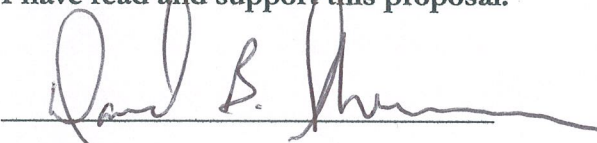
- **This student's performance in his/her major field is acceptable.**
- **He/she has completed the requisite research methods coursework for the research to be pursued.**
- **I understand that he/she plans to graduate with Honors.**



Department Chair (signature)

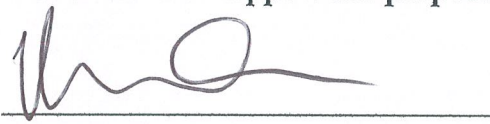
Research Advisor Approval

I have read and support this proposal:



Primary Advisor (signature)

I have read and support this proposal:



Secondary Advisor (signature)

If human subjects or if live vertebrate animals are involved, evidence of approval from the Institutional Review Board or an Animal Use Committee is needed through the campus scholarly research offices (Ext. 6361).