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FILA-450

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Whether it was deep in the labs of McKinney, reinforcing my knowledge in the FLC, or engaging in my lectures in Bowman, Bridgewater has etched a distinct attitude for my future. Any great conversations or lessons came from the wonderful people in all the departments and the student body, for which I am truly grateful. As a Biology Major, I have had the great opportunity to delve deeply into my education with a curious and hands-on approach, while my Biomedical Sciences Minor only reinforces my knowledge and experience in biological systems and the healthcare dynamics surrounding the art. Although I have established a solid foundation in Biology, it has been the classes outside of my major that have had the most significant influence on my way of thinking, as each class has tested my beliefs and abilities. I have had the opportunity to take courses in Political Science, Psychology, Chemistry, Music, and even Tai Chi, where I have learned a great deal from several brilliant professors while building connections with enthusiastic peers. Over the years, I have overcome and failed many challenges, but my courses have allowed me to build a strong work ethic and resilience that have prepared me for anything.

Integration and Experiential Learning

Some of the biggest growth I have experienced has been outside of the classroom, actively applying behaviors and ideas that I have learned during my time at

Bridgewater. The experiences that are included under this umbrella intentionally bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world experiences. My involvement in these activities allowed me to step out of a traditional classroom setting and immerse myself in engaging and immersive professional growth.

For my Experiential Learning course, I took Religious Traditions with Dr. Klancher, A course that built a strong spirituality within me and bridged gaps of knowledge within several ideas. This class was not just a lecture that described the beliefs and practices around the religions of the world, but an active conversation that actively challenged all of our beliefs. One particular experience of this course was interviewing a stranger who aligns with a different belief system or religion. This assignment pushed other students and me out of our comfort zones, into having conversations that are profound and even uncomfortable.

Though I had never interviewed someone before, I was excited to learn from, share, and find common ground in the beliefs that distinguish us. I had the pleasure of interviewing an international student of the Muslim faith who described to me her personal experiences and new revelations that I had not known of. Throughout this Interview, it was very apparent that the theories we learned in class have various applications in explaining the psychological and social elements that affect religious belief and spirituality. In my Interview reflection ([ARTIFACT 1](#)) I noted several stories, conversations, and mannerisms that were unique to the experience, and overall helped reinforce social skills and understanding when dealing with diverse cultures. From the various awe-inspiring and unique cultures that we were presented to, I

began to find answers to many questions in my own life, while building empathy and knowledge in the beliefs of others, a skill essential in the field of medicine.

Outside of the classroom, I was grateful to be a part of the Model United Nations Organization at Bridgewater, as I believe this experience put strong negotiation and networking skills to practice. As a diplomat, I represented the country of Belarus, where I was positioned in a General Assembly hall that debated resolutions regarding Safe Drinking Water and Refugee Displacement ([ARTIFACT 2](#)). In this environment, key negotiation skills were king, and building a consensus among an international cohort helped pass key mission guidelines. By utilizing specific budget and logistics-based policies, we built a consensus among peers that wasn't available anywhere else.

Model UN has been pivotal in developing communicative and policy drafting skills; it exposes you to a plethora of ideas and cultures, really testing personal abilities. This program works to integrate several key FILA philosophies, including Political Science, Biology, Sociology, and many more, to draft United Nations resolutions. Overall, this experience has been once in a lifetime and proves that there are no easy solutions for multifaceted and nuanced issues. I intend to utilize the skills acquired during this experience to advocate for healthcare policy and various other human rights throughout my career.

Engaging Diverse Perspectives

When engaging in learning about diverse perspectives, the only thing standing in its way is censorship. Censorship as a whole limits our abilities to learn from and

explore different attitudes and outlooks, a dangerous precedent that limits the growth of an individual. Recently, I had the opportunity to step in a Literature for Children course where I read books that dive into a plethora of ideas surrounding individual and cultural issues. Children's books are much more than a lighthearted and fun story to entertain; many contain perspectives that could not be experienced anywhere else. These stories serve to address issues, provide guidance, or simply illustrate something beautiful. When exploring these tales, I learned of new traditions, values, and history, which I am grateful for. When it comes to reading level and depth, one may think children's books will lack nuances, but after reading several, they are truly indispensable when introducing new or unknown topics.

In this course, I had the opportunity to write about censorship and the dangerous outcomes that will be realized if it is not mitigated ([ARTIFACT 3](#)). Book banning has never been and will never be about "protection"; it is an act of fear, a political tool for control, and a pitiful cry against a world that will refuse to stay simple and conservative. Manipulation, misinformation, and misunderstanding are to blame for the psychological fear that leads to the impulse to want to ban a book, and it must be prevented. Not only do these books serve to teach and expose children to ideas that they may not be familiar with, but it challenges them to understand distinct ideas and topics, A skill essential in an ever-changing world.

When reading through and analyzing several of these stories, it became apparent that each one served its own unique purpose. There is no one book that gives all the answers to the world, just like anything else on Earth. It is only through the culmination of diverse experiences and critical thinking that we build a rich and

diverse source of knowledge that guides us through this journey. When evaluating these stories as a college student, I realized that without these books, I would not have become the same person. It was only through a diverse range of stories that I built a strong sense of adaptability and creativity that enriched my life beyond measure, and I am always grateful. As I venture into my future career, I am confident in my ability to engage thoughtfully with new perspectives and find common ground with opposing viewpoints. It is in the field of medicine that I will be tested every day with a new face and story, but I do not worry. Experiences such as Literature for Children helped enrich my outlook on the society around me, while building the skills necessary to rationalize any distinct topic.

Public Discourse

Enrolling in a Psychology 101 course delivered me the necessary skills to engage thoughtfully with and understand the viewpoints of my peers during discussions. This class, taught by Dr. Honeycutt, exposed us to various psychological phenomena and real-life situations that require the analysis of all perspectives. Primary discussions involved taking our own experiences and deducing what was happening. Whether it was debating Reinforcement and Punishment behavior, comparing Principles of learning, or diving deep into Psychopathology, we brought a diverse array of perspectives to the classroom that enriched our own understanding. One particular discussion involved the use of phones and how they can negatively impact a child's education and social life, a multifaceted issue that has led to many debates on the implementation of restrictions. This complex issue directly shaped my professional

philosophy for the future, where taking others' perspectives seriously and analyzing evidence-based data is paramount for medicine. I particularly analyzed Jonathan Haidt's argument about a “phone-based childhood” and the serious consequences it could lead to if left unchecked ([ARTIFACT 4](#)). This reflection on Haidt’s work highlighted how younger generations may experience alarming and detrimental impairments in social and cognitive functions as they are deprived of essential interactions. As a future medical professional, this insight allows me to approach younger patients with more clinical empathy and understand the symptoms that are rooted in systemic issues, not individual failings.

Engaging with Jonathan Haidt's work taught me that professional conflict is not an obstacle to be avoided, and in any setting, opposing perspectives must be taken seriously to accomplish anything. My response to this disagreement changed from a personal defense of my digital lifestyle to a collaborative problem-solving approach due to the studies presented. In practice, whether I am debating a treatment plan with a colleague or addressing a patient's worries, I have built the necessary skills to listen for the underlying factors and nuances rather than surface-level distractions. By synthesizing the debates among various research studies and their findings, along with Haidt's sociological opinions, I have begun to develop a better model of collaboration and group discussion that prioritizes evidence and mutual respect over being right.

Global Citizenship and Intercultural Competencies

In lecture, my engagement with 20th-century world history served as a crucial steppingstone for understanding cultures and customs vastly different from my own. Specifically, through the analysis of Hany Abu-Assad's film *Paradise Now*, a film that highlighted the "Why?" behind resistance groups ([ARTIFACT 5](#)). Before this coursework, my perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was mostly shaped by vague and detached headlines. This film provided a window into the emotional, social, and political factors that define life in the West Bank and the somber mood of apartheid that shapes the Palestinian experience. This humanitarian crisis, driven by blockades and embargoes, challenged preconceptions I had built by Western propaganda and technological comfort. My spoiled and misinformed ideas were replaced with a deeper understanding of how environmental and unjust conditions lead individuals towards a sense of desperation and hopelessness.

A large portion of my intercultural growth came from analyzing different global elements and cultural dialogues, along with the way they coexist. The film itself highlights a deep ethical dilemma through the perspectives of the characters. When analyzing the tension of martyrdom sought by Said and Khaled, it is a response to the life of subjugation and humiliation that they have faced. This is contrasted by Suhas' feelings about suicide bombings and the endless cycle of violence that provides a counter perspective to the protagonist's anger and sadness. This cultural discourse illustrated that no society is a monolith, and that global dynamics are often influenced by stark contrasts between realities, such as the run-down neighborhoods of Nablus compared to the pretty beaches of Tel Aviv.

In my future professional life, the ability to comprehend and build intercultural knowledge is indispensable for exceptional and compassionate patient care. Medicine requires the ability to look past emotionless eyes and work through any psychological turmoil that is a product of a patient's unique past. *Paradise Now* uses Olive trees as a symbol of resistance and cultural roots. Through this experience and many others, I have learned that a patient's health is fully intertwined with their history, cultural symbols, and religious customs. Cultural humility is non-negotiable in this profession and suspending judgment even when a patient's motives feel unreasonable enables me to better address the range of factors that influence health outcomes.

Above all, this coursework has prepared me to be a more effective global citizen and medical professional by recognizing the importance of collective action when addressing systemic issues. Unwrapping history and recognizing what others have undergone prepares me with the skills to treat distinct patients with dignity and respect for their customs. I feel better prepared to serve populations with empathy and bridge cultural divides in any way possible, providing human-centered care for the rest of my career.

Ethical Reasoning

My enrollment in Bioethics provided me with the tools and framework for navigating fragile and ethical considerations, imperative to the modern medical system and current breakthroughs. Throughout the duration of this course, we engaged extensively with the tensions between rapid technological changes and the established moral boundaries of medical professionals and their patients. One focal

point of our study involved the use of Assisted Reproductive Technology and IVF, technologies that have gone through decades of scrutiny. One specific study involved the 2009 case of Nadya Suleman, the “octomom” ([ARTIFACT 6](#)). This was chosen largely because it serves as a tale of caution for how something as miraculous as IVF can be a source of significant harm. Before this course, my views of ART and IVF were seen through a strictly positive lens, where they could overcome the physical barriers of conception. This preconception of mine was rooted in reproductive liberty and patient autonomy without medical interference.

Analyzing this case required me to evaluate the autonomy of a patient and contrast it with the core medical principle of “non-maleficence”. In this tale, Suleman's request to transfer six embryos, enabled by a lack of professional guidelines, led to a high-risk scenario for her and her children. This case illustrates that medicine should not be just a standard service where the customer is always right. The subsequent loss of the doctor's medical license really underscores the importance of a moral and ethical code that the professional community must readily defend to address any wrongdoings.

Understanding and evaluating various ethical principles is indispensable for preparation in a medical career, particularly as I pursue training at clinical institutions like Sentara RMH. My growth and development in ethical reasoning have shifted my perspective towards a patient's welfare from complete liberty to moral guidance and collective well-being. I want to ensure that I approach every clinical choice with the understanding that some situations, such as the conception of a child, are not a standard commodity. In my future professional career, I am well-equipped

to articulate ethical perspectives and confront various fundamental questions. By prioritizing ethical guidelines and maintaining an open point of view, I am prepared to traverse this complex moral landscape of diverse and modern healthcare, making important assessments that protect the long-term health of my patients and the broader community that surrounds us both.

Works Cited

Supporting Artifact 1: “Religious Traditions 210, Fall 2024, *Interview Reflection*”

Supporting Artifact 2: “Model United Nations, Spring 2025, *General Assembly Final Draft Proposal*”

Supporting Artifact 3: “Children’s Literature 345, Fall 2025, *An Assault on Knowledge*”

Supporting Artifact 4: “Psychology 101, Spring 2025, *Exploring the Impacts of Technology on Child Development*”

Supporting Artifact 5: “World History 115, Fall 2024, *Paradise Now Reflection*”

Supporting Artifact 6: “Bioethics, Spring 2026, *The case of Octomom and ART*”