THE IRISH ROVER

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Classes Expose Students to Sexually Explicit Content

What your PATH course description doesn't tell you

Abigail Smith
Staff Writer

Clare DiFranco
Campus Editor

As students prepare to register for their next semester of classes, they make semester-defining decisions while lacking necessary information. Due to unclear course descriptions, students have been exposed to sexually explicit materials with little or no forewarning.

Notre Dame has increased awareness of sexual misconduct in recent years and provided more resources for prevention, such as mandatory modules on consent and optional consent seminars around campus. One of the four elements of valid consent is knowingness, which means that "[t]he person must understand what they're agreeing to: the basic terms, the nature of the transaction, and any significant risks. Consent based on false or missing information isn't real consent."

Consent is not only for sexual actions but also sexual exposure.

The *Irish Rover* spoke to several students who have been exposed to sexual content in classes without consent. The following student interviewees were granted anonymity out of concern for their privacy.

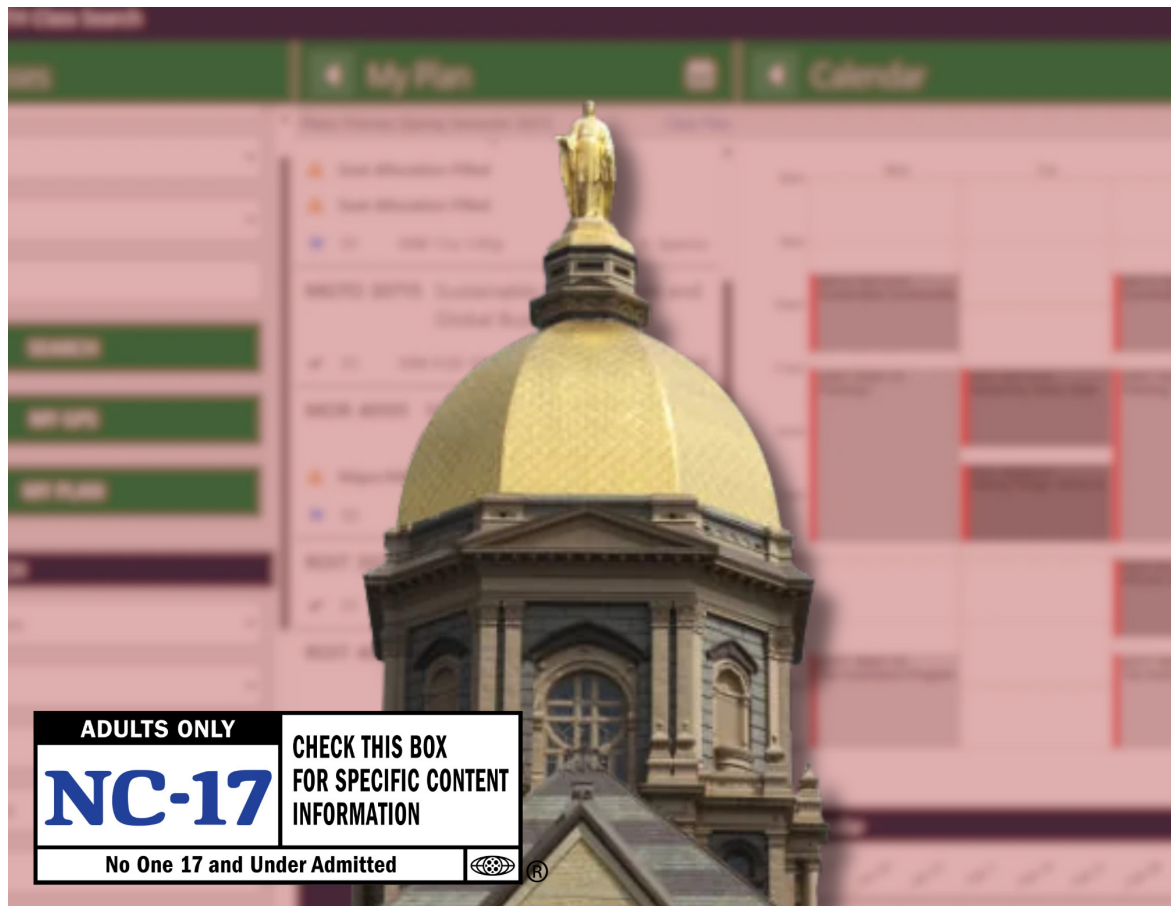


Image by the Irish Rover

One English major came forward about a class where students read a short story about a college woman who sells her used underwear to men with fetishes. It was the only story that made her feel uncomfortable, so she thought it was best to read the story and move on. However, she noted that it felt unnecessary to the course and surprising because the title of the short story collection was vague and gave no warning.

Another anonymous student discussed his experience in a writing class required to complete his English major. Since he found that reading the contents of the novel, *Martyr!*, was at odds with his conscience, he refrained from participating in any class discussions regarding the work. He told the *Rover*, "When prompted to speak about my silence, I told the professor that I, as a Catholic at a Catholic institution, did not want to engage with material as needlessly graphic and vile as what was being presented to us as irrefutably artistic and in promotion of relativistic ideals."

Another anonymous student who took the course added, "*Martyr!* by Kaveh Akbar … had scenes that would make a Catholic uncomfortable—that's not my issue—it's the fixation on abuse without focusing on recovery, the ceaseless insistence on the dark without even looking for a light, the idea that because it focuses on an 'important struggle' that this book must be saying something important."

While the syllabus for this course shared with the *Rover* repeatedly emphasizes creating a "safe space" for conversation and has a section outlining language to be used by students in

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Ron DeSantis Speaks With the *Rover*

Florida governor discusses midterm results, higher education, and presidential ideation

Caleb Vaughan
Editor-in-chief

Come January 5, 2027, Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida is a free man. Throughout two terms, DeSantis won favor in Florida and across the nation for his leadership throughout the COVID pandemic, reform of Florida schools, and fights against 'woke' social policy. Despite a razor-thin victory in 2018, DeSantis won reelection in a landslide in 2022.

The *Rover* sat down with DeSantis to recap his eight-year tenure and discuss his future plans and the results of the 2026 midterms.

Presidential Campaign

DeSantis ran for president in 2024, but bowed out after placing a distant second to Trump in the Iowa caucus. Many speculate that he will run again in 2028. As it stands in 2026, DeSantis, alongside Vance and Rubio, are clear frontrunners for the Republican nomination in 2028.

Contrary to a report by the *Washington Post*, DeSantis told the *Rover* that he does not yet have plans for a 2028 run. "You can't trust these folks," he said, echoing the president's distrust of mainstream media.

DeSantis, however, did not reject the possibility of a 2028 presidential campaign.

Ultimately, Desantis' decision will come down to whether he sees a viable path to election. "We need an improvement in the political climate for Republicans to be competitive in '28," he said. "The reality was if we ran George Washington on Tuesday with an (R) by his name, he would have lost."

Even if Republicans could win the executive branch, DeSantis expressed doubt that a Republican legislature would be possible at any point during the upcoming presidential term. "With how polarized our country is, even if a Republican could win in '28, … say you win a couple senators, you have 54 Dem senators. They're going to have the House. What are the prospects of having an agenda that can actually move the country in a good, solid, conservative direction?"

A majority blue legislature "undercuts our ability to really have a positive agenda going forward," he added. "Anything I would do is to really make an impact and to

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ND's OCIA, Short Course Participation Surpasses Records Again

Sacramental preparation participation has boomed over the past four years

Alexander Salentine
Staff Writer

Notre Dame's sacramental preparation programs are experiencing record growth. According to Brett Perkins, Campus Ministry's Assistant Director for Evangelization & Religious Education, both the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) and Short Course, a preparation program for Confirmation, have experienced unprecedented participation in recent years.

Notre Dame's OCIA program boasts 81 participants this year, surpassing last year's previous record of 76 participants. In addition, 35 people are enrolled in this semester's Short Course, designed for "previously-baptized individuals with substantial experience studying, living, and practicing the Christian faith" who desire to receive Confirmation and enter into full communion with the Church, according to the Campus Ministry website. In 2025–26, the fall Short Course program had 27 participants, while the spring program had 60.

David Rae, a Holy Cross

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THE FINE PRINT

Founded in 2003, the *Irish Rover* is an independent, Catholic newspaper published fortnightly by students of the University of Notre Dame du Lac, and, as such, it receives no funding or official recognition from the University. Indeed, the ideas presented herein are not necessarily those of the University, although they probably should be.

The *Rover* was established by Notre Dame students who desired a strong and organized conservative voice on campus with the primary purpose of keeping the University true to its founding mission as a Roman Catholic institution. The *Rover* seeks to facilitate part of what the University's mission statement desires in its community: "a forum where through free inquiry and open discussion the various lines of Catholic thought may intersect with all the forms of knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity." To provide this forum, the *Rover* offers a distinctive kind of coverage that includes campus news, religion, politics, culture, history, and humor.

Out of civility, the *Rover* will not critically mention names of students, professors, or administrators, unless the person is either a well-known member of the community, or he or she has openly sought publicity. Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the *Rover*'s Editorial Board, while content in individual columns represents the views of each respective author and should not be construed as representing the views of the entire staff. All comments and questions regarding the *Rover*'s policies and editorial content, as well as Letters to the Editor, may be directed to the Editor-in-Chief, Caleb Vaughan, at editor@irishrover.net or PO Box 46 Notre Dame IN 46556. These letters may be printed anonymously, upon request. Also, please visit our website www.irishrover.net, where you can peruse archives and subscribe to the paper.

"And this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge, and in all understanding: That you may approve the better things" (Phillipians 1:9–10)



Image by Wikimedia Commons

The 'Woke' Participation Grade, Part II

CALEB VAUGHAN
Editor-in-chief



As I browsed for free electives to take in my upcoming and final semester, one class stood out to me: "Reproductive Injustice: Race, Gender, and Medicine in the United States 1900-Present." The course description reads, "Grounded in Black feminist scholarship and the histories of reproductive oppression and resistance, the course adopts a comparative approach to understanding how race, gender, class, colonialism, immigration, and state power have shaped the reproductive experiences of Black, Latina, Indigenous, Asian American, and other women of color."

Classes like this not only represent a rejection of Catholic teaching on marxism, human sexuality, and abortion; they are also wildly unpopular among students. Notre Dame should stop compromising its Catholic mission and values to cater to the rare radical leftist student.

A small group of these students started a publication in 2023 called the *Irish Radical*, which has since fizzled out. Such publications lack student interest and support.

In the late 1960s, Fr. Hesburgh capitulated to black student demands to create a University Committee for Afro-American Students, which developed into the Department of Africana Studies. Like the *Irish Radical*, the racial riots of the '60s also faded, but Notre Dame continues to offer the 'woke' courses they brought about.

Despite small classroom sizes, the registrar struggles to fill courses with obvious 'woke' leanings. Enrollment in classes listed under GSC (gender studies), for example, has decreased in each of the last five academic years from 194 seats in 2021–22 to 150 in 2025–26. No more than 12 students have graduated with a gender studies degree in any given year since the figure was first reported in 2013.

Furthermore, just 2.2 percent of seats filled in the history department over the last six years have carried the "gender and sexuality" or "racial history" tags. Yet, despite students' best efforts to avoid 'woke' courses based on their titles, they still must contend with 'woke' ideology espoused by their professors in class. For example, one student told the *Rover* that the tenured professors who teach required seminars in history use these courses as platforms for their ideologies. "It's classic that most tenured professors in the history department have a little more of a liberal lean," he said euphemistically. To placate these same leftist professors, he frequently censors himself in essays—opting to mirror the professor's opinion rather than articulate his analysis.

Similarly, students are inadvertently exposed to sexual content in the literature they are required to read. In this issue, the *Rover* reported on classes that included graphic sexual content, often unanticipated for students, as required reading. Our French department, the most egregious offender, teaches a mandatory course where French students must translate a sexually explicit graphic novel. A key element of the 'woke' mission—evident here—is to normalize and promote sexual ethics that diametrically oppose those of the Catholic Church.

As 'woke' courses struggle to fill seats, enrollment in subjects based in the western and Christian tradition are thriving. Among the many offerings in the history department, classical interests are the most popular: North American history, European history, and the History of Law. Over five percent of students choose to enroll in a theology major or minor after taking the required intro class.

Seniors registered for classes this past Monday morning. Two hundred and thirty—more than 10 percent of the entire senior class—have already registered for Fr. Kevin Grove's "Augustine's Confessions and Spiritual Autobiography" class. The course, a one-credit elective offered in the largest classroom on campus, is already half-full before freshmen, sophomores, and juniors have even had the chance to sign up.

Students at Notre Dame are intellectually curious. They want to take interesting courses outside of their primary fields of study. But they don't want to be ensnared by the ideological infatuations and machinations of leftist professors. Not only are they intellectually curious, the vast majority are also Catholic.

But many will say that it is quite possible to be both 'woke' and Catholic. Why should these two be at odds? 'Wokeness' at Notre Dame often shrouds itself in the language of Catholic Social Teaching, co-opting phrases like 'integral human development,' as well as niceties like 'belonging' to promote radical leftism.

If 'wokeness' is truly about Catholic Social Teaching—an appreciation of human dignity in pursuit of the common good—then to be 'woke' is to be Catholic, proper.

Yet, that is not its aim. The 'woke' cult requires sacrificing the lives of innocent children to abortion, it demands that traditional views of marriage and family be eschewed, and it insists that white people apologize for their own existence. Rather than uplifting human dignity, it degrades it.

So what else might justify offering courses that very few want?

Provost John McGreevy says we need to offer a global perspective because "The average Catholic today is a person of color in the Global South—not someone who looks like me."

The average Catholic today may hail from the Global South, but the average Catholic today can't get into Notre Dame, either. This is not to say that those admitted to Notre Dame are superior to everyone else; it is simply to demonstrate the clear inconsistency between the 'woke' proselytizing and the exclusivity Notre Dame clearly desires.

It is a great irony that Notre Dame extends 'belonging' to everyone, so long as they meet the modest requirements of being top of their class, a multi-season varsity athlete, and having hundreds of volunteer hours under their belts. Ninety–one percent of applicants to this school are rejected because they did not meet the strict criteria of a Notre Dame student. What are we saying to them? That they don't belong?

Yes. We should be less afraid to say the same to other groups. Namely, those who hate the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Notre Dame must stop pandering to the tiny group of students who crave this 'woke' ideology. I can point them to hundreds of other universities that will gladly feed it to them. But I can point them to only one university that has both the intellectual firepower and the zeal for the Catholic Faith to offer a truly great education. It will be a sad day if Notre Dame goes the way of all the others.

Caleb Vaughan is a senior from Orono, MN. He can be reached at cvaugha2@nd.edu.

Where Did Western Civ Go?

History enrollment declines; race and gender studies classes fail to fill seats

CALEB VAUGHAN
Editor-in-chief

What began at Stanford in 1987 as a 500-person protest against white and Eurocentric teaching of history led to a fundamental shift in American history education. Less than a year after the protest, Stanford changed its required freshman course to a more diverse and global survey to avoid the infamous "European-Western and male bias" and "sexist and racist stereotypes."

As survey courses faded in importance, their allegedly problematic omissions became a focal point of history departments across the country. Increasingly, the history of women, race, and ethnicity—and more recently the history of sexuality—has grown to inhabit a far larger share of course offerings in history departments across the country.

At the same time, however, history departments both at Notre Dame and beyond have faced dwindling enrollment.

Conferral of history degrees at Notre Dame peaked in 2005 at 127 students. In 2024, that number had dropped to 45.

History majors are required to take 10 courses, including five elective courses, three of which must fit within a geographical or thematic concentration chosen by the student.

Until Spring 2026, Notre Dame's history website said, "Thematic concentrators will choose from thematic pathways that fit particular strengths within the department, such as Business and Economic History; the History of Religion; Global Empires; the Medieval World." It clarifies that these options are not exhaustive, "Students may also petition the Director of Undergraduate Studies to shape their own concentration."

According to Director of Undergraduate Studies Lisa Lillie, the most popular of these concentrations are North American history, European history, and the History of Law.

In Fall 2026, the website added "Gender and Sexuality" and "History of Race" to its thematic offerings. Each concentration requires three related elective classes. Course offerings that count towards these concentrations include titles like "From homosexual to LGBTQIA+: How we got queer in the USA, 1920—present" and "African American Resistance." Courses with the HTGS (gender studies) and HTRA (race) attributes represent just 382 seats out of 17,056 filled seats in the history department since 2020.

These courses have an average fill rate of 69 percent, in contrast to the 79 percent fill rate across all undergraduate history courses over the same time period. Out of every course with the gender studies or race attributes, only one course has reached full capacity since 2020: "Race and American Popular Culture" in Fall 2021. Lillie noted an "ebb and flow" in the popularity of certain history topics. The early 2020s were a particularly hot time for racial topics.

History Department Chair Darren Dochuk believes that, in past decades, there has been an increase in faculty desire to teach specialized courses. He noted, however, that faculty have indicated an interest in teaching more survey style courses in recent years.

Notre Dame has never had a blanket Western Civ requirement for all freshmen, but the university included a history requirement in the Core Curriculum until 2018, when that requirement expanded to include history or the social sciences. In that same year, the courses Western Civ I/II fell from 129 students in 2017–18 to 55 students in 2018–19. In the semesters since, enrollment in Western Civ has remained a shade of its former numbers.

The core curriculum history credit can be fulfilled with any course carrying the WKHI attribute in PATH, including those not listed in the history department. In Spring 2027, this list of courses includes "Reproductive Injustice: Race, Gender, and Medicine in the United States 1900-Present." The course's description reads, "Grounded in Black feminist scholarship and the histories of reproductive oppression and resistance, the course adopts a comparative approach to understanding how race, gender, class, colonialism, immigration, and state power have shaped the reproductive experiences of Black, Latina, Indigenous, Asian American, and other women of color."

"Western Civilization to 1500" has not been offered since Fall 2025, but a class is open for Spring 2027 registration under a new title, "Traditions and Encounters in Global History to 1500." No longer focusing only on western civilization, the new course will "range widely from ancient Mesopotamia to China, India, the Islamic Middle East, and Western Europe with stops along the way in the Western Hemisphere," according to its description on PATH.

The *Rover* spoke to several people close to the matter.

According to Dochuk, "in the last 10 years … the big survey class has been diminished in importance in undergraduate education."

He continued, "I think functionally a lot of that has to do with how many students were coming in with that credit already." Lillie and Father Wilson Miscamble, C.S.C., Professor Emeritus and former history Department Chair, echoed this sentiment.

Advanced Placement (AP) allows high school students to take more challenging courses in high school that are accepted for credit at most universities. The primary AP history offerings were World History, U.S. History, and European History. Beginning in 2024, AP African American Studies has also been offered nationwide.

With these surveys completed, many students enter college looking to take more specialized courses. Class offerings are also largely decided by faculty interest and specialty. Lillie told the *Rover* that the Undergraduate Studies Committee, which selects course offerings, has to play a balancing act "between what students want and what [faculty] think … will make them well-rounded individuals who will take that degree and help make them more marketable [after graduation]."

Each history major is required to take a History Workshop course, often completed freshman year, which the history department website describes as "an introductory seminar in which new majors learn why and how historians study the past." Regarding this course, one history student told the *Rover*, "I was very much writing what I thought the professor needed to hear." He continued, "And that's true for all basic seminars that history majors have to take." History majors must take three seminar courses, including the introductory history workshop.

Lillie told the *Rover*, "We're alive to national trends, of course, but at the same time, I think Notre Dame is in an industry leading position."

Caleb Vaughan is a chemical engineering major from Orono, MN. If memory serves, he can answer questions about Minnesota history, the topic of his 6th grade social studies class. To inquire, reach cvaugha2@nd.edu.

ND Launches *Magnifica Humanitas* Working Group

Interdisciplinary research group applies CST to AI topics

JOSHUA BARNARD
Staff Writer

An interdisciplinary group of faculty and graduate students recently established the *Magnifica Humanitas* Working Group centered on Pope Leo XIV's newest encyclical of the same name, which provides a Catholic response to the rising influence of AI, digitalization, and robotics.

Published in May of 2026, the Holy Father's encyclical has inspired deep discussion across disciplines about human dignity and ethical technological practices amidst the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and specifically large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT. Once dismissed as "stochastic parrots," LLMs are now replacing jobs, disrupting study, and altering human interaction.

Sponsored by the Initiative for Data, AI, and Computing as well as the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, the group is led by Notre Dame faculty members across multiple disciplines. Law professor Paolo Carozza, engineering professors Megan Levis Scheirer and Walter Scheirer, and theology professor Paul Scherz formed the group to integrate their individual research in Catholic responses to technological upheaval.

Speaking to the group's mission, Levis Scheirer told the *Rover* that they are "working to build a community of practice and research around the encyclical and feel Notre Dame is well positioned to be a field leader in research related to *Magnifica Humanitas*."

Levis Scheirer emphasized the need for Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in addressing the challenges posed by AI and rapid technological change: "Catholic Social Teaching has a long history of responding to previous technological upheavals, such as the Industrial Revolution, and is no less relevant in the digital age."

Levis Scheirer researches technology ethics with the Institute for Social Concerns and the College of Engineering. Her involvement with the working group includes engagement with CST principles and computer science. "We have been translating Subsidiarity and other principles of Catholic Social Teaching into design proposals for software engineers," Levis Scheirer said, citing paragraph 31 of the encyclical which states: "According to this principle, whatever can be carried out by individuals, families, intermediary organizations and local communities should not be carried out by higher-level authorities."

"This means that we might imagine community control over data and algorithms versus the total control exercised by the frontier labs," Levis Scheirer added.

Computer Science Ph.D. student Louisa Conwill, who collaborates with Levis Scheirer to incorporate CST principles in engineering design, told the *Rover*, "The hope with this working group is to bring together people across the university who are thinking about the same questions from different disciplinary perspectives into dialogue so we can collaborate more effectively,"

"The approach that my research takes in operationalizing the principles of Catholic Social Teaching into concrete technology designs can be easily translated into thinking about the design of AI systems," Conwill added.

Beyond computer science, the group also intersects with the law. NDLS Professor Paolo Carozza, an expert in human rights and technology law as well as the co-chair of the Meta Oversight Board, told the *Rover*, "Law exists to serve the dignity of human persons and the communities in which they live and flourish. As AI calls into question what it means to be human, what are our responsibilities to one another, and how we can order our lives together, it necessarily also calls into question the purposes and possibility of law as well."

Carozza continued, saying that "the encyclical helps us to understand the conditions needed to ensure that the institutions and practices of law, and the rule of law, continue to benefit humanity."

The encyclical does not condemn AI as evil, but provides "a comprehensive and integrated set of criteria for discernment that can allow us to develop and direct these technologies in ways that will allow them to serve human dignity rather than degrade us as human beings," according to Carozza.

"I share Pope Leo's assessment that AI is 'a valuable tool that requires vigilance.' I do worry that we are not taking the 'vigilance' part of that judgment seriously enough, and I believe that the need to do so is urgent," Carozza said.

Conwill similarly appreciated the encyclical's prudence in its approach to AI and other similar technologies. "There's a temptation when we see the harms and dangers of technologies like AI to take a Luddite approach and say that the only path forward is to get rid of the technology entirely. That's not what *Magnifica Humanitas* says at all. Pope Leo calls out many societal concerns with AI, but … he's advocating for a world where AI is built in a way that encourages greater participation in its design and development and respects the dignity of every person."

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Holy Cross College Opens New Hall

President, students reflect on Holy Cross Hall

JOSEPH DIFRANCO
Staff Writer



Image by Holy Cross College

Fall of 2026 marks the first semester of Holy Cross College's (HCC) newest residential men's hall. Completed in August, "Holy Cross Hall" has three floors, providing residence for over 100 male students at the growing campus west of Highway 933.

Holy Cross College President Marco Clark spearheaded the development of the new hall with the intent to accompany a growing student body while fostering culture for on-campus students. While the direct funding of the hall was from the college, financial support came through a developer as well as a financial agreement between Holy Cross and Notre Dame Financial Credit Union (NDFCU). In an interview with the *Rover*, Clark remarked, "Sometimes banks treat you like bankers, but at Notre Dame Financial Credit Union, the promise that was made to me is 'I'll treat you like a neighbor.'"

Because the college directly funded the planning and construction of the new hall with the aid of anonymous donors, NDFCU, and a developer, a unique opportunity for Holy Cross to name the hall arose. When asked about finding a name for the building, Clark explained that the college wanted to "name it in such a way that gives tribute to the legacy of our founders, which is why we came up with 'Holy Cross Hall.'"

The name of the hall, however, remains subject to change in the event of future donors who would want to support the hall and leave their name attached, according to Clark. Additionally, he expressed gratitude for the board of trustees, the administration at the University of Notre Dame, and the multiple "wonderful and generous" benefactors who contributed to initiating the project. Their names will be attributed in the study lounges and community spaces.

Holy Cross Hall marks the beginning of a new era of development for the college. Clark explained that the Pfeil Center parking lot will soon be replaced with a quad, accompanying three dorms in total. This development, which is currently in the planning phase, also entails the vision of a new student union. Renovations are also coming soon. Clark remarked, "We are a 60 year old campus now too, so we have some aging infrastructure that we need to address, some renovations and upgrades as well."

The new residence hall also sets a standard that Holy Cross wishes to implement in all dorms. The nearly completed sanctuary on the first floor Holy Cross Hall marks the college's first dorm chapel, "Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel." Clark said, "We have donors who have chosen to remain anonymous for the chapel, and they were really thoughtful about putting a vote back to the students on the naming of the chapel. It was really beautiful to see the students chime in." Blue color schemes are featured on the walls in honor of the Marian name of the chapel, and a relic of Saint Mary Magdalene sits within the altar.

He continued, "The chapel will be consecrated on December 16th by Bishop Rhoades and by Father Bill Lies, the provincial for the U.S. Province of Priests, and of course Father Mike Delaney [HCC Chaplain] as well," said Clark.

HCC freshman Reece Campbell shared his excitement for the new chapel. He told the *Rover*, "They have been doing great work with it." Campbell also reflected on his time thus far in the new residence hall, saying, "I am very much enjoying it. I heard good things about the hall when I came and visited. I saw they were building it and I applied for it because I thought if this is the newest one, they are going to put a lot of effort into it."

Campbell continued, "I love the community there. The rooms are very nice and really spacious." In addition to enjoying the common area on the south side of the hall that overlooks the soccer field, Campbell also noted the main lounge and kitchen area on the third floor, which serves as a gathering space for football game watches, movie nights, and billiards or ping pong competitions.

In previous years, many upperclassmen have left the campus to live in nearby housing or off-campus apartments such as University Edge while the vast majority of on-campus rooms housed freshmen. Holy Cross Hall RA Tyler Hexamer explained that students, including upperclassmen, "like getting the full college experience," which is dependent upon living on campus. The new hall provides room for 100 more students to stay.

Joseph "Joey" DiFranco may or may not be connected to the Detroit mob. Find out, if you dare at jdifranco1@hcc-nd.edu.

Explicit Content

continued from front

conversation, there is no mention of graphic content or forewarning to students regarding the required readings of the class.

The student continued, "I and two other classmates who shared these beliefs received the same email for our midterm grade report penalizing it as a lack of engagement. It was an environment hostile and foreign to differing, Catholic views."

A 2026 alumna told the *Rover* about her college seminar "Adapting Oz," which required her to read *Wicked* by Gregory Maguire. Without any warning from the professor, she had to read explicit sex scenes: "It was uncomfortable and not something I would like to expose myself to, especially in a class I am taking to fulfill a degree requirement to graduate from the University of Notre Dame."

The alumna explained how the class also discussed fanfiction, which are often sexualized perversions of source text. Overall, the course discussions "emphasized sexual identity, which fell out of line with Catholic thought." Like the other students, she was not warned by the PATH course description, and "even then, there was no warning about the content in class. We were still expected to read and discuss." The alumna wished she had researched the required texts on the syllabus before she committed to taking the course.

The philosophy department has also exposed their students to sexual material without prior notice. A senior architecture major told the *Rover* that her introduction to philosophy class required her to watch TV-MA episodes of *Black Mirror*: "Multiple episodes involved very explicit heterosexual and homosexual episodes, which were largely irrelevant to the plot of the episode." This student had no idea of the sexual content before watching the episodes. While she acknowledges how legally she was not exposed to pornography, she was still "extremely uncomfortable viewing this content." She would skip scenes, but there were times when she had to skip full episodes because the content was so prevalent.

The student's response to the introduction to philosophy content demonstrated that she felt her consent was violated: "I was shocked that a Catholic university would allow students to view this type of material for required assignments without any prior warning about the content."

One of the most explicit exposures to sexual content came from the French department. A student told the *Rover* about when they had to translate the graphic novel *Le bleu est une couleur chaude*, or *Blue is the warmest color*. This text was adapted into a film in 2013, containing graphic lesbian sex scenes based on the book, making it one of the 23 NC-17 rated films at the time it was produced in the United States, according to *Variety*. Throughout the graphic novel, there were several images of groping, sex, and full-frontal nudity of both male and female genitalia.

Unfortunately for French students, this class, which dealt with literary devices in poems, novels, graphic comics, films, etc., was and still is required for French majors and minors. "I have also seen and discussed other 18+ content in two other French courses," this student told the *Rover*, "One discussed LGBTQ ideals, prostitution, etc." All of these texts were to show different accounts of people who migrated to France. "I was not aware when registering for any of these classes," the student added.

However, the French student was not surprised by the content: "It's French. The French are much more comfortable discussing their sexuality, and the students in the classes are much more left-leaning. Furthermore, some students are LGBT in these classes, so it is a way to have representation for them at a Catholic school. I was one of the few students uncomfortable reading, hearing, or discussing these topics. But we all mostly laughed."

The student notes that the issue was centered around the lesbian graphic novel: "There's pushing the envelope, and then there's taking it too far." The professor provided a "PG" version, but it still contained at least 10 pages of nudity, with four pages of lesbian sex. Furthermore, the professor was a man, which added another layer of discomfort to the female student. "Even if it was a hetero couple," she added to the *Rover*, "a graphic novel containing sex scenes isn't the best choice for a mandatory French literary devices class."

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ND Students React to Midterm Elections

Campus split on how GOP should move forward

Anthony DuVinage
Staff Writer

Almost all polls, prediction markets, and pundits predicted that the 2026 midterm elections would be a landslide win for Democrats, and they were vindicated when Republicans lost a historic 42 house seats and nearly every election considered a toss-up. Democrats are projected to walk away from the midterm elections with an estimated 80-seat majority in the House and a 12-seat majority in the Senate, while Republicans have also lost major gubernatorial races in states that had previously been reliably red, including Texas, Ohio, Iowa, Alaska, and Kansas.

Exit polls have shown that issues like the Iran war, corruption, and the economy made the current Republican administration deeply unpopular. President Trump's approval ratings have declined steadily since his election, and around 42 percent of voters said that they voted explicitly to "rebuke him" according to an AP poll. Experts suspect that such attitudes toward Trump led to many historically popular Republican incumbents—such as Susan Collins of Maine and Greg Abbott of Texas—losing their reelection bids.



Image by Ted Eytan / Flickr

Both establishment Democrats and progressive outsiders won their respective elections, but moderates in the party have pointed to their successes in red states as a sign that the progressive left is still "unelectable" at a national scale, even in the midst of a blue wave. Relative underperformances from candidates like Senator-elect Abdul El-Sayed, combined with unexpected overperformances from moderate candidates like Senator-elect Scott Colom in Mississippi, have resolved concerns for moderates that their influence was declining among the Left.

A unified Democratic Congress with a significant majority means that Trump will finish his second term as a "lame-duck" president, expected to be unable to accomplish much of his agenda without improbable bipartisan support. In the meantime, the Republican party will likely spend the next election cycles searching for the successor to the MAGA movement.

Students at Notre Dame have offered competing explanations for what has come to be characterized as the "blue tsunami" of the midterm elections.

Sam Marchand, Vice President of the Notre Dame College Republicans, told the *Rover* that, "Republicans failed in the midterms because of the war, full stop. … Ideally, the Republican Party and the administration is able to focus on lowering costs and making it clear to Americans that Democratic socialism is not a viable alternative to anything. … The cumulative inflation generated by both tariffs and the war since January 2025 is less than the country suffered under Biden, but the pocketbooks of voters have a short-term memory."

Several conservative students who are less positive about the MAGA movement expressed their hope that these results would bring the party to a reckoning. After ten years steering the Republican Party, there are many conservatives who feel that their dislike for Trump has been vindicated with this loss.

Peter Baglow, a freshman, told the *Rover*, "I think the midterms are an indication of American dissatisfaction with the current establishment whether that be economical, cultural, or ethical. … I also think this is a great moment of recognition of how any unexpected swing in voter-ship is actually an optimistic sign of depolarization across party lines. Further depolarization is what I hope for."

Another said, "Honestly, I don't know what to make of it. I don't love that Democrats won, but I am glad that this Republican party is facing a reckoning."

A freshman, who supported Democrat candidates, said, "I would consider myself more conservative if the Republican party found a way to be less controversial and more considerate of normal American citizens." He added, "If there was a way to bring the Republican party back to the era of McCain, I'd consider voting for them for sure. As it is, the Democrats just need to win; Trump is just totally crazy, honestly."

The College Democrats of Notre Dame gave a statement to the *Rover*, saying "The midterm results exemplified a resounding rejection of Donald Trump and the Republicans' agenda … the American people decided enough was enough. Democrats now fully control both houses of Congress and will put the brakes on a runaway train that has been the Trump Administration. It will be up to the current administration to listen to voters' demands and actually begin to work for the people."

Notre Dame students are split on the results of the midterms, as one would expect, but most seem to echo the sentiment that the Republican party needs change.

Anthony DuVinage is a first-year majoring in PLS and Political Science. He can usually be found mulling over his intense dislike of AI (please don't kill me). If you'd like to discuss something besides politics, he can be reached at aduvinag@nd.edu.

Panelists Debate the Future of Conservatism After Trump

Conservative panelists blame GOP midterm loss on Iran War, tariffs

Luke Severson
Staff Writer

Three days after the November 3 midterm elections, the Center for Citizenship and Constitutional Government (CCCG) hosted a panel on "The Future of Conservatism After Trump."

Panelists included Kimberly Strassel, Ryan T. Anderson, and Michael Anton. Strassel, a member of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board, writes the weekly Potomac Watch column. She is also a Fox News contributor and the author of *The Biden Malaise*.

Anderson, who earned his Ph.D. in political philosophy at Notre Dame, is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a think tank in Washington, D.C. Trump appointed him to the Religious Liberty Commission in 2025. He is a co-author of *What is Marriage? A Defense: Man and Woman*, alongside Notre Dame law professor Sherif Girgis.

Anton is a senior fellow at the Claremont Institute and a lecturer at Hillsdale College. He served as the State Department's Director of the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff in Trump's second term, from January 2025 to September 2025. He is best known for "The Flight 93 Election," his 2016 essay comparing that year's election to the hijacked flight whose passengers stormed the cockpit, which rallied conservatives behind Trump.

Vincent Philip Muñoz, CCCG director and panel moderator, began by asking, "Why did the Republicans lose so badly on Tuesday?"

Strassel responded saying, "There is nothing that is more politically damaging to a member of any office than high prices and inflation, and there is no question that Trump's tariffs on key goods, ones that are essential for the economy, contributed to this."

Anton blamed the GOP losses on the Iran war. He said "Trump had won in 2024 by saying, 'I didn't start any new wars,' a message that appealed to younger voters of both parties who are as anti-war, if not more anti-war, than young people were during Vietnam."

Muñoz then asked whether the results were "a vote against Trump as opposed to a vote for Democrats." In response, Strassel called the outcome "a repudiation of the Republican Party and not an approbation of Democrats," noting that Iowa and North Carolina voters approved tax limits on the same ballots that elected Democrats. Anderson also highlighted that conservative policies were succeeding where conservative candidates failed, stating,"Even in deep blue states, people were rejecting trans ideology."

Asked what the Right should "retain from Trump and Trumpism and what should be jettisoned," Anderson replied, "Trump was willing to fight on certain cultural issues in a way that no Republican president during my lifetime has." Strassel agreed: "He was tough, and I think that is the most important thing that the Republican Party can take from Donald Trump."

Anton argued for returning to the agenda Trump first ran on. "Some form of basic foreign policy restraint needs to be retained," he said, predicting that the party's foreign policy "is inevitably going to be closer to what Trump was talking about in 2015."

On what to jettison, Anderson said, "I think he learned the wrong lesson from *Dobbs* and he has been afraid of doing anything remotely pro-life after *Dobbs* was decided." He added that "historically the conservative movement was against vice," pointing to marijuana and betting markets, which he said are "particularly bad for" working-class men.

When Muñoz asked whether Trump was "punished for the ICE raids," Anderson said, "The way in which some of the raids were executed almost seemed like they were intentionally being maximally terrorizing so that people would then self-deport. I think that backfired."

When asked about how to address the rising popularity of the Left, Anton described the Democratic Party as "two parties welded together." There is both a "credentialed, highly paid class" and "a kind of lumpen Left where all the energy is." Of the activists, he said, "We can't get rid of them, we have to pacify them, but we also can't hand the keys over to them because they'll drive the car off a cliff." Strassel said, "The greatest tragedy of this loss is not just that Republicans lost, but they lost in the year when Democratic socialists made their big move on the party," pointing to Abdul El-Sayed's win in Michigan.

Anderson also explained why so many religious voters first backed Trump. "The reason that 10 years ago so many people voted for Trump the first time was that in November of 2016, it looked like institutions like Notre Dame could be losing their non-profit tax status if they continued operating according to orthodox Catholic beliefs," he said. He cited bakers, florists, photographers, Catholic adoption agencies and "orders of Catholic nuns that had to pay for contraception." "I think a bunch of evangelicals and Catholics said, 'This is crazy. I'm not voting for her, I'm voting for him.'"

Asked for advice to Democrats, Anton said, "You need to restrain your crazies." Strassel's advice to Republicans was simpler: "Good policy is good politics."

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Blue Wave Sweeps Indiana While ND Graduates Hold On

Pro-life ballot measures lose, anti-transgender ballot measures win

Tristan Buttimer
Staff Writer

The 2026 midterm elections are over, and though not every race has been called, the results show a blue wave of historic magnitude. The popular vote shifted a drastic 15 points left from 2024, leading to massive upsets in Senate races in Mississippi, South Carolina, as well as gubernatorial races in Texas, Kansas, and Ohio.

Down-ballot races were similarly consequential, with Democrats flipping more than 40 seats in non-statewide elections and establishing unified Democratic control of government in seven additional states. Although Indiana Republicans managed to keep control of both state legislatures, the 2026 blue wave did not spare the deeply red state.

The race for Secretary of State in Indiana was won by Democratic candidate Beau Bayh, making him the first Democrat to win a statewide election since former Senator Joe Donnelly in 2012. While third party candidates Greg Ballard and Laura Shillings may have pulled votes from Republican nominee Max Engling, Bayh ultimately finished with the majority of the vote and a healthy nine-point margin.

In Indiana's State House, 16 seats flipped from red to blue in the largest gain by a single party in Indiana in 50 years, leaving Republicans with only a slight majority, retaining 54 of the 100 seats. In addition to the national environment favoring Democrats, the state party managed to recruit candidates in 97 districts, as compared to 74 in 2024, expanding their influence in Indiana's rural regions.

In St. Joseph County, the blue wave had the same effects as it did nationwide. In the State House District 8, the district that covers Notre Dame, Rep Ryan Dvorak (D-8) won by 30 points against Republican Eric Harris, his widest margin of victory yet.

In the county council, Democrats swept all four seats up for election, giving Democrats a 6-3 majority in the council. Democrats also won five other positions in the state, including County Sheriff, County Assessor, County Auditor, County Clerk, and County Commissioner District 1. In County Council District C, Professor Jamie O'Brien of the Mendoza School for Business lost his bid to regain his old seat to former St. Mary's College President Jan Cervelli.

Apart from Indiana's politics, not one incumbent who graduated from Notre Dame lost their seat. The most competitive race a Notre Dame alumnus faced was in Colorado's third district, where Rep. Jeff Hurd (R-CO) won by a slim two point margin, making him the lone Republican in Colorado's congressional delegation.

The most surprising margin of victory for Notre Dame graduates was in Nebraska's second District, where Rep. Mike Flood (R-NE) narrowly defeated his challenger by four points, a large shift from his twenty-point victory in 2024. In Pennsylvania, both Notre Dame graduates won, with Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) winning his deep-blue district and Rep. Mike Kelley (R-PA) surviving the blue wave that swept four incumbent House Republicans in the state. Rep. Rudy Yakym (R-IN), defeated fellow Notre Dame alumna Jamee Decio in the first Notre Dame graduate matchup in another surprisingly close race.

Beyond congressional election results, controversial ballot measures and referendums also attracted significant media attention. In particular, four states considered abortion-related measures, prompting local Catholic bishops in each state to issue public endorsements of the pro-life position.

Idaho was the only state to vote in favor of the pro-life side, voting down a right to abortion that would have overturned the current abortion ban. In Nevada, which is typically a swing state, voters amended the state constitution to protect a right to abortion until fetal viability. In Virginia, a similar right to abortion was passed, shockingly by an even larger margin than a measure to repeal the ineffective same-sex marriage ban, which the Diocese of Arlington also publicly opposed.

In Missouri, a broad ballot measure was lost that would have repealed a previously passed right to abortion in the state as well as gender transition surgeries for minors. Exit polls showed that protecting the right to abortion may have had downballot effects, leading to the surprising loss of the Republican Rep. Ann Wagner in Missouri's 2nd District.

In addition to Missouri, several other states considered measures concerning transgender rights, producing electoral outcomes that differed considerably from those of the abortion referendums. In the deeply blue states of Colorado and Washington, voters approved proposals to assign people to school sports based on their biological sex and Colorado surprisingly passed a ban on transgender surgeries for minors. Catholic bishops in Colorado and Washington actively supported the initiatives by speaking out in support of biological sex.

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Letter to the Editor: American Conservatism is Falling Apart

Conservatives must abandon liberal rationalism for traditionalism

Raymond Webber
Politics Editor

The 2024 domination of Donald Trump's Republican party appeared to signal not only the vindication of the conservative movement in the United States, but also the culmination of a broader conservative resurgence against the neoliberal political order that has dominated the West for decades. Just two years later, however, the results of the 2026 midterms indicate that, once again, people are fleeing the American conservative movement.

One need not look at exit polls or approval ratings to know that Trumpist populism is dying. Democratic socialism seems to be replacing the anti-elite philosophy of the "Make America Great Again" movement and the GOP's appeal to fiscal conservatism has proven illegitimate. Not even a decade after Trump's triumph over the neoconservatism of the Republican Party's old guard, the American conservative project appears to have failed again.

Political scientists were quick to blame the Iran War or tariffs, but I contend the cause is something innate within American conservatism itself.

American conservatism continues to fail because it does not understand what genuine conservatism necessitates. Rather than appealing to the goods of preserving inherited traditions and cultivating the mutual loyalties that bind a nation to something substantive, American conservatives have instead advanced a rationalistic alternative—one that amounts to an older iteration of the very liberalism they seek to displace.

American conservatism in its present form is dismissive of the drastic transformations our republic has undergone. It clings to the institutional architecture of American constitutionalism rather than preserving the very political community those institutions were originally designed to protect. As corporations centralize economic power and financial demagogues threaten the liberties of American citizens, the solution of conservatives has been to simply defend the "invisible hand" and side with private enterprise.

In this sense, American conservatism is hardly conservative at all; it is a confused and incoherent collection of competing interpretations of the American founding, united by a relentless faith in its infallibility. For this reason, the movement has not only failed to address the pressing concerns of American citizens, but it has failed to reconcile its inevitable, internal contradictions.

Although it may not have been the explicit reason for many Americans' support of Trump, the president's opposition to the Republican establishment appeared to offer the corrective that American conservatism needed: a turn towards traditionalism and away from the rationalistic liberalism of the GOP establishment.

But Trumpism failed for the same reason its conservative predecessors failed: "Make America Great Again" proved not to be a traditional axiom, but a blanket nostalgia for American wealth and prosperity.

Rather than confronting the sclerotic bureaucracy of neoliberalism or the revolutionary impulses of the progressive left, Trump directed his criticism toward an ill-defined "elite class," simply opposing everything with which this class is associated. Like his ideological predecessor Pat Buchanan, Trump recognized the growing dysfunction of American democracy and understood that an increasingly disillusioned public was beginning to hold the "elites" responsible for its decay.

But both Buchanan and Trump ultimately failed to identify the deeper causes of America's political dysfunction. Trump did not attempt to address the philosophical failures of our founding in addressing modernity. He instead framed America's dysfunction and declining economy as the responsibility of tyrannical elites. His solution was to rid America of its deep state—a task that has proved harder than initially imagined.

Trump has neither reformed our broken political system nor fulfilled his promise to "drain the swamp." Instead, he has become an embodiment of the very elite establishment against which he so vehemently campaigned because he refused to act outside the system and provide alternative leadership.

My explanation may seem shocking, but the reason for this failure is because Trumpism bears an important resemblance to Marx's politics. Like the Marxist revolutionary, Trump presented American society as divided between a ruling class and an exploited people, declaring himself as the delegate through whom the latter might reclaim its political sovereignty.

Yet, like many Marxist movements before it, Trumpism failed to translate this antagonism into a coherent political alternative. It identified an enemy without adequately identifying the institutional and economic arrangements that sustained its power—all while he continued to rely on broad democratic approval, special interest lobbying, and fusionism to accomplish his agenda.

Trump maintained the Lockeanism of our founding as his guiding principle, and simply sought to restore the system by returning power to the proletariat. Once again, like his conservative predecessors, he placed responsibility on the system itself and not its leaders or tradition. The nation, according to Trumpism, remains a reduced and convenient vessel for popular sentiment and individual rights, and is only an instrumental good to prosperity or power.

If there is one thing that Trump got right, it was this: elites should be held responsible for the nation's problems.

Unlike Trump, however, I believe that America needs its elites to recover their power. American disorder is not the result of having elites; it is the result of replacing them with a dehumanized system. We need philosophical, ambitious, excellent leaders who are willing to replace the managerial bureaucrats and take back the tradition of the nation. We will restore our republic and make America great again through our elites, through leaders who will be the recipients of honor, trust, and hierarchy. Instead of elevating its weakest, American conservatives need to restore the strong.

If America is to survive, she must reconceive her government to promote leaders who do not place their will in the hands of an impersonal system, but assert it through an active pursuit of the just. We must detach from our egalitarian sensibilities and humble ourselves to place America's future in the hands of its most virtuous citizens. Ultimately, politics is not merely the exercise of designing a rationalistic system to produce the best foreseeable outcomes; it is the active interpretation of how society ought to pursue its proper ends—a task that requires the judgment and wisdom of capable rulers.

Raymond Webber is a junior from Cleveland, Ohio and politics editor for the *Irish Rover*. He thinks he is the elite that America needs. Email him for proof at rwebber@nd.edu.

DeSantis Interview
continued from front

leave a lasting positive mark. The reality is you can't do that just with executive orders."

Part of DeSantis' success in passing legislation in Florida is due to Republican control of both houses of the state legislature throughout his tenure. Since the 2022 elections, Republicans have held a two-thirds super majority in both chambers.

The Midterms

So why did Republicans lose so much ground in the recent midterms? Many point to a shift in younger voters. This includes the Gen Z vote, which DeSantis is optimistic towards. He told the *Rover*, "I think it's recoverable."

"I don't think it was that the young people shifted blue. I think it was like the young people that voted blue two years ago came out, and the ones that voted red didn't vote. I mean, I think it was more just the lack of turnout. But you know, that's a problem too because you got to inspire people."

"I don't think those people who voted for Trump who then didn't turn out this time are all of a sudden flaming liberals," DeSantis added.

The focus of political ads is also a strong indicator of voter sentiment. "Democrats were running—yes, on cost of living prices—but very heavily on the corruption in Washington and the self-dealing." He continued, "If you talked to the voters and looked at the data, [corruption] was a big issue for a lot of voters."

Voters watched as politicians' wallets got thicker while prices on gas, groceries, and other goods rose across the country due to tariffs and the Iran War.



Image by Ron DeSantis

When DeSantis first ran for the U.S. House of Representatives, an endorsement from Trump helped him win the Republican primary with little political clout. The *Rover* asked whether Trump's endorsement will carry the same weight following the Democrats' midterm blowout. To what extent will Trump have a say over the next Republican nominee?

In response, DeSantis indicated that he does not view the midterm results as a total rebuke of Trump. "If we had an Iowa caucus next month, [the Republican base] would re-nominate Trump. If we had a South Carolina primary, Republican primary voters would re-nominate Donald Trump."

"[Trump's] endorsement would be a major thing. Anything that tells you it won't be influential [is wrong]."

Catholic Faith

In response to the question, "What does [your Catholic faith] mean to you? How does it change your daily life?," DeSantis described his faith as a "cornerstone" and "foundation."

"It keeps you focused to true north, and I think it's allowed me to be a much stronger leader," he said. DeSantis did not elaborate on his personal practice of the faith, however.

Higher Education

The *Rover* asked DeSantis about American higher education and its significant lean to the Left.

"If you're an outspoken conservative, especially in [liberal arts fields], I think the chance of getting tenure at a lot of these universities is low. If you bottle up those beliefs, your chances go up. If you fake Left wing beliefs, your chances go up even more," he said.

"But why would we want to be in a situation where that would be the case?", DeSantis questioned.

"You look at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, all these. It's like 99 to one in terms of faculty donations, Democrat to Republican. And I think Yale even one time was 100 to nothing. They didn't have a single faculty member donate to a Republican." Recent reports coming out of these three Ivy's confirm that faculty donate almost exclusively to Democratic candidates and causes.

At Notre Dame, the political ratio is nearly as pronounced. A recent *Observer* report showed that 93.8 percent of faculty political donations have gone to Democratic candidates and causes. However, *City Journal* noted that the 6.1 percent of donations that go to Republican candidates and causes represents one of the 20 highest shares in their rankings of 115 schools.

In 2016, DeSantis passed a law banning public universities from spending state or federal funds on DEI programs or offices, and certain DEI-related general education courses. It also reassigned faculty hiring authority to university presidents, and by extension, the Boards of Trustees. This law was intended to disentangle hiring decisions from the opinions of the current faculty who would theoretically support continued left-wing entrenchment, DeSantis said.

"Say you have a great guy at Notre Dame who we want—we can go offer them, bring them to the Board of Trustees, and our board can grant them tenure without having to go through the existing faculty," DeSantis explained. "This way, people that are more conservative aren't going to be blackballed."

"We also have post tenure review, so all tenure professors now have to go under review, and they can be terminated for poor performance," he added. "And so, making sure that the faculty is really focused on pursuing truth and robust debate and facts and not ideology has been huge for us."

The threat of withholding accreditation, DeSantis said, is also a major check against DEI. "Some accreditors say you have to have DEI, otherwise you don't get accredited." In that case, a college's hands are bound, DeSantis argued. This creates "an alternative accreditor." DeSantis is working with the Trump administration to create an alternative national accreditation system that does not reward DEI practices. "You won't get accredited if you have DEI," he told the *Rover*.

While DeSantis was on campus, he had lunch with the undergraduate Tocqueville Fellows and engaged in a fireside chat with professor Vincent Philip Munoz in front of an audience at the Center for Citizenship and Constitutional Government. He also stayed to watch the Fighting Irish take down the Miami Hurricanes. He told the *Rover* that his son, Mason, was repping the Irish.

Caleb Vaughan is a senior from Orono, MN. If you think he should run for president, either now or when he becomes age-eligible in 2040, send him a note at cvaugha2@nd.edu.

Trump Administration Reacts to Midterm Losses

Republican leaders search for answers

Anthony Fedoruk
Staff Writer

The 2026 Midterm Elections resulted in a sweeping victory for the Democratic Party, with Democrats projected to hold a significant majority in both the House and Senate beginning in 2027. A "blue wave" has seen resounding Democratic victories across the country, as Democrats won by significant margins even in states and districts that have strongly supported Republicans in recent election cycles, including Texas, Ohio, Alaska, Kansas, Iowa, and Mississippi.

In response to the historic losses suffered, members of the Trump administration and Republican leaders were vocal in expressing where blame should fall. Many have drawn attention to the U.S. conflict in Iran and its impact on the economy as driving factors in alienating the working class from the GOP.

Vice President J.D. Vance posted a detailed response to the midterm results on X emphasizing the impact of the Iran War. He said bluntly, "The reason we lost is the war." He added, "To the people who are just pissed at the results, you should be." Senator Ted Cruz echoed Vance's sentiments, saying, "Tariffs have made everything too expensive and the Iran war has dragged on too long." Cruz continued, "It should have been brief, decisive and over. It needs to end."

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis was among the most vocal Republican leaders during the midterm cycle, and he joined other party leaders in emphasizing the impact of the Iran war. DeSantis said, "We just got to be honest. Gas is higher. It hurts people, working-class people, and it's higher because of this conflict. That's just a fact."

With Republicans vocally opposing Trump's actions in Iran, the Trump administration—in response to the midterms—has experienced some inner turmoil with several high-profile resignations. The resignation of Chief of Staff Susie Wiles headlined a list of departures from the administration that included White House Deputy Chief of Staff Richard Walters, Assistant Attorney General Brett Shumate, and Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Harmeet Dhillon.

President Trump announced that Chief of Staff Susie Wiles would be replaced by Stephen Miller, a longtime Trump ally and an architect of the administration's immigration policy. Trump commented on Miller's appointment, saying, "I wanted to make a change. I think Susie's done a very good job, great job, but I just wanted to make it. Stephen's been great. And we have got to make moves."

With Democrats set to have control over the legislature for the rest of Trump's term, Miller's appointment is seen by many as the elevation of a trusted advisor who can help advance the administration's agenda in key areas without congressional approval. These areas of focus include policy on immigration, tariffs, federal spending, and housing costs.

In an interview with Ross Douthat on "60 Minutes," President Trump expressed his thoughts on the midterm results and provided more details regarding the administration's next steps.

When asked for his political analysis of the results, Trump said, "Well, number one, I was not on the ballot … I think if I was on the ballot, it would've been a much different situation because you saw the level of popularity and love [voters had for me]." He also acknowledged the grievances of voters, saying, "There seems to be a dislike for Israel. So you have that. You have the war itself. You have the gas prices. And I think those are the primary reasons."

Trump also reflected on the impact of his administration's immigration policy, and how it might change going forward. He said, "I think it might be too tough, yeah. And a lot of people would say that it's great. But a lot of people think it's too tough."

Notre Dame students commented on the results of the midterm elections and what they believe the next steps for the Republican Party should be.

In an interview with the *Rover*, a Notre Dame graduate student attributed the results of the midterms to a "crisis of confidence in the Republican Party because of the failure of the administration and Congress to deliver on their campaign promises of no new wars and mass deportations." He added, "The older generation appears to be losing their grip, while younger generations are beginning to feel their electoral power."

Ethan Simmons, a sophomore from Knott Hall, told the *Rover*, "I do not wish that our Congress and electorate migrate leftward, but the failures of our present administration to fulfill its promises of mass deportations, exposure of corruption, and abstention from international conflict do necessitate a transformation of the Republican Party that can only happen as a consequence of these elections."

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University Hosts Theology Course for Football Visitors

Fr. Kevin's Crash Course gives insight into theology at Notre Dame

Luke Fisher
Staff Writer

Amidst the enthusiastic preparations for Notre Dame Football's historic game against Miami, the College of Arts & Letters held a Crash Course sample lecture in Foundations of Theology. Taught by Father Kevin Grove, C.S.C., Associate Professor of Theology and Director of the Master of Divinity Program, the Crash Course allowed campus visitors to experience an introductory Notre Dame theology class.

The College of Arts & Letters' Crash Course series is composed of hour-long lectures hosted each Friday preceding a home football game. Each lecture offers a glimpse into some of the most popular and engaging Arts & Letters classes on campus.

"We'll do a bit of theology today, and I'll give you a few central insights of this course," Fr. Grove began. "The fundamental purpose of this course is not simply to teach a whole bunch of students facts about theology … but rather to think about what it really means to live an integrated life if we believe that theology and philosophy are these wisdom-forward disciples that incorporate all that we do at Notre Dame."

Fr. Grove continued, "At Notre Dame … we believe that theology is faith seeking understanding, so part of what I try to help students see in the introductory week of lectures is [...] that beliefs are not



Image by Creative Commons

vacuum-packed certainties … but the adventure of belief is a dynamic one."

Using the example of "The Calling of Saint Matthew," a painting by Caravaggio, Fr. Grove demonstrated how he derives his class's core theme: to be human is to be related in love. "Christ's call to Matthew, the tax collector, who's in the midst of his sin, is a sort of new creation. If what it means to define a human is a relation, then Matthew is going to be completely reconstituted in those relationships by Christ."

After explaining the painting's significance, Fr. Grove continued, "If a human is to be related in love, then the question becomes, 'What is it to which we relate?' And as it turns out, the scriptural tradition is pretty thoughtful about the things which we start to love."

Fr. Grove described how Genesis 3:6 encapsulates three fundamental human loves: the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. The fruit in the Garden of Eden tempted Adam and Eve by appealing to these desires, but Christ overcame these temptations in the desert. The Church gives us the practices of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer to help us to govern these loves, Fr. Grove explained.

The lecture, held on a Friday afternoon in DeBartolo Hall, attracted approximately 90 attendees. "Multiple things brought me to the Crash Course today," said John Savage, a freshman studying political science. "One of my friends in his class texted me about it and I saw signs about it in DeBart. I've also had one or two really meaningful conversations with Fr. Kevin … and at the end of the second one he told me about [this] and said that I should go."

"I came because of my daughter," said Mary Mahoney Christensen, '75. "She majored in theology and teaches religion at a middle school, so it was interesting to see how the first-year religion classes are here on campus. Compared to what they were 50 years ago, [they] are quite a bit different. I didn't have the experience of a big lecture hall with so many common first-year students. It was much more of an individual course situation; we never had any large theology courses. There's quite a big difference. It seems to be much more of an overwhelming element to the university's identity than it was 57 years ago."

"I end every class that I teach with the following prayer," Fr. Grove concluded, referencing the Hail Holy Queen. "I want you to notice how this prayer describes our lives; that it's not exactly always perfect down here, weeping in this vale of tears. And so we might find ourselves to be castaways in need of life, sweetness, and hope that we don't produce but that we receive, that would draw us ever closer to God and together, and that might be thought about with the greatest of rigor in courses like Foundations of Theology."

Luke Fisher is a sophomore from Motown (Detroit) Michigan studying theology and the Program of Liberal Studies, and is questioning his sleep schedule after just adding a constitutional studies minor. If he isn't ruminating about unshackling society from the Industrial Revolution or getting angry at the Playoff Committee, you can find him cooking up custom pasta dishes in North Dining Hall. To suggest recipes or chat, reach out at lfisher8@nd.edu.

OCIA

continued from front

Postulant at Moreau Seminary and Scholasticate and an OCIA team member, told the *Rover* that the program's growth is primarily due to word-of-mouth testimony. "The people who went through OCIA before … testify to the ways in which it changed their lives, and they're telling their friends about it in their classes, in their dorms, in their friend groups."

OCIA team member Jack Keller told the *Rover* that participants join the program to address a sense of longing in their lives. Keller explained, "We all have this God-shaped hole in our heart."

Anna Kim, a former OCIA participant, noted the program's warm community. She wrote to the *Rover*, "It was really comforting to go through the process alongside so many others, and I met some really wonderful people."

First-year law student Michael Urban is serving in his seventh semester on the Short Course Team. He wrote to the *Rover*, "I had the privilege to sponsor a friend during the year-long OCIA process my freshman year. After going on that beautiful journey with him, the opportunity arose for me to join the Short Course team, and I've been involved as a team member ever since!"

Describing his involvement with Short Course as one of the most fulfilling parts of his Notre Dame experience, Urban continued, "I love walking with people who are seeking a deeper relationship with God through the richness of the Catholic tradition. I get the chance to have meaningful conversations about the life of faith and deep discussions about Church teaching."

OCIA and Short Course both take place on Sundays. Each program is a weekly four-hour commitment for all participants and sponsors, which includes attendance at the 10 a.m. Mass for OCIA and 12 p.m. Mass for Short Course. Following a meal led by catechist team members, participants and sponsors hear an hour-long catechesis followed by 15 minutes of prayer. They have the remaining time for small group discussion. Day-long retreats occur throughout the year as well.

Students praise the programs for their quality. "You can really see how much love is poured into it," Kim commented. She added, "I was already planning on becoming Catholic before coming here, but ND OCIA definitely made me feel confident in my decision."

Interviewees also noted that OCIA does an outstanding job explaining complex theological material and helping participants pray and learn about the Christian life. Keller said that the program succeeds because it "makes a space for students to ask questions as they go through the process," which increases their understanding.

Rae explained that this questioning happens in small groups, which give participants a tight-knit space to ask questions, reflect, form community, and receive answers. Rae also highlighted the OCIA program's community, which embraces people of all backgrounds. This community is intentional, as candidates choose or are paired with sponsors based on similar interests and life experiences. Sponsors are expected to attend all events.

While OCIA and Short Course look similar in many regards, Urban explained a key difference between them. "Students … [in Short Course] tend to have a more comprehensive catechetical background, and often join with a more precise understanding of what it means to be a Christian (since everyone in Short Course is already a baptized Catholic or Christian). This means that we tend to get to the 'juicer,' more high-level questions of Catholic doctrine at a much faster pace than may be the case in OCIA."

Perkins emphasized the programs' personalized approach to each applicant, noting that sacramental preparation is mainly about discernment: "We encounter them where they're at and give them space to ask the question: Can I say yes to this?" He also emphasized that deciding not to proceed is not a failure; it might simply not be the right time, because "we have to leave open room for the movement of the Holy Spirit … in the discernment process."

Growing to accommodate so many participants has put strain on the Campus Ministry team, as they have had to reorganize and expand substantially to meet students' needs. Perkins noted that, above all, the program needs students who can serve as sponsors and accompany participants on their journey towards communion with God and His Church.

Perkins emphasized that mentors in the Christian life are essential to the success of the participants and the programs. Thus, Perkins asked students to consider becoming a sponsor for Short Course this spring or OCIA next year. Please contact brett.perkins@nd.edu if interested.

Urban offered a similar message. "If anyone reading this feels drawn to enter fully into the Catholic Church (whether as a non-Baptized catechumen or a candidate for Confirmation), to accompany someone as a sponsor, or join the team as a catechist and small group leader, please don't hesitate to reach out to Campus Ministry! I can assure you, it will be the most fulfilling and life-changing experience of your college journey, or maybe even your life. It surely has been for me!"

Alex Salentine is a member of the class of 2030 studying political science and philosophy. He enjoys playing water polo, talking about life's deepest questions, and singing in the Glee Club. You can reach him at asalent2@nd.edu.

Global Vatican II Group Hosted by Maritain Center

Cavadini, Levering lead hundreds of theologians from six continents

Gabe Hockstra
Managing Editor

The Global Working Group (GWG) on Vatican II officially began its work at a launch panel hosted by Notre Dame's Jacques Maritain Center on November 12, 2026. Made up of over 200 archbishops and bishops, priests, and lay scholars from six continents, the GWG is led by Notre Dame Professor of Theology John Cavadini and Mundelein Seminary Chair of Theology Matthew Levering.

"The group we're launching today may possibly be the largest Catholic theological working group in the world," announced Therese Cory, Director of the Jacques Maritain Center, in her opening remarks at the launch panel.

The mission of the GWG is to "discern and further" the theology of Vatican II to support the "ongoing renewal" of evangelization and proclamation in the Church today. Over the next six years, the GWG will convene four major global conferences on each of the four constitutions of Vatican II.

Asked by the *Rover* about the inspiration for the GWG, Cory commented that narratives around Vatican II "are being increasingly defined by groups



Image by Wikimedia Commons

that view the Council as a rupture with the Church's two millennia of tradition." She referred both to progressive and traditionalist movements.

"Theologians who want to be faithful to the Church's magisterial teaching as expressed in the Council and the Church's long tradition have often found themselves endlessly playing defense against one or both camps," Cory wrote. "The GWG takes a new approach: through theological reflection on the Council's teachings, the group will build up a positive, unified understanding of the Council's vision for renewal in continuity with tradition, and apply those insights to help the Church more effectively preach the Gospel and evangelize in the world of today."

In addition to Cavadini and Levering, Thursday's launch panel included five internationally renowned theologians: two from Africa, one from South America, and two from the United States. Each panelist reflected on the GWG's vision of evangelization and proclamation, drawing on their personal scholarship and experiences.

Levering, who serves as Project Director of the GWG, told the *Rover* that he gathered its members together with the intention of forming friendships among Catholic theologians around the world. "Most conferences in the U.S.A. only include people who teach in the U.S.A., and the same for most conferences in Europe, in Latin America, and so on."

"Vatican II is so important—it should be a vehicle of unity, a Christ-centered engine of evangelization and proclamation for the whole world," Levering said. "I immediately thought: Why not try to bring together scholars from around the world in this way?"

Prior to the panel discussion, Cavadini outlined the GWG's vision of evangelization, proclamation, and theology. He serves as Chair of the Steering Committee. Asked about the challenges he hopes the group will address, Cavadini listed issues especially pertinent to the Church since Vatican II.

Cavadini wrote to the *Rover*, "In the West, the wave of disaffiliation from the Church that seems to have almost made the faith disappear in some communities in Europe and North America; in other parts of the world, the persecution of Catholics and Christians which is at an all time high; clerical sexual abuse and its coverup; the challenge of religious competition in the Global South; the development of an ecclesial approach that proclaims the Gospel as a servant Church, proclaiming the good news to the poor in every part of the world."

"These are the 'signs of the times', of 'our times,'" he added.

Cavadini tied the significance of the GWG being hosted at Notre Dame to the university's pursuit of truth. "[Notre Dame] stands for the hope that there can be genuine academic excellence that is in service of an ideal higher than itself, namely truth."

"[This university] stands for an intellectual life ultimately ordered to and informed by the very truths the Second Vatican Council set out to proclaim. What better place to launch this event than a university dedicated to achieving intellectual excellence in pursuit of the meaning of these truths?" Cavadini wrote to the *Rover*.

The GWG's first major global conference on *Lumen Gentium* will take place in August 2027 on Notre Dame's campus. Readers can sign up to receive updates on the group's website, or watch a recording of the launch panel online.

Gabe Hockstra is a sophomore from northern Virginia studying economics and history. Reach him at ghockstr@nd.edu.

Basilica to Add New Saints in Global 'Diversity' Push

Global Saints Initiative will install nine new icons

Marie Spencer
Staff Writer

The Basilica of the Sacred Heart stands in the heart of Notre Dame's campus and has long depicted the lives of the saints through its murals, icons, and stained glass windows. In the beginning of 2027, nine icons will be added along the center columns of the Basilica, depicting saints from around the world as part of Notre Dame's new Global Saints Initiative. This initiative was established to mirror the diversity of the university's Catholic community, featuring saints from a variety of countries and vocations.

When the Basilica was originally built, the university's founder Father Edward Sorin, C.S.C., sought to offer current students examples of saints that could be applicable to their lives.

Father Brian Ching, C.S.C., Rector of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, told the *Rover* that the initiative was intended to continue Fr. Sorin's mission by mirroring the current student body of Notre Dame, choosing saints from five continents and nine countries to reflect the diversity of the Catholic community on campus: "Our goal is the same as his, that the sacred art in the Basilica inspires



Image by Matt Cashore / University of Notre Dame

those who visit it and pray and worship in it, to live the life of holiness. Just as the original windows and paintings in the Basilisa depict various saints and highlight the stories of holiness, these icons seek to do the same."

Fr. Ching said that the initiative arose from an "increased desire we have seen from the student body in the past few years to deepen their lives of faith and take seriously the call to holiness."

Meg Hunter-Kilmer, Coordinator of Small Groups for Campus Ministry and author of numerous books on the saints, emphasized the range of ages and vocations of the saints chosen for the initiative, as well as the diversity of their lives and locations. She wrote to the *Rover*, "The way that the diversity of the Church is reflected in the Communion of Saints helps us to see the value in spiritualities and personalities and cultures and life experiences that are different from ours, which helps us to love others better and also helps us to see that it's possible for us, too, to be saints. A broad and diverse image of holiness is an invitation from the Lord for us to become more fully His, exactly as we are."

Hunter-Kilmer highlighted several of the saints, writing, "Each of these Saints was chosen because of the many elements of their lives that will resonate with our students," from St. Oscar Romero, who stood up to injustice, to St. Théodore Guérin, a nun whose mission was to establish schools in Indiana. "These are Saints who took classes, paid bills, disappointed their parents, and fought daily to become more like Jesus. What a gift it is when we can see ourselves in them! And what a gift when they're totally different from us as well."

To complement the initiative, Professor Kathleen Sprows Cummings is offering a new class to explore the academic understanding of Catholic sainthood. Sprows Cummings, Director of the Global Catholic Research Initiative and the John A. O'Brien Collegiate Professor of American Studies and History, will be teaching a one-credit course entitled "Global Saints" through the Department of History in Spring 2027.

Working alongside Anna Rudolph, Managing Director of the Global Catholic Research Initiative, Sprows Cummings will help students explore the "development of global sainthood" and the ways saints have shaped global culture. In an interview with the *Rover*, she emphasized how her class mirrors the initiative, as it is intended for a variety of students, from any college, discipline, or religion. "The course is open to anyone, regardless of whether they have any knowledge of or devotion to the saints, and it is primarily an intellectual enterprise," Sprows Cummings explained. "That said, I think the course also offers a rich opportunity for those who already love the saints to come to love them even more."

Hunter-Kilmer concluded by reflecting on how the icons can strengthen our relationship with God. She wrote, "In my work as an evangelist, I've learned that nearly everybody has something about themselves that makes them think that God can't want them or that they can't truly be holy—a wound or a sin or a life circumstance or even a talent or a passion that seems too secular to be sanctified."

The ultimate goal of this initiative, she explained, is to serve as a reminder to "help us to move from an intellectual belief that God loves us to a firm conviction that God truly does delight in us, that He longs for a relationship with us—not as we think we should be, but as we truly are, right now."

Marie Spencer is a freshman majoring in honors math and classical civilizations. She is looking forward to seeing her Confirmation saint, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, depicted in the Basilica. Let her know your Confirmation saint at mspence8@nd.edu.

Does AI Believe in God?

Theology, philosophy professors and students consider AI use

Elizabeth Canty
Staff Writer

Among college students, use of AI for help completing coursework has become the norm. According to a 2025 survey from Chegg, 80 percent of college students use AI to "support their university studies." At Notre Dame, one particular use is concerning professors: the use of AI by students in philosophy and theology classes. The *Rover* interviewed students and professors in these departments to gain their perspective on the issue.

Among students and professors, AI's inability to think for itself is a primary point of concern when it comes to its usage in theology and philosophy classes. Professor of Theology John Cavadini, for example, described AI as incapable of the kind of inquiry theology requires. In an email interview with the *Rover*, he explained, "[The] mind is not just intellect … [i]t's memory, intellect, and will. Thinking involves the whole person. It's a whole body sport. It involves my willing, my loving, my desiring, my detesting. It involves my memory, meaning, the totality of my identity as embodied spirit."

"[There is] a very thin line between asking for information and renting out one's mind to a machine that [does not have one]," Cavadini concluded.

Visiting Associate Professor of Theology Father Michael Heintz expressed a similar sentiment, arguing that while "AI can reduce or eliminate the 'leg work' that real scholarship demands," the ability to find sources and "[develop] a principle of discernment among them" is integral to developing expertise in any research-based field.

Thomistic Studies professor Therese Cory noted some benefits of AI, recognizing that it can "provide pretty reliable bullet point summaries of major philosophical and theological texts on which there is already a lot of existing data."

However, Cory ultimately maintained an attitude of caution toward AI, explaining, "Every time a journal sends me an article for review, I now have to wonder how much of it might have been AI generated versus written by a real person," she explained. "I find this disturbing, because philosophy is a conversation among minds seeking the truth. I want to know if I'm in a conversation with a real person or not."

Not all professors are strongly opposed to the use of AI in the classroom, however. Philosophy professor Jc Beall finds AI to be a useful tool in this setting. Beall praised AI's ability to "make a lot of necessary research tasks much more efficient."

Beall explained that he "support[s] using any tools that serve to facilitate the search for truth, at least on one condition. The one condition: the tools must be used by those who are already well-trained, conscientious, highly intelligent seekers of truth or creators of beauty."

Joris Geldhof, Professor of Theology, expressed optimism that AI could be a useful tool in the field of liturgical studies, where AI has revolutionized the analysis and translation of many large texts that would otherwise have taken years of work by very specific scholars and specialists.

However, Geldhof noted that the expansion of AI "comes with a huge societal cost and a huge impact on the environment." He explained,"[AI] is another technological revolution that needs to be looked at in the context of a broader evolution."

Theology students have also grappled with the impacts of AI on their studies. Junior theology and Program of Liberal Studies student Rylen Lastrella expressed strong opposition in a statement to the *Rover*, explaining, "The inclusion of AI in theology/philosophy classes is primarily detrimental and has very little benefit to add in fields that are primarily led and reinforced by individual, deep thinking."

"I fear that with AI use becoming more common in academics, the humanities especially, we run the risk of undermining basic critical thinking, practically offloading human expression to a non-human," he concluded.

Lastrella is not alone in his criticism of AI tools. Junior Jacob Mills concurred, writing, "While AI can have great use as a search tool, capable of searching and collecting many sources, I do not think it has any substantial use in the real work of philosophy or theology … [since] it is inherently incapable of innovative thought."

Lizzie Canty is a freshman from Long Island, New York, who is studying architecture. When she's not doomscrolling or Spotify nichemaxxing, she can be reached at ecanty@nd.edu.

Should Christians Dance?

An examination of Notre Dame's weekend culture

Andrew Blake
Culture Editor
Edward Kerwin
Staff Writer



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The typical Saturday night and Sunday morning of a Notre Dame student present a sharp juxtaposition. Students who, the night before, bustled to and from packed dorm parties with loud music, dancing, heavy drinking, and other inappropriate behavior, now go to and from the Basilica for Sunday Mass. While the contrast between Mass and a dorm party is obvious, it seems many do not see any problem with this kind of recreation. After all, what's wrong with a late night out?

Several weeks ago, the *Rover* published a piece by Notre Dame alumnus James Thunder titled, "A Rule of Thumb From Augustine." In the article, Thunder shared two methods for avoiding the near occasion of sin, given to him by a priest as a young man: "'Do not do in a crowd what you would not do alone,' and 'Do not do at night what you would not do in the day.'"

A typical dorm party puts us in danger of transgressing both of these rules. Not only does being in the presence of a lively, often intoxicated, crowd tend to lower one's inhibitions, but the fact that parties often stretch well into the night means that one attending these gatherings will often do so while particularly tired, which again weakens one's ability to act prudently and resist temptation. Moreover, the features of a dorm party order it toward intemperance. It is hard to imagine how drinking games or homemade "jungle-juice" with an unknown ABV would serve any purpose other than excess.

As further evidence, readers might recall the kinds of imprudent behavior they have witnessed others engage in during or as a result of these kinds of gatherings.

Besides parties, another characteristic social event at Notre Dame deserves attention. Namely, SYRs, formals, and other couples dances.

SYRs and formals pose a similar risk as dorm parties. But, what about other kinds of couples dances—such as swing dances?

The Church and her saints have opposed dances between unmarried couples throughout the ages. Notable examples include: Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, St. Anthony of Florence, the Council of Trent, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. John Marie Vianney, and St. Anthony Mary Claret.

These saints opposed dancing, not out of a puritanical spirit, but out of a zeal for souls. It is true that partner dancing took different forms in the time of these saints—some were more promiscuous—but others, like those in the time of St. Charles Borromeo, were quite similar to or even more conservative than modern swing dancing. Regardless, this consistency across the saints suggests they opposed dancing in principle, as opposed to a specific time period's style of dance.

As with parties, these saints opposed dancing because they saw it as leading to sins of impurity. St. John Vianney, for example, warned his parishioners regarding dancing, "Is it not in these gatherings that people are most violently prompted against the holy virtue of purity?"

It is also true that these saints by-and-large wrote in times in which society's sexual ethic was in much greater conformity to that of the Church. Today, given that society's moral standard has severely degraded, Catholics may be tempted to dismiss what they perceive as antiquated perspectives on sexuality. However, society's drift in morals does not permit us Catholics to drift also.

As one priest of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter explains, "Just because there are many things in society that are more immodest than dancing, and that lead to impurity, that doesn't mean that unmarried [men] and [women] dancing together isn't immodest and won't lead to impurity."

In sum, a Catholic's moral compass is not relative to society's. While the world's values change, the Church's do not.

We must consider whether or not attending dances and dorm parties is a wise decision, or if it places us in a situation in which the already-fierce temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, will become all the more severe.

The Church does not advocate for an observance of the faith deprived of joy. On the contrary, Catholics should be joyful witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. Catholics can—and should—pursue opportunities for community and leisure. However, not every recreational activity that we might enjoy brings us closer to the "peace which passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Ultimately, we need to ask ourselves the question, "What would I give up for Christ?" If, out of humility and reverence for the teachings of the Church's saints, we conclude that parties and dances tempt us to evil, we must be willing to give them up. As Our Lord exhorts us, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna" (Matthew 5:30).

Andrew Blake is a junior from Minnesota studying PLS. In order to help avert his inevitable unemployment after graduation, please send job openings at local dance halls to ablake5@nd.edu.

Ned Kerwin is a senior from Manhattan studying theology. He has recently taken a liking to speaking Spanish, though he has a very limited vocabulary. In order to immerse himself in Spanish-speaking culture, he is trying to learn the tango. Please send relevant advice to ekerwin@nd.edu.

Catholic Worker movement serves South Bend community

Our Lady of the Road celebrates twentieth anniversary

Madeline Page
Staff Writer

Nestled between the urban lots and industrial structures of downtown South Bend is an unassuming building: Our Lady of the Road, a local offshoot of the Catholic Worker movement that ministers to the impoverished, especially those experiencing homelessness. This December marks the twentieth anniversary of its opening.

Although Our Lady of the Road was founded in 2006, its roots date to 1933, when Servant of God Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin founded the Catholic Worker movement. Moved by the poverty following America's Great Depression, Day printed and distributed a newspaper addressed to those suffering from lack of work.

"[This newspaper] is printed to call attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social program—to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare," a copy of Day's publication reads.

As distribution of *The Catholic Worker* publication expanded, Day and Maurin began opening "houses of hospitality" and "farming communities" for the impoverished and unemployed. Nearly a century later, the Catholic Worker movement includes over 180 officially registered communities worldwide.

Included in this list is the St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker of South Bend, which operates Our Lady of the Road. Founded in 2003, the group "[aspires] to follow in the tradition of hospitality offered by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, using Matthew 24:31-44 as a guide in practicing the works of mercy."

The primary work of St. Peter Claver is their hospitality homes. Run by a community of laypeople, these homes welcome men and women off the street and into a stable environment for as long as they wish to stay.

The St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker is also home to the Common Goods Cooperative Grocery, a joint sustainability and humanitarian initiative. The Grocery seeks to assist low-income individuals "meet their needs for healthy, low-cost produce and fresh foods" by partnering with local retailers and volunteers.

The St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker also seeks to accompany active and former service members through the Catholic Peace Fellowship, which provides resources such as combat-returnee retreats, pastoral support, and Catholic conscience-formation workshops.

Our Lady of the Road is the most prominent work of St. Peter Claver, however. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings, a team of volunteers gathers there to make and serve breakfast to those coming off the streets of South Bend. Guests can make use of the free shower and laundry facilities, request donated clothes, receive haircuts, and enjoy fellowship.

Students from Notre Dame, St. Mary's, and Holy Cross are regularly part of the volunteer crew, either through involvement with Campus Ministry, dorm events, or their own volition.

David Ek was first introduced to Our Lady of the Road's ministry while serving as an OCIA sponsor in his junior year of undergraduate studies. Now an assistant rector in Keough Hall, Ek organizes regular trips to Our Lady of the Road for his residents.

"Notre Dame is a great place to exercise the Spiritual Works of Mercy, but we—or at least I—don't often think about our Christian responsibility to feed the hungry while strolling in the shade of South Dining Hall," Ek told the *Rover*. "Serving at OLR has reminded me that Notre Dame is a wonderful place, but certainly not a representative sample of the rest of the world. Above all, the chance to meet and speak with people I wouldn't normally meet has been such a gift."



Image by Wikimedia Commons

Ek notes that he is particularly impacted by the conversations he has with guests as he serves coffee. Recalling a conversation from a few years ago, Ek told the *Rover*, "I can't recall [the man's] name, but I do remember him speaking of the Lord as though He was sitting right next to us … I'll never forget that."

Will Buyske, a junior in Old College Undergraduate Seminary at Notre Dame, was introduced to Our Lady of the Road during the Summer Seminary Immersion Program. He fondly remembers "the day we constructed a small greenhouse in the backyard so that OLR could extend their garden's growing season."

Another Old Collegian, Joseph Carlson, similarly appreciates the opportunity that Our Lady of the Road provides to students.

"I always try to volunteer to walk around with the coffee, because it gives me the opportunity to talk to all the guests," Carlson told the *Rover*. "I love that a simple 'Can I get you a refill?' can jumpstart a 20 minute conversation about faith, their favorite book, or funny stories [from] when they were children. It is a beautiful service we can offer as students."

Our Lady of the Road, via their St. Joseph Woodshop, also makes handmade coffins, caskets, and urns for those who would otherwise not be able to afford them.

The initiative is managed in part by Jonathan Hehn, the director of Notre Dame's Basilica Schola. Hehn was introduced to Our Lady of the Road at a Campus Ministry team formation event during his first few years as a Notre Dame faculty member. At this time, the St. Joseph Woodshop was merely an idea. An avid woodworker, Hehn jumped at the opportunity to assist in its implementation.

"There are so many folks in the community who cannot afford … a dignified burial," Hehn said in an interview with the *Rover*. He noted that the woodshop also works to maintain the older buildings in South Bend, explaining that "we [also] offer a space where people can learn some traditional crafts … so that we're not just focused on continually constructing new buildings or replacing things that are broken, but being better stewards of the earth."

Our Lady of the Road's twentieth anniversary celebration will take place on the evening of December fourth, and will feature tours of the facility as well as a potluck dinner. More information on their work and how to get involved can be found on their website.

Madeline Page is a junior studying biology. She narrowly escaped death by squishing at the Miami game, instead venturing on an exciting, but ultimately unsuccessful, quest for seating across five sections of the stadium. Perhaps she should have gotten to the game earlier. She can be reached at mpage4@nd.edu.

Temptation

St. John Henry Newman

O Holy Lord, who with the Children Three
Didst walk the piercing flame,
Help, in those trial-hours, which, save to Thee,
I dare not name;
Nor let these quivering eyes and sickening heart
Crumble to dust beneath the Tempter's dart.

Thou, who didst once Thy life from Mary's breast
Renew from day to day,
O might her smile, severely sweet, but rest
On this frail clay!
Till I am Thine with my whole soul; and fear,
Not feel a secret joy, that Hell is near.

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Many, Holy, catholic, Apostolic Churches

Diverse worship spaces continue to pop up all over campus

Joseph Ferguson
Humor Editor



Image by Irish Rover

Notre Dame has announced a new initiative to advance the Catholic mission and promote the common good. Aptly named the "One of Many Initiative," the facilities on Notre Dame's campus will feature new, diverse worship spaces starting in 2027. "We, as Catholics, are called to go forth to all nations and all religions," one administrator told the *Rover*. "What better way to live up to the apostolic mission of the Church than by supporting all other churches? Just because we as Catholics believe we are right does not mean that everyone else is wrong! 'Catholic' does mean 'universal,' after all."

This mission-driven, inter-faith approach has gained rapid traction; after the opening of the multifaith prayer room in Jenkins Nanovic Hall in 2017, which included a fountain for ritual washing and courtesy prayer rugs, university administrators began drafting plans for the construction of more prayer spaces (including new minarets to be added to Jenkins Nanovic in the summer of 2027). "We are designating the basement of Bond Hall to be the new Scientology prayer space," administrators told the *Rover*. It was decided that the building would be renamed "Cruise-Bond Hall" after the university received a 50 million dollar donation from a famous actor. A portion of these funds went towards erecting a large stone wall around the building to keep out students who, on a weekly basis, would film themselves sprinting into the building to see how far they could get before being removed by security.

It was also announced that a synagogue would be consecrated in the tunnels under South Quad. McKenna Hall and The Morris Inn were also considered as potential sites. The Jewish Student Association applauded the decision. Soon after the official opening, however, the members declared themselves a "nation" and seceded from the university. The prayer space was then peacefully invaded by members of the Muslim Student Association, and NDPD had to clear the tunnels with drones and GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator missiles. There were no casualties.

Every inch of campus seemed to be included in the reintegration of religious diversity across Notre Dame; "The stadium was the perfect place for a Protestant megachurch!" another administrator exclaimed. "This was a natural pick," he continued, "because it came already equipped with pulleys, lights, and a massive speaker system. It will need very little renovation. We hope it's big enough for its newest members." While additional smoking benches were added for Rastafari students in the Grotto, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart was allowed to stay as it was, with the exception of a few side chapels designated for Orthodox Christians, with one chapel reserved for SSPX members. It was also renamed the Basilica of the Sacred Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes for the sake of inclusivity.

The new initiative had its fair share of challenges, however. When asked which location they desired for their sacred space, the Agnostic Student Association was too indecisive. They simply forfeited their claim for a location. Next, the atheists posed a real problem: university administrators did not know if designating a sacred space for atheists would offend them. It was decided to give them the forest behind Saint Mary's Lake so they could hug trees in private if they wished to do so. They still complained, but not as much as the Buddhist Student Association. Their new prayer space was combined with the Hindu prayer space in St. Edward's Hall; "It's brutal. For many reasons," a peeved Buddhist student told the *Rover*.

An Indigenous shaman prayer space was designated inside the Main Building, in the hallways next to the Columbus Murals. The university declined to comment on that particular decision.

A popular decision came with the announcement of the repurposing of Grace Hall as a Masonic temple. The current offices in Grace Hall are to be relocated to Zahm. A spire is being added to the top of the building, and the light-up "#1" sign for Irish athletics is being replaced with a large illuminati. The Masonic Student Association of Notre Dame could not be reached for a comment.

Joseph Ferguson is religious. He can be reached at jfergu22@nd.edu.

Restoring Government
By The People
The Trump Administration's Fight Against the Administrative State

NOTRE DAME CENTER FOR CITIZENSHIP & CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT

A Conversation with
MARK PAOLETTA
Chairman, National Planning Comission

Friday, November 20, 2026
12:30 - 1:45 p.m. ET
525 Flanner Hall

Lunch will be provided to attendees.





Mark Paoletta has practiced law for nearly 40 years in Washington, D.C., evenly divided between private practice and government service. Currently, Mark has several jobs in the Trump Administration, including serving as the General Counsel for the White House Office of Management & Budget (OMB) and as head of OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). President Trump recently appointed Mark to be Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission.

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