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## **Iwanter Prize Recognizes Excellence in Undergraduate Humanities Scholarship**

Recent graduate Isaiah Stock (B.A. '16, Political Science) has received the 2017 Iwanter Prize for Undergraduate Research, an annual award administered by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for the Humanities. The \$2,000 prize is given to a graduating senior who, through a senior thesis and general academic distinction, demonstrates outstanding humanities-based scholarship of a broad and interdisciplinary nature.



**Isaiah Stock, B.A. '16, Political Science**

Stock's thesis, "A Reluctant Game-Changer: Examining Pre-exposure Prophylaxis through Epistemological Pluralism," brings the medical and social sciences into radical contact with humanistic discourse. Exploring the social, medical, and intellectual implications of the recent biomedical innovation for HIV prevention—pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP—Stock draws together scholarship in epidemiology, anthropology, and queer theory, and deftly balances competing methodologies.

Collecting an ambitious volume of sources and bringing them into intense focus via his sophisticated analysis, Stock demonstrates "the future of PrEP—and, by extension, HIV/AIDS—is contingent not only on subsequent biomedical advancements, but also on social and intellectual responses." Stock's "independent and dogged scholarly research," says

John Zumbrennen, Professor of Political Science and Stock's thesis advisor, "represents our highest hopes for senior theses and for undergraduate education in the interdisciplinary humanities."

Samuel Gee (B.A. '16, History and Religious Studies) has garnered the \$500 Honorable Mention prize for his dual-honors thesis, "Scientific Salvation: Mystical Experience and the Psychology of Religion in America, 1880-1930." Dr. Corrie Norman, Associate Director of the Religious Studies Program and co-director of Gee's thesis, says his project is "truly an original contribution" to the fields of history and religious studies. Performing at a high-level in both scholarly fields, Gee's thesis takes psychology as its topic and draws on philosophy, biology, and anthropology. Thesis co-director and Merle Curti Associate Professor of American Intellectual and Cultural History Jennifer Ratner-Rosenghagen notes that "Sam's investigation into the origins of the relationship between



**Samuel Gee, B.A. '16, History and Religious Studies**

psychology and religion helps put into historical perspective the development and insights of ‘mindfulness’ research which is so important at UW-Madison.”

The Iwanter Prize was established in 2000 by Sidney E. Iwanter (B.A.’71, History) to fill what he perceives as an “unfortunate gap” in rewarding the outstanding efforts of students in the humanities. The competitive award is selected by faculty members on the advisory committee of the Center for Humanities, and Mr. Iwanter is highly engaged with the program—he personally reads every application.

While Mr. Iwanter likes to say that he spent most of his time as a student at UW-Madison playing cards and dodging tear gas canisters, he has also reflected on the powerful intellectual experiences campus afforded, particularly the standing-room-only lectures of Professor of History and political activist Harvey Goldberg. Admiring Goldberg’s incredible teaching and lecture style, Iwanter secretly recorded Goldberg’s lectures in the 1970-71 academic year, and in 2004 generously donated these “bootlegs” to UW-Madison (the lectures are available from the Harvey Goldberg Center: [goldberg.history.wisc.edu](http://goldberg.history.wisc.edu)). After UW-Madison, Iwanter put to work the narrative skills he developed as a student of History. As an animation producer in Los Angeles, he notably orchestrated a significant shift in children’s programming in the 1990s, incorporating into animated programs more sophisticated story lines and serious social issues.

A native of the Greenbush neighborhood in Madison, Mr. Iwanter is returning to the Midwest this summer for his graduating class of Madison Central High School’s 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. His continued support of the undergraduate humanities and the love of learning at UW-Madison stems from his belief that “a well-rounded humanities education is the keystone to an informed electorate and a healthy society.”



**Iwanter in the 1967 Madison Central High School Yearbook**

More information about the Iwanter Prize and past winners can be found on the Center for the Humanities website: [humanities.wisc.edu/research/iwanter-prize](http://humanities.wisc.edu/research/iwanter-prize)