

2023 Iwanter Prize Co-Winners Announced

The Award Recognizes Excellence in Undergraduate Humanities Scholarship

MADISON, Wis. (August 1, 2023) – Two recent graduates Alanna Goldstein (B.A. December '22, Gender & Women's Studies and Political Science) and Rachel Litchman (B.A. '23, Gender & Women's Studies and Sociology) received the 2023 [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. It was another competitive year for the Iwanter Prize with many compelling entries. Goldstein and Litchman were co-winners, each receiving the full \$2,000 prize.

The prize was established in 2000 by alumnus Sidney E. Iwanter (B.A. '71, History), who said, "In this academic year featuring a landscape of such chaos and uncertainty, it is uplifting to witness such a continuing form of scholarship from these seniors."

Iwanter Prize for Undergraduate Research: Alanna Goldstein

Alanna Goldstein won the Iwanter prize for her thesis, *Poetics as Disobedience: Reimagining Academic Debate*, which examines the role of poetics in academic debate and challenges traditional approaches to scholarly discourse. As a case study, Goldstein observed a three-day debate tournament in Illinois with more than 250 high school debaters, coaches, and judges. Goldstein focused on a nontraditional movement called "Kritikal" debate that involves methods of argumentation—such as the use of poetry—as evidence for arguments. Goldstein reached six findings that highlight the potential for poetics to disrupt power structures within academic debate, for academia to reach younger generations, and for people of all backgrounds to participate and be heard.

Jill Casid, Professor of Visual Studies in the Departments of Art History and Gender & Women's Studies at UW-Madison, guided Goldstein's thesis work. Casid writes, "Alanna's original and timely senior honors thesis research and intersectional analysis that represents the very best of what work in the engaged humanities can contribute to the core gate-keeping issues of differential access at the center of



judgment and argumentation is concrete evidence that Alanna is already upholding the pillars of the Wisconsin Experience in changing the terrain of policy debate and analysis.”

In addition to her studies, Goldstein also interned then worked part-time in Wisconsin state government at the Office of the Governor and the Department of Administration where she directly aided thousands of Wisconsin constituents, particularly with rental and mortgage assistance. This “helped me to see the connections between researching and writing theoretical ideas to implementing them into practice through programming that provides crucial support to people’s lives,” Goldstein writes.

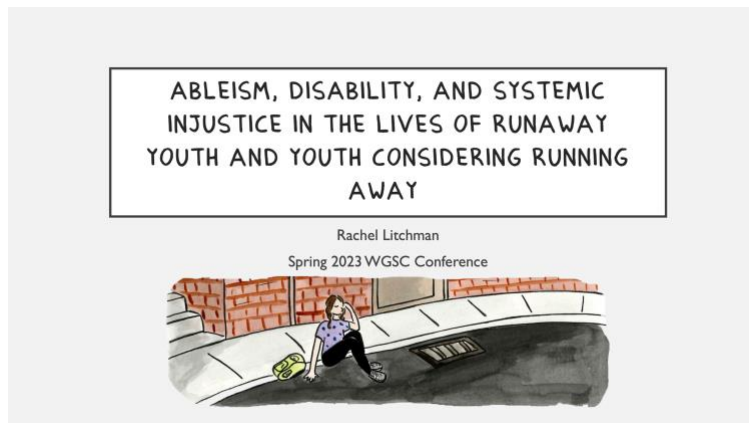
The Iwanter Prize selection committee admired how Goldstein’s “live research” and critically sharp scholarship brought together poetic device, policy, and power into a solid constellation with interesting resonances with our nation’s current debates around access and admission to higher education.

Iwanter Prize for Undergraduate Research: Rachel Litchman

Rachel Litchman won the Iwanter prize for her thesis: *Ableism, Disability, and Systemic Injustice in the Lives of Runaway Youth and Youth Considering Running Away*. Her research question addresses how ableism and disability impact youth who run away from home or consider running away from home, a question that has not yet been addressed by any existing research to date. Litchman used a range of methods in her thesis, including content analysis, existing sociological research, and critical disability studies, a methodology that deconstructs binary ways of thinking about disability.



"As both a sociology major and a gender and women’s studies major, I have been uniquely positioned to understand how disability is addressed quite differently in each of these disciplines," Litchman writes. "Simultaneously, I also use feminist methods to draw on my own lived experience as a disabled, formerly homeless runaway youth to guide my deeper insight into the ableism underpinning the stories that young people share about needing to run away from home."



Litchman worked under the guidance of Sami Schalk, Associate Professor in the Department of Gender & Women's Studies at UW-Madison. Schalk writes: "She analyzed how homeless and runaway youth talk about experiences with disability and institutionalization on these anonymous message boards in order to better understand the kind of support they need and to highlight the injustices they face both by their families and the state. This information will be directly useful in Rachel's post-graduation career working as an advocate and consultant with local and national organizations which support homeless and runaway youth."

The selection committee admired how Litchman's original object of inquiry and critically sharp scholarship brought together methods drawn from sociology and critical disabilities studies, while critically examining the disadvantages of entrenched methodologies. The committee felt her thesis demonstrated truly original research, deft movement between theoretical and practical concerns, and accomplished academic prose.

About the Iwanter Prize



*Iwanter in the 1967
Madison Central High
School Yearbook*

The Iwanter Prize itself is about legacy and the passing of intellectual curiosity from one generation to another. The prize was established in 2000 by alumnus Sidney E. Iwanter (B.A. '71, History), a native of the Greenbush neighborhood in Madison. While an undergraduate, Iwanter's own curiosity and will to document the knowledge of the previous generation led him to secretly record the lectures of Professor of History and political activist Harvey Goldberg. In 2004, Iwanter generously donated these "bootlegs" to UW-Madison (the lectures are available from the [Harvey Goldberg Center](#)). Additionally, the George L. Mosse Program in History conducted [an oral history with Iwanter](#); you can find out more about his childhood in Madison, attendance at UW-Madison, career in Hollywood, and why he set up the Iwanter Prize.

Iwanter, who now lives in Los Angeles, continues to support the undergraduate humanities and the love of learning at UW-Madison, stemming from his belief that, "a well-rounded humanities education is the keystone to an informed electorate and a healthy society."

More information about the Iwanter Prize and past winners can be found at:
<https://humanities.wisc.edu/research/iwanter-prize>