

ANNUAL REPORT

2022 -23



Abigail Adams Institute



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The mission of the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI) is to foster and fortify traditional liberal arts education and Harvard and in the wider intellectual community of Cambridge and Boston area universities and colleges. We seek to open students to the value of deep and broad thinking and to stimulate the spirit of intellectual adventure during college years.



DR. DANILO PETRANOVICH

Over the last seven years, we have seen how difficult it is for young people to make time and develop habits required for genuinely independent thought. Everyday busyness, careerism, conformity, and media-driven distraction have eroded many of the preconditions for true learning. Our approach has been to work with people, inside as well as outside the University, who share our diagnosis of some of the major intellectual and cultural challenges we will face in the coming years.

In partnership with likeminded faculty, alumni, graduate students and some highly motivated undergraduates, we provide supplementary humanistic education in a variety of settings and formats. We hope that the University will take some inspiration from knowing that the students continue to be deeply interested in the humanities and are willing to dedicate time and energy to seriously engage with the existentially meaningful questions that are with us throughout our lives.

In the following pages you will see examples of our work. *The Great Conversation: How Should We Live*, which won the National Endowment of Humanities (NEH) award several years ago, was back in person for 2022. It continues to foster free and robust discourse across disciplines and between generations as students debate among themselves and alumni some of the recurring personal, social, and political dilemmas in the Western tradition. Faculty and Student reading groups of Shakespeare and Tolstoy attract close and committed groups of readers; the Summer Seminars welcome mainly students outside Harvard to experience an intense week of seminar-style instruction; the AAI Great Ideas Debate takes up a controversial topic and welcomes the larger community to learn about our work; the Institute's literary journal, *Veritas Review*, displays creative writing from students and award-winning artists alike; and so on.

We invite you subscribe to our mailing list and stay connected with us in person and online. Please check out our website www.aaicambridge.org for regular updates. And please know that we are grateful to you for supporting AAI's work and vision of educational reform in the academe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danilo Petranovich'.

Danilo Petranovich
Cambridge, Massachusetts
May 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The past few years has been fraught with challenges, but we at AAI are incredibly grateful to all our supporters and attendees who helped make this an incredibly successful time. In all of what we have done and continue to do, our approach aims to open students to the value of deep and broad thinking and to stimulate the spirit of intellectual adventure.

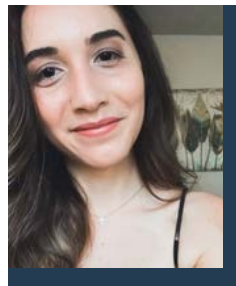
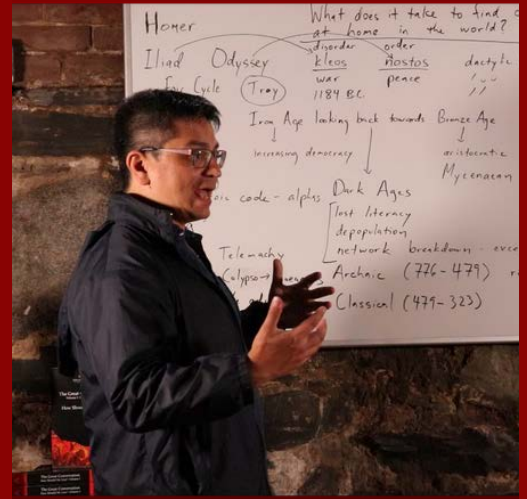
Our programs, guides, and recommendations are designed to motivate students to challenge themselves in intellectually ambitious ways: to ask better questions, to spend time with classic works, to explore diverse areas of thought and inquiry, to think and write with more passion and precision, and above all to make time for genuinely independent thought despite the everyday busyness, conformity, and media-driven distraction.

In our first ever annual report, we seek to highlight some of the major events, initiatives, and people that are core to AAI. Each has had a unique impact on the mission to cultivate intellectual and moral virtue towards human flourishing.



THE GREAT CONVERSATION

Launched in 2016, The Great Conversation is one of our longest running and most successful programs, serving students and professionals alike. TGC aims to introduce its learners to the rich tradition of western thought aimed at the key question, "How should we live?" Through readings, lectures, and discussions led by Dr. J. David Franks, students dialogue with the greatest minds in history on the difficult but key questions centuries in the making.



“ I am very grateful AAI facilitated and encouraged me to explore my academic interests through the Hippocratic Forum. Exploration of medical humanities and medical ethics is certainly a niche but very interesting area of study for me. AAI did a good job of encouraging and facilitating our intellectual growth. The numerous seminars, lectures, and scholars I came across were very helpful to foster intellectual growth.

Abrania Marrero, Ph. D.
Harvard University, T. H. Chan School of Public Health



“ As an independent thinker and a Core Curriculum student of BU, I truly appreciate how Abigail Adams Institute’s Great Conversation stimulates one’s intellectual flourishing, including myself. Quite assuredly, AAI is a fantastic place for ambitious students who are keen to philosophically challenge themselves at a deep level.

Kenneth Wong, Boston University '24

READING GROUPS

SOUND AND THE FURY: SHAKESPEARE READING GROUP

Over the course of the 2022–2023 academic year, led by Prof. David Nee and AAI staff, Harvard undergraduate students, read and discussed Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, and more.



"AND LIFE AWOKE..."

WAR AND PEACE READING GROUP

Led by one of our summer interns Bridget Beck, AAI ran a reading group of Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece, *War and Peace*. Members ranged from Harvard undergraduate students to young professionals who read and discussed the entire volume in just 8 weeks.

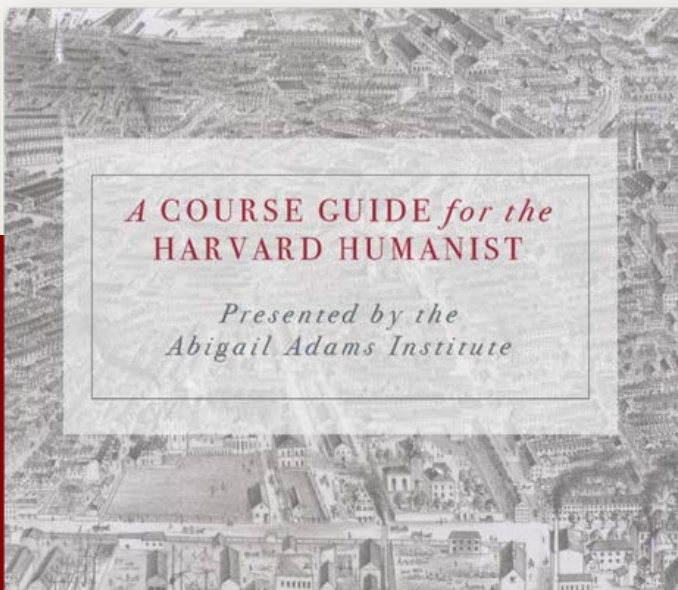


“I really enjoyed seeing the plays come to life as we read select sections from the plays and being challenged to think deeper about the social issues presented, many of which are still quite relevant in today's society. Getting to share this experience with a group bringing their own diverse perspectives was the icing on the cake!

Jennifer Gao, Harvard College '24

A COURSE GUIDE FOR THE HARVARD HUMANIST

First developed in 2017, The Course Guide to the Harvard Humanist gives any Harvard student a comprehensive list of recommended classes and professors across all fields of humanities study. It has continued to be updated and grow to help undergraduates at Harvard College receive a powerful and expansive humanities education from one of the premier universities.





COMMON GOOD IN THE DIGITAL AGE

High School Summer Seminar

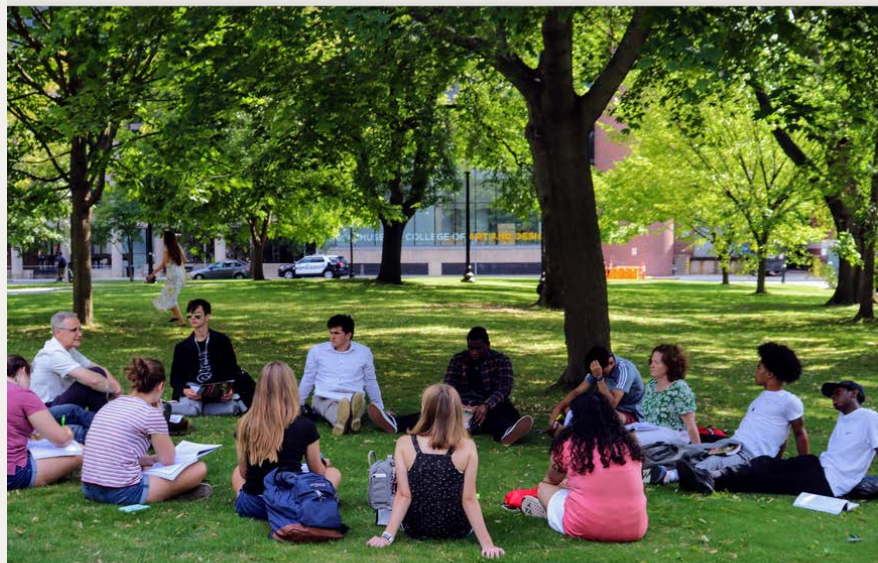
Our annual summer seminar for high school students of the Boston area aims to help young minds think deeply about pressing issues, engage with great thinkers of the past, cultivate an appreciation for art and culture, and foster community of like minded youth. Led by Katie Elrod, Head of Montrose School and Timothy Belk, Headmaster of Boston Trinity Academy, students spend a week in a college-style class setting, with close reading and deep discussion around a timeless but essential question, "What is the common good?"

"After taking the seminar, I feel more motivated and inspired than ever to really dig in to the questions of the day, not only in the United States but in the world too, inside and outside the classroom."

MAEVIS FAHEY,
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA '25

"It was very interesting to hear different viewpoints from people...in my classroom it's very difficult to hear different views without getting censored or being afraid...in the Abigail Adams Institute I felt comfortable expressing my opinions, and I know that everyone else felt comfortable discussing theirs."

BLAKE CHEN, HARVARD COLLEGE '25



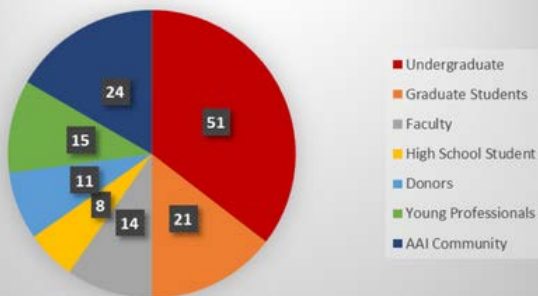
GREAT IDEAS DEBATE *with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute*

PATRICK DENEEN & MICHAEL ANTON: RETURN TO THE FOUNDERS TO SAVE AMERICA?

AAI partnered with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute to host a debate and discussion between Hillsdale College's Michael Anton and Notre Dame's Patrick Deneen April 2022. They spoke on the intellectual roots of the American Founding and its connections to present day political and ideological issues. Our director, Dr. Danilo Petranovich, moderated the debate. We had a broad range of attendees from high school students to working professionals in the Boston area.



2022 Great Ideas Debate Attendance



Registrants/Attendance In-Person



GREAT IDEAS DEBATE *with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute*

ADRIAN ZENZ & ARNAUD BERTRAND: CHINESE OR AMERICAN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT?

AAI again partnered with the Intercollegiate Studies Institute to host a debate and discussion between Adrian Zenz and Arnaud Bertrand April 2023. They debated the state policies of the US and other western systems against the Chinese system, drawing from historical and current examples to support their arguments. Our director, Dr. Danilo Petranovich, again moderated the debate. We again had a broad range of attendees from high school students to working professionals in the Boston area.



74 In Person Attendees

64,000 Video Views



STUDENT SCHOLAR PRESENTATIONS

NATURAL RIGHT AND POLITICAL RELIGION IN YOUNG LINCOLN:

FRED LARSEN

Fred Larsen is one of our Student Fellows at AAI and a Harvard College Junior from North Carolina studying political philosophy. He is interested in the rise of modernity and attempts to rejuvenate the spirit of classical political thought.



GEORGE FITZHUGH AND THE END OF SOUTHERN ORDER:

DAVID BRANNON

David, originally from South Carolina, is a recent graduate of Harvard College, where he concentrated in History. He is especially interested in the political thought of Antebellum America. David was Chairman of the John Adams Society and has worked outside of school at George Washington's Mount Vernon, Alston & Bird LLP, and his own food truck court.



TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY IN A POST-TRADITION WORLD:

JASON O'DWYER

Jason O'Dwyer graduated from Boston College, Class of 2022, with a dual degree in economics and philosophy. He serves his community as a member of the Knights of Columbus and through local community organizing. He works as a legal clerk in Boston and will begin studying at Boston College Law School in the following year.



STUDENT SCHOLAR PRESENTATIONS

COVID-ERA LEAVES OF ABSENCE AT HARVARD COLLEGE: EXPERIENCES, LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HARVARD ADMINISTRATORS

GABRIELLE LANDRY

Gabrielle Landry is our longest tenured Student Fellow, a Student-Associate Fellow, and John Aroutiounian Fellow at AAI and a Harvard College Senior from Massachusetts studying philosophy and education. She took a gap year during the COVID-19 Pandemic, and researched the impact of leaves of absence at Harvard.



THE CATHOLIC REPUBLIC OF ORESTES BROWNSON:

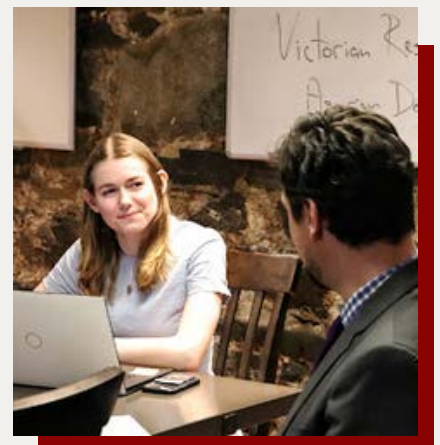
LOREN BROWN

Loren Brown, an AAI Student Fellow and John Aroutiounian Fellow. Originally from southwest Washington, Loren is a senior at Harvard College studying Government and English. His interests range from the philosophical foundations of traditional conservatism to the history of Christian humanism, from St. Augustine to T.S. Eliot.

THREE VICTORIAN RESPONSES TO THE DECLINE OF AGRARIAN ENGLAND

PAIGE PROCTOR

Paige Proctor is a member of Harvard's Class of 2023, concentrating in History. She is an AAI Student Fellow and John Aroutiounian Fellow. Paige is an active member of the John Adams Society, the Harvard Institute of Politics, and Harvard's Sport Shooting Team.



PIATTI DINNERS

The Piatti dinners began in 2021 to offer fully funded opportunities for undergraduates at Harvard College to have intimate and engaging dinners with their faculty. We have held six dinners, introducing us to twenty-eight Harvard undergraduate humanities students and six professors.



"I really loved the dinner, especially the chance to get to know and learn more about Professor Fryer's passion for economics. His research on education inequality is quite inspirational, and I wanted to thank AAI for giving us the opportunity to extend these conversations outside the classroom."

KAITLYN ZHOU, HARVARD COLLEGE '25

"The dinner with Dr. Hankins allowed me to explore a field outside of my comfort zone in the best way possible: hearing from an expert in the field who has devoted their life to studying it."

CHRISTINA GAVAZZI, HARVARD COLLEGE '22

VERITAS REVIEW



This past fall, AAI published the first issues for our new interdisciplinary journal, the *Veritas Review* as an outlet for creative writing and thoughtful literary expression and to build intellectual community around Harvard. Publishing both a fall and spring issue, the *Review* has student literary reflections, poetry, and art. It is generally difficult for young students to get a start in their professional work and therefore the chief aim of this journal is to address that challenge and transform it into an opportunity.

Featured authors include Alfred Alcorn, Forrest Gander, Marilyn Chin, as well as numerous student fellows.

The Wollstonecraft Project



The Wollstonecraft Project is directed by legal scholar and AAI Senior Fellow Erika Bachiochi. The initiative aims to guide, facilitate, and support scholarly engagement in questions of sexual equality and freedom, as philosophically informed by realist metaphysics, virtue-based ethics, and a Wollstonecraftian understanding of rights grounded in responsibilities. It provides intellectual and professional formation for Harvard students and those of the greater Boston area through a series of lectures, debates, and seminars.

Featured Lectures



Publication



Published July 2021
Notre Dame University Press

Erika Bachiochi offers an original look at the development of feminism in the United States, advancing a vision of rights that rests upon our responsibilities to others.

MAN AND WOMAN, BODY AND SOUL IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

Summer Seminar



A AI and the Wollstonecraft Project put on an annual week-long summer seminar for undergraduate and graduate students and young professionals. Taught by Erika Bachiochi and Dr. Angela Franks, this seminar engages with the metaphysical, ethical, and political questions of sex and gender.

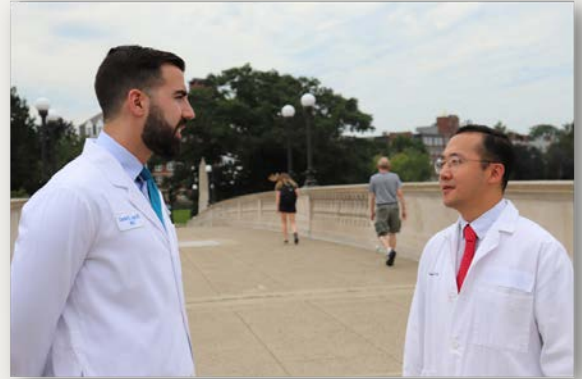


*"Bachiochi and Franks
provide a wonderful
synthesis of philosophy,
theology, and politics in
service of a necessary
modern day discussion"*

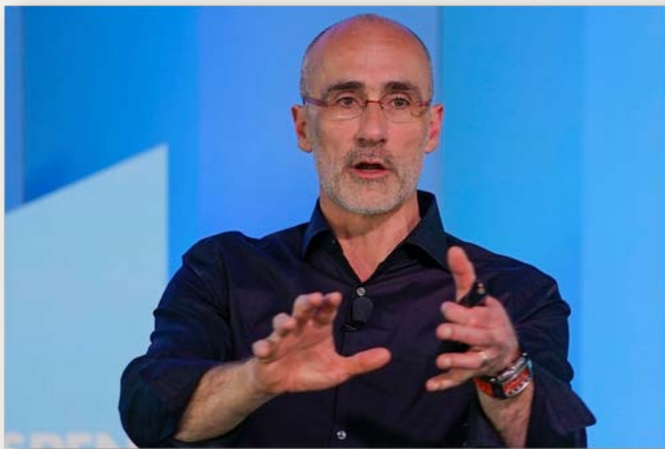
STUDENT PARTICIPANT, 2022

THE HIPPOCRATIC FORUM

The Hippocratic Forum officially launched this past fall, founded by Dr. John Rhee, M.D. and Dr. Daniel Lage, M.D. The Hippocratic Forum seeks to help medical students and practicing physicians maintain their ideals and learn to practice medicine as a way to cultivate virtue and human flourishing.



PROGRAM ON HUMAN DIGNITY



The Program on Human Dignity serves as the hub for the creative work led by Dr. Arthur C. Brooks outside of the Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Business School. These projects include a new book on finding vocation in the second half of life, a podcast on the art and science of happiness, a popular column on building your best life, and other exploratory media ventures.

PRACTICAL WISDOM PROJECT

The Practical Wisdom Project at AAI serves as the center for the development of Dr. Karen Bohlin's creative work in leadership education drawing on the theory and application of the Practical Wisdom Framework.TM This project seeks to cultivate *phronesis* and human flourishing among today's leaders



THE JOHN AROUTIOUNIAN FELLOWSHIP

Named after Mr. John Aroutiounian, the JAF is awarded to undergraduate or law school students of exceptional talent and high motivation who have demonstrated ability in building peer and intergenerational communities of intellectual and moral virtue. John's deep and enduring faith in God, alongside his academic brilliance, led him to explore religion in ways that inspired and brought people together.

John graduated from Yale University in 2015 with a double major in History (with distinction) and EP&E (Ethics, Politics & Economics). He then attended Oxford University and earned a master's degree in Classical Armenian Studies. He was in his second year at Columbia Law School and a recipient of the prestigious Dolores Zohrab Liebman Fellowship, when he was diagnosed with cancer. John departed this earthly life on May 3, 2019 at the age of 26, but his infinite presence is with us always.



2022 John Aroutiounian Fellows



*GABBY LANDRY,
HARVARD COLLEGE '23*



*LOREN BROWN,
HARVARD COLLEGE '23*



*PAIGE PROCTOR,
HARVARD COLLEGE '23*



*MATHIEU RONAYNE,
BOSTON COLLEGE '22*

THE JOHN AROUTIOUNIAN FELLOWSHIP

2023 John Aroutiounian Fellows



FRED LARSEN,
HARVARD COLLEGE '24



SHANI AGARWAL,
HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL, '23



ALEXANDER HUGHES,
HARVARD COLLEGE '25



AAI STUDENT FELLOWS

PAUL CHIN

HARVARD COLLEGE '24

Paul Chin is a sophomore at Harvard University. While in high school in the Boston area, he was a co-founder, in conjunction with AAI, of the Summer Seminar titled "Divided We Stand: Pursuing the Common Good in the Age of Trump." He is passionate about Astrophysics as he believes this field to be the perfect blend of hard core physics and philosophy, and has done extensive research on the earth's magnetosphere and auroras at the University of Alaska - Fairbanks and Boston University.



BLAKE CHEN

HARVARD COLLEGE '25

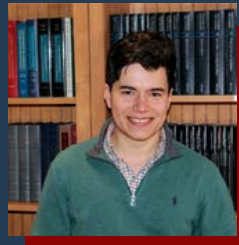
Blake is a Harvard College Freshman. His interests include history, public policy, constitutional law, and economics. He is Senior Organ Scholar at nearby St. Paul's Parish and an active officer in the Civil Air Patrol, the civilian auxiliary to the U.S. Air Force. He enjoys reading Victor Davis Hanson and Thomas Sowell, and admires the statesmanship of Calvin Coolidge.



JACOB CREMERS

HARVARD COLLEGE '24

Jacob is studying Applied Math, Economics, and Computer Science at Harvard College. He is especially interested in political philosophy, and is an active member of the John Adams Society and the Cicero Society of Washington DC. Outside of school, he has worked as a programmer and data analyst at Numinar Analytics, Millennium Management, and Harvard Law School.



ALEXANDER HUGHES

HARVARD COLLEGE '25

Alex is a member of Harvard's Class of 2025, concentrating in Government with a secondary in Global Health and Health Policy. Originally from Marshall, Michigan, he is involved with the John Adams Society, the Harvard Republican Club, and the Harvard Undergraduate Foreign Policy Initiative. His favorite writers include Dostoevsky, Lincoln, and Augustine.



JASON O'DWYER

BOSTON COLLEGE '23

Jason O'Dwyer graduated from Boston College, Class of 2022, with a dual degree in economics and philosophy. He serves his community as a member of the Knights of Columbus and through local community organizing.

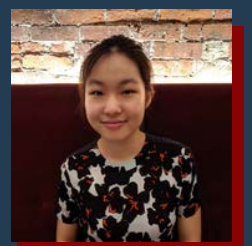


He works as a legal clerk in Boston and will begin studying at Boston College Law School in the following year.

JIANING WEI

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO '23

Originally home-schooled in Beijing, Jianing is a sophomore at the University of Chicago majoring in computer science and philosophy. She enjoys coding, reading Plato, and learning about cryptocurrencies. She delights in the Latin language. Catullus is her favorite Roman poet.



SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

AAI's first official summer internship program launched this summer, 2022. The program aims to provide advanced undergraduate and recently graduated students with an introduction to non-profit management through intensive training followed by completion of two projects within the eight week period.

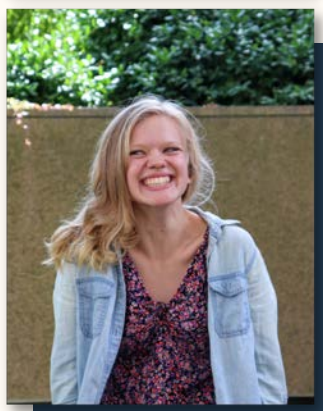
2022 SUMMER INTERNS

We welcomed Bridget Beck, a 2022 graduate of Magdalen College and Noah Hoonhout, a student at Hillsdale College, class of 2023. Bridget led a reading *War and Peace* reading group and worked on The Great Conversation. Noah worked on the annual report, filming for AAI, and researched for The Hippocratic Forum.



I am very grateful AAI facilitated and encouraged me to explore my academic interests through the Hippocratic Forum. Exploration of medical humanities and medical ethics is certainly a niche but very interesting area of study for me. AAI did a good job of encouraging and facilitating our intellectual growth. The numerous seminars, lectures, and scholars I came across were very helpful to foster intellectual growth.

Noah Hoonhout, Hillsdale College '22



The AAI internship offered continual opportunities for professional growth, and I honestly found myself floored by the willingness of the team to support and foster my intellectual interests and challenge me to take action and create something, to explore what leading a group would be like, and to facilitate the opportunity for me to learn and grow.

Bridget Beck, Magdalen College '22

THE ABIGAIL ADAMS INSTITUTE TEAM

DANILO PETRANOVICH, PH.D. - DIRECTOR

Dr. Petranovich is the Director of the Abigail Adams Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Previously, Dr. Petranovich taught political science at Duke University and Yale University.

His scholarly expertise is in nineteenth century European and American political and social thought. He is currently writing a book, contracted with Yale University Press, on nationalism and the North in antebellum America.



EMMA TOWNE - DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



Emma serves AAI through management of the daily operations of the institute & its programs, including finances, bookkeeping, compliance, and program logistics.

She graduated from Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts in May 2019 with a B.A. in Liberal Arts with a major in Politics.

JAMES CAPUZZI - DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

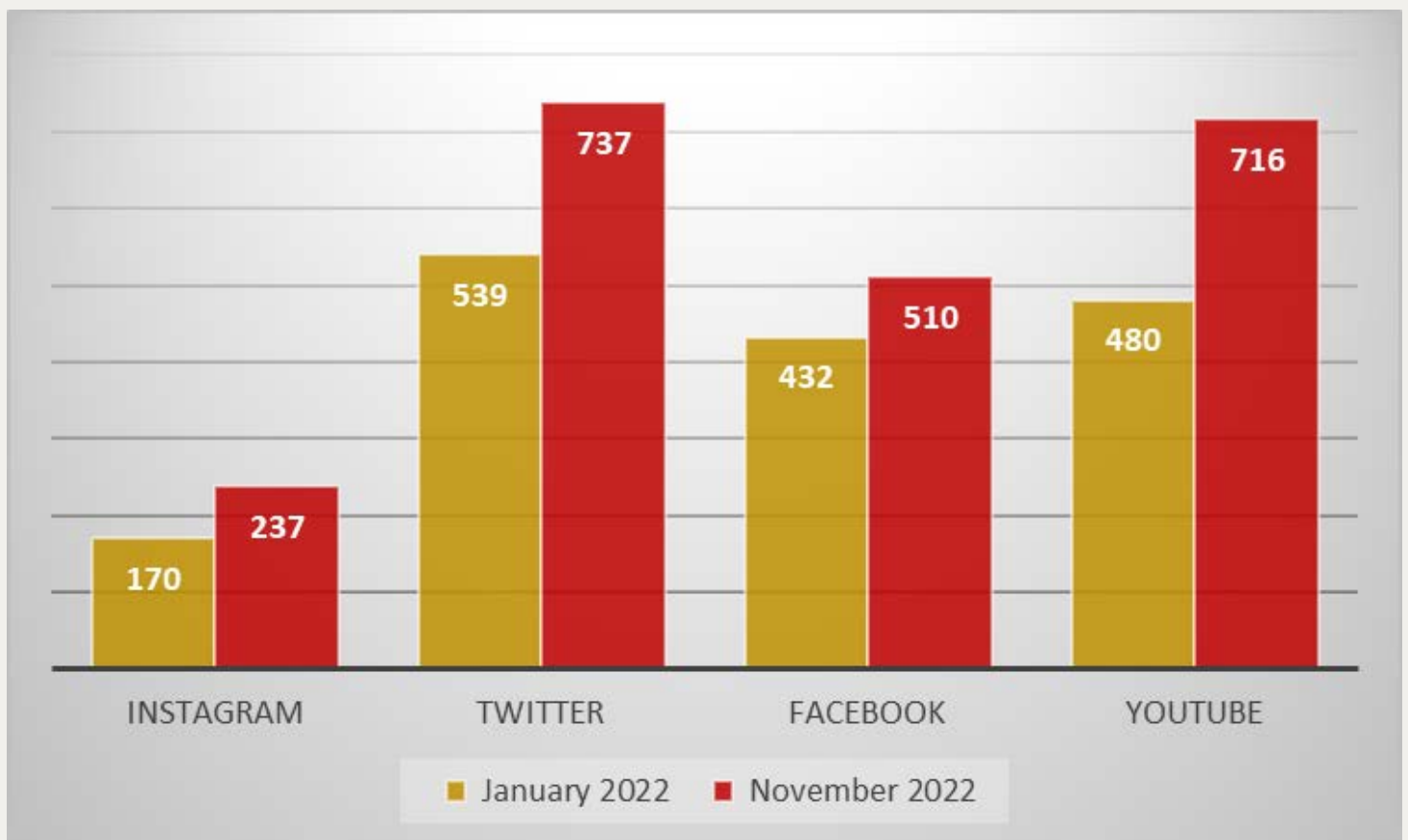
James is Director of Communications and Marketing at AAI. He currently manages all digital community-facing aspects of the institute: website, social media, and online programming as well as filming and editing video content.

He graduated from Tulane University, where he concentrated in Classical Studies and Italian Language, and then completed a Master's Degree in Sustainable Cultural Heritage from the American University of Rome.



SOCIAL MEDIA

As a response to the pandemic, the Abigail Adams Institute expanded its digital outreach, particularly focusing on video content. Our online presence continues to grow, with our largest growth on Twitter, where we share affiliate articles, and YouTube where we post weekly videos to Youtube for our Great Conversation series, and regularly post Conversations with Affiliates, which highlight our student leaders through interviews.







"When I first came to AAI 5 years ago — as a proud liberal, atheist, and humanities-skeptic — I was ready for confrontation with perspectives vastly different from my own. I had deliberately sought out AAI as part of my mission to avoid echo-chambers.

Unlike the other spaces I've found, AAI doesn't just value the clash of ideas for controversy's sake — instead, there's a real focus on civil conversation guided by philosophical rigor.

I distinctly remember my first few sessions of "The Great Conversations", in which we discussed Hegel, Mill, and Marx. It was beyond refreshing to have genuine, well-intentioned, and sincere debate — not discussion for attendance points, or merely oblique disagreement — on topics like meaning, virtue, religion, and the social contract.

AAI has given me the chance to explore those 2am conversations that college should be about (i.e. "Am I living my life well?") in an academic, yet friendly setting. It's a wonderful community which I look forward to staying involved in for many years to come."

DEEPAK SINGH, HARVARD COLLEGE '23



Abigail Adams Institute



The Abigail Adams Institute thanks its donors for their generosity in providing liberal arts education to the greater Harvard community.



If you are interesting in learning more, or contributing to AAI's mission, please visit us online.

www.aaicambridge.org/giving

Looking back as a senior at Harvard College, I am constantly surprised at how my approach to education, and the world at large, has changed since I was a freshman. When I first came to Cambridge, I was interested in becoming a master of political science—I wanted to understand the often crude and unforgiving nature of American domestic politics, in order to prepare me for a career outside of Harvard. This changed monumentally, however, with the advent of the Abigail Adams Institute.



After just a few visits to a reading group there, wherein we discussed justice in Plato's Republic, I came to realize that my presence at Harvard is not simply a stepping stone to what comes next: rather, it would serve as the most formative period of my life, and I ought to value it as such. The various programs at AAI instigated in me a love for theory, rather than practice: the pursuit of truth, rather than a useful approximation of it. AAI was instrumental in forming me not as just another ambitious graduate from Harvard College, but one who now understands the limits of life, and the "permanent things" (as T.S. Eliot would say) that truly matter.

LOREN BROWN, HARVARD COLLEGE '23

"I am so grateful to the Abigail Adams Institute for supporting my academic and personal pursuits since my first year at Harvard in 2018. Over the years, AAI has empowered me to lead a discussion group for Harvard students on meaning and flourishing; organize our annual birthday party for Abigail Adams; write and design my creative project Looking Closely, a collection of poetry inspired by paintings at the Harvard Art Museums; and more. These experiences have complemented my studies in Philosophy and Education and have helped me make connections across disciplines and communities at Harvard."



GABRIELLE LANDRY, HARVARD COLLEGE '23

