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Contact us at
(914) 633-2370
ionian@iona.edu
ionianads@iona.edu

Data journalist Betsy Ladyzhets discusses data journalism in the COVID era

By: Kyle Ross and Stacey Franciamore *Contributing Writer and Editor-in-Chief*

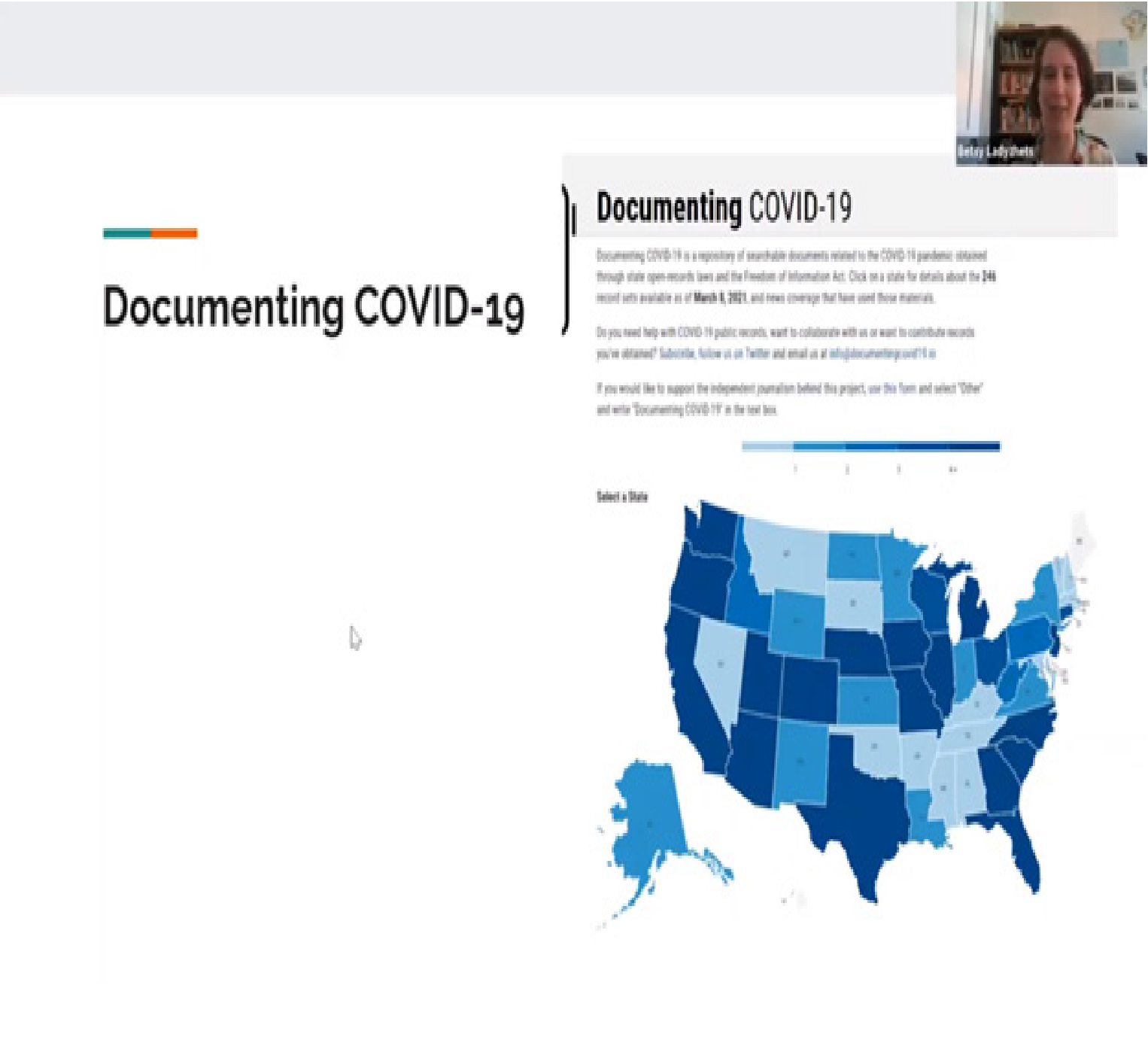


PHOTO FROM ZOOM.
Ladyzhetz has documented data from around the country since the beginning of the pandemic.

Iona recently hosted a discussion with data journalist Betsy Ladyzhets, who has been analyzing gaps in data and misinformation about the pandemic that have occurred over the past year.

Ladyzhets founded the COVID-19 Data Dispatch, a private publication whose sole intent is to inform Americans on COVID data and important news on the current pandemic. According to Ladyzhets, the main goal of the CDD is to share information and resources and broadly make data available. At the event, Ladyzhets described her day-to-day activities and the various other organizations that the COVID-19 Data Dispatch works with.

The CDD’s website is used as both a bulletin and forum. It provides visitors with information on hospitalization, antigens and vaccination data for the common person. The website also shares data amongst journalists, which allows them to combine the storytelling of journalism with facts and data backed by research from experts.

During the discussion, Ladyzhets described her process of communicating findings to the public. First, she gets her research either from the field or from interviewing experts. Then she cleans the information, which means she analyzes what she found and does more investigating on this information, basically double checking her sources. For example, she collected research on populations that are vulnerable to COVID-19 from public health sources including the Centers for Disease Control and obtained solicited advice from the National Association of Social Workers. She took the information she gathered to clean, analyze, organize and pull together data on factors that make individuals vulnerable to COVID-19 such as health factors and socioeconomic factors, among others. Her research determined 27 factors that can make individuals vulnerable to COVID-19.

Ladyzhets also discussed the Covid Tracking Project, which collected and published COVID-19 testing data in the US and its territories up until March 7. The main cause of this project was to fill in the gaps of information that the CDC had left unfilled due to administrative problems or problems with local and state governments in the past year. While the Covid Tracking Project has since slowed down with the new administration putting out more data about infections, testing and vaccination, the New York-based organization is still accepting volunteers to their cause.

Further, Ladyzhets discussed how there are common settings where COVID may spread more rapidly such as in factories and food processing facilities. People in these areas are close together and may not always be wearing the proper gear or taking proper hygienic precautions.

One organization Ladyzhets highlighted was the Marhsall Project, a group that works with the COVID-19 Data Dispatch and focuses on the criminal justice system in the United States. It has an investigative project that collects data on COVID-19 infections in state and federal prisons. Ladyzhets also mentioned a more heartfelt organization that has popped up during the pandemic, Missing Them. Missing Them is a New York City project that wishes to honor those who have succumbed to the virus. In New York alone there have been 35,000 fatalities commemorated by Missing Them.

Ladyzhets explained that there will always be people doubting the information coming out about the pandemic, however, people need to show their work, their resources and the experts to support the information they are putting out there. The CDD continues to publish issues every week.

Outside Iona

By: Krystal Ortiz News Editor

Throughout our hectic student lives, we should always remain aware of what is happening around us. In this column, I find the most significant things going on in the world and provide you with a small blurb of all the important details. Here are some of the major events that have been happening since last issue of The Ionian:

General coronavirus updates as seen in Biden’s primetime address:

On Thursday night, Biden gave his first primetime address to America, addressing the death toll of the pandemic. The President stated that he has been thinking about all of the ones that died in the past year, not only due to the pandemic. He also mentioned the pain of the grieving families and the economic toll the virus has taken on the country. He mourned “the loss of hope” individuals had been feeling. Moreover, Biden plans on opening all of schools with tactics stated in the America Rescue Plan. One of the plan’s many intentions includes vaccinating teachers and school staff, including bus drivers, to ensure health and safety once the schools reopen, as well as meeting the goal of administering 100 million COVID-19 vaccinations in Biden’s first 100 days in office.

Information from CNN & NY Times.

Governor Cuomo faces possible impeachment.

There was an impeachment inquiry opened against Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo on Thursday in response to the growing number of sexual harassment allegations he is facing. After a meeting, the State Assembly gave the authorization to investigate the allegations of misconduct against Cuomo, including his administration’s handling of virus-related deaths of nursing home patients, a separate allegation. The decision makes it the state’s first impeachment effort in over a century. One of the sexual harassment allegations includes a woman who worked as an aide for the governor who claimed that he groped her in his official residence last year. The allegation makes it the sixth woman to accuse him of sexual misconduct. The allegation emerged after the governor claimed that he had never touched a woman inappropriately. The allegation was initially reported by the Times Union newspaper. The paper cited a source that had direct knowledge of the woman’s allegations, which makes it the most severe allegation taking place against the governor.

Information from NPR, NY Times & Forbes.

Additional murder charge added to George Floyd’s killer.

The judge leading the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer charged with the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, has permitted prosecutors to add an additional charge of third-degree murder against the accused, who is already facing a more serious count of second-degree murder. The decision was confirmed on Thursday, ending a block that hindered the trial’s progression. Jury selection has begun with half of the jurors selected. Opening arguments are scheduled to commence on March 29. The chosen jurors will now have an additional murder charge of which they could possibly convict the accused.

Information from MPR News, NY Times & The Washington Post.

Interested in writing for News?
Contact Krystal Ortiz, our
News Editor, at
kortiz4@guels.iona.edu

Getting to know New Age Spirituality

By: Aliyah Rodriguez *Features & Lifestyle Editor*

It’s no secret that Iona College is a religious institution founded by the Christian Brothers, but those of the Christian faith aren’t the only ones on campus. The recent boom in alternative forms of spirituality has resulted in people exploring their faiths and finding a combination of different ideals to subscribe to.

New Age Spirituality is a series of practices and beliefs that became popular in the Western world in the late 70s and has seen a recent uptick in the past decade. Those who subscribe to these beliefs make the point that they are spiritual, not religious, and focus primarily on more holistic practices.

With the Christian faith being the most widely accepted set of religions in this country, it may be daunting for many to accept and embrace forms of New Age Spirituality.

New Age theology doesn’t consist of anything that’s unheard of: it’s deeply rooted in divinity, whether that be in the belief of a singular higher power or multiple guiding powers such gods and goddesses, nature spirits, ancestors and angels. Most people that practice these forms of spirituality also believe in a divine self and acknowledging every part of yourself – past, present, and future - as a whole rather than as individual, underdeveloped pieces adding up to something else.

Have you ever been stumped when you hear others talking about their sun, moon and rising signs? What about when people complain about Mercury being in retrograde? In the past few years, apps like Co-star, Astro Future and The Pattern have become more popular, as well as social media accounts with professional astrologers providing daily, weekly and monthly readings to their following base.

These apps and social media accounts have become gateways for people to better understand New Age Spirituality. It has even become less taboo for people to talk about their use of tarot cards, oracle decks, crystals and other spiritual cleansers like white sage and palo santo.

Senior Brianna Fornasari, a psychology major, has been interested in spirituality for many years despite being raised Catholic.

“Honestly, I feel like growing up surrounding by a combination of Catholicism and hypocrisy in the world really just pushed me in away from religion as a whole,” Fornasari said. “I’m not sure when I got into astrology because I was really young, but I knew that I was obsessed with the moon, the stars and the sky and I’ve always felt very in tune with them - the more I did research, the more I loved it even though it isn’t considered scientific, it made more sense to me than a lot of the things I was being taught in school.”

Whether you’re Christian, a person who subscribes to another monotheistic religion or someone who practices alternative spirituality, embracing and understanding other faiths will allow for a more well-rounded existence.

When considering how her spirituality has impacted her life, Fornasari believes that the best part of her journey comes from getting to know every part of herself better.

“I learned more recently how to use spirituality to get to know me, something I lacked for so long,” Fornasari concluded. “Now I’m grateful that so many people are tapping into it, because I realized that this is what helped me find myself.”



PHOTO FROM @LIRA_KARINA ON INSTAGRAM
Tarot card reading is the practice of using tarot cards to gain insight into the past, present and future.

Women leaders on campus reflect on their roles

By: Margaret Doughert *Managing Editor*

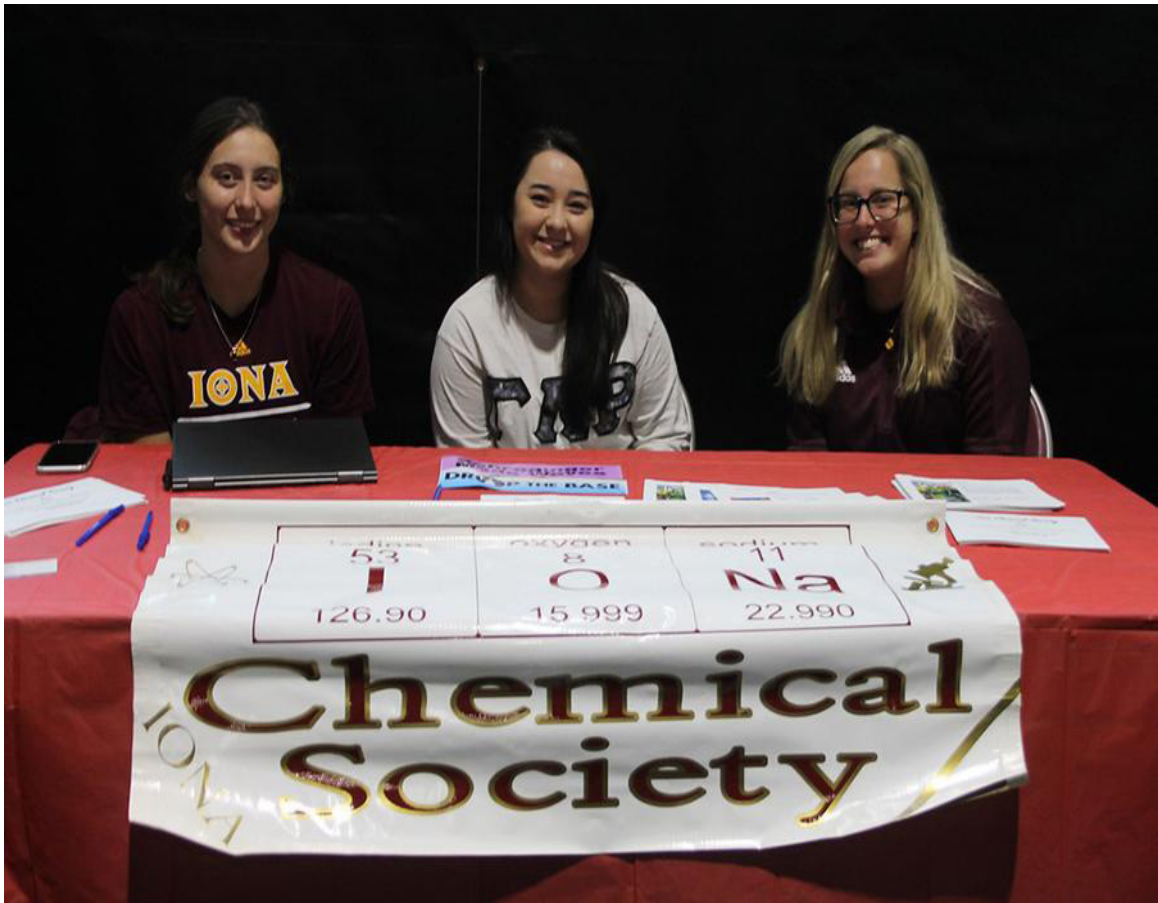


PHOTO FROM IONA.EDU.
The chemical society is one club on campus with women leaders.

Every March i set aside to celebrate the contributions of women in American history and appreciate just how much progress has been made in advancing women's rights. However, focus is also put on the work that still needs to be done. One area in which women remain disproportionately represented is workplace leadership. According to a 2020 study by McKinsey & Company, a management consulting firm, women hold only 28% of senior management roles in America. Women leadership is vital for a company's success, bringing different perspectives and skillsets that are effective in the modern age.

At Iona, many women have active leadership roles in clubs and activities.

Senior Linnie Chong channels her passion for science into her role as President of

the Chemical Society. She knows just how male-dominated the STEM field can be, but believes that having more women in leadership is a step in the right direction.

“Throughout history, there has been a lack of women, especially women of color, in STEM,” Chong said. “I believe having women leaders for clubs like the Chemical Society is important because it allows other young women who want to pursue degrees and careers in science to see another woman who is achieving her goals. There is something so motivating about seeing a fellow woman in STEM succeeding!”

Chong celebrates Women’s History Month by celebrating the incredible contributions of women in STEM, including Marie M. Daly, the first African American woman in the U.S. to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry, and Tu Youyou, the first woman from China to receive a Nobel Prize. Chong also honors the influential women in her own life.

“During Women’s History Month, I often think about both of my grandmothers who did not have the opportunities that I have today,” Chong said.

In her role as President of the Finance Club, junior Gabriella Cocucci recognizes the importance of having diversified viewpoints in the finance industry. She draws inspiration from the celebration of fellow women leaders in March.

“This month serves as another motivating factor to me,” Cocucci said. “It shows that through hard work and dedication anything can truly be achieved.”

The President of the Marketing Club, senior Alana Zayas, also appreciates Women’s History Month and looks forward to even more women achieving their full potential.

“I think having a woman leader reiterates that when we put our minds to it, we can do it,” Zayas said. “I enjoy working with both my male and female colleagues on our executive board and look forward to hearing more accomplished women lead the Marketing Club.”

In the male-dominated field of international affairs, senior Nicholle Parsons is grateful for her role as President of Model UN, where she can help other women excel in their roles on the team. She notes that female representation is vital to encouraging even more women to get involved.

“When I was a freshman, there were three women on the Model UN team,” Parsons said. Today, four out of five e-board positions are filled by women and we have more than doubled the number of female team members. That’s what representation does.”

Motivated by their leadership positions at Iona, this next generation of female leaders is prepared to create a more inclusive workforce in the real world.

What to know as you prepare for fall course selections

By: Aliyah Rodriguez *Features & Lifestyle Editor*

The time has come once again to pick classes for next semester and it’s time to ask yourself all the important questions you may have around course selections such as how many classes you should take, if double majoring or declaring a minor is possible for you or if you’re even on track to graduate. It’s best to be as informed as possible to get the most out of course selection season.

If you’ve officially declared your major, then you should have a faculty advisor in your department to help steer you on the right path when selecting your courses. However, if you’re a new student or undeclared then you’ll have to go to an advisor in the advisement center for assistance.

Laurie Wenchell, the Senior Director at the Center for Advising and Academic Services, asks students to do their part in using the school’s available resources to check on their degree progress.

“First, use the tools you have available to keep you on the path to graduation, your Academic Advisors as a resource for all kinds of questions, PeopleSoft so you know what

your academic record looks like, if you have holds, if you have ‘to do’ something for any reason, and for your Degree Progress Report to track if you are completing degree components like the Core and your major, and the College Catalog for details about policies and options for multiple interests,” Wenchell said through email.

What are some options that students have moving forward? With the college’s announcement that in-person classes will fully resume in the Fall 2021 semester, some students may be wondering what course selections will look like. The college’s course registration page describes the modes of instruction that the college will have going forward. The pandemic has changed how and where we learn best, and the college’s additional modes of instruction show that they’re taking that into consideration.

The four type of courses being offered are traditional courses, hybrid courses, distance learning courses and service-learning courses.

The traditional courses are just like those that the college offered prior to the pandemic and for the duration of the 2020-2021 school year. These courses are ones where students attend in-person synchronously and their designated time.

The hybrid course format is something that most students may be familiar with. In hybrid courses, some classes will be on campus while others are online. For example, a class with a traditional Tuesday, Thursday, Friday schedule will most likely only meet in-person on Tuesdays and Thursdays while Fridays will be reserved for an online session through Blackboard.

Distance learning is the newest option brought on by the pandemic and only certain classes will be designated as distance learning going forward. In these courses, there are no on-campus class sessions and students can access their courses anywhere as long as they have a stable internet connection.

Lastly, service-learning course combines academic content, community service and strategic reflection into one course. This kind of course directly focuses on community service and strengthening communities.

Open enrollment for the fall semester has already begun and Wenchell gives some final advice for students getting ready to pick their courses for the fall.

“I hope that students will talk about all of their interests with their advisors early, and be open to the multiple paths that might exist for options moving toward degree completion,” Wenchell said through email. “The chosen major doesn’t have to define what you will do in your career or even your first job, but your ability to try new things, find out what you’re good at, and what you find worth pushing yourself to achieve, is something that will give students the confidence to pursue new and interesting options that open up possibilities during and after school.”



PHOTO FROM @LIRA_KARINA ON INSTAGRAM
Reach out to your advisor for advice on how to choose your courses.

No more FOMO!

By: Tiffany Persaud *Assistant Features & Lifestyle Editor*



PHOTO BY TIRACHARD KUMTANOM FROM PEXELS.
Many students have opted for remote learning, making the normal college experience feel distant and unfamiliar.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a lot from students and now the campus is even more divided between residents, commuters and remote-learning students. Even if you’re on campus regularly, you might be feeling like something isn’t the same - like you’re missing out on all the great experiences of college life.

During the school week, Iona offers many educational yet fun projects and events for its students. Guest speakers are always welcomed into the school’s departments, art-exhibits are often displayed, and community and outreach services are always activities worth the time. But all these things took a drastic halt due to COVID-19.

Nights at Beechmont Tavern, Spectator’s Sports Club, hanging out with friends in the dorm common spaces and frat parties all seem like distant memories for many – things just haven’t been the same. Scrolling through TikTok until 2 a.m is not the ideal Saturday night for most Gaels, but that’s just our reality.

Senior Natalia Pena is currently enjoying her online class experience in Miami Beach, Florida. Despite being someone who does not socialize much, Pena misses the comfort her roommates gave her.

“Granted, our group chat is still quite strong, but it just isn’t the same as seeing them with their bowls of coffee and distaste for chocolate,” Pena said. “I miss our weekly pasta nights after night class and my every-few-months-trip to the city with another group of friends. I miss the community I made there that isn’t the same as one as powerful on a digital scale.”

Those on campus feel like they are being hit with FOMO – the fear of missing out - the worst. They attend classes as they normally would but are completely fenced in as no one can interact like they used to.

Junior Riley White is sentimental about losing one and a half years of her college experience. Although the pandemic has brought on illness and deaths to American lives, the happiness of college-aged kids is often overlooked. People assume that the lack of social interactions can be easily overcome, but that is not the case for students who are used to heavy socialization and involvement on their college campus.

“Though I’m on campus, I feel like I’m missing out on so many activities,” White said. “I miss going to basketball games, eating at Lapenta, even going to all my classes in person. Some days it feels like I wake up to hang out in my dorm all day.”

Most students remember reading Iona’s extended Spring Break email, then the closure announcement email and then trying to figure out how to work Zoom. FOMO reached its peak in the spring when the ’99 babies were turning 21 and spent their birthday home- not to mention the virtual graduation for the class of ’20.

But now, a year later, when Iona’s students are snuggled in with online schooling, most students probably had mixed reactions to the recent announcement of Iona College’s full reopening for the Fall 2021 semester. The bubbling atmosphere at Iona is expected to be in full swing as students will try to make up for their FOMO during the quarantine. It’s clear that the parties are not what FOMO is all about, but the meaningful, in-person connections we make with one another.

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Phone: (914) 633-2370
E-mail: ionian@iona.edu
Web site: theionian.org

Stacey Franciamore
Editor-In-Chief

Margaret Dougherty
Managing Editor

Emily Varker
Chief Copy Editor

Krystal Ortiz
News Editor

Matthew Chaves
Sports Editor

Aliyah Rodriguez
Features & Lifestyle Editor

Joseph Ferrer
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Riana Khan
Chief Photo Editor

Ciara Serpa
Advertising Manager

Frances Hoey
Social Media Manager

Prof. Mitchell Bard
Media & Strategic
Communication Dept.
Advisor

Printer:
Media Trends
(732) 548-7088

Layout Design by
Nicole Chacon

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Why you should read what you want

By: Ciara Serpa *Advertising Manager*

Today, we see more acceptance and movements to be who you truly are. Something that I would like to see is more acceptance in the literary world. Some of my favorite books are “Anna Karenina,” “One Hundred Years of Solitude” and “The Bell Jar.” While they may be famous works of literature that you read in AP Lit, none of these books are works of scholarly research, and that’s okay. I often see people on Instagram, YouTube and even Tiktok posting about how they love to read research papers in their free time, or how they consume mass amounts of what is considered “classic” literature. This is not for everyone.

While I mentioned some of my favorite books that fall under the category of “classics,” I also enjoy books like “House of Leaves,” “I’m Thinking of Ending Things” and “Diary of an Oxygen Thief.” These have all come out in the last 20 years and I consider them to be on the same level as my previous picks. I love books that mess with my head and make me think critically about my values and even how



SERPA

I read. No one should be ashamed of what forms of entertainment they prefer or whether it is superior to another. At one point in time, even “Pride & Prejudice” was shunned for not being a classic piece. Reading is all about finding new forms of entertainment and subjects that you are interested in.

Whether it is John Green, Sarah Dessen or a comic book series, all book preferences are valid and give their readers the same feeling of happiness. Everyone, at some point or another, is guilty of feeling superior for their taste or looking down on someone else for what they read or what they don’t. By getting rid of this way of thinking, we will encourage more people to read and find the genre or books that speaks to them. There are 129,864,880 books in the world, one of them must be for you!

Interested in contacting The Ionian’s Ciara Serpa? Email cserpa1@gaelsona.edu.

The benefits of drinking more water

By: Stacey Franciamore *Editor-in-Chief*

People underestimate how beneficial drinking water is for their health. Whenever someone mentions that they want to start living a healthier lifestyle, my first piece of advice is to start drinking more water.

Here are some of the health benefits of drinking water:

1) Prevents Joint Pain

Water acts as a lubricant for our muscles and joints, which helps prevent injuries and leads to a faster recovery time after exercise.

2) Helps Balance Your Body Temperature

When you sweat and urinate your body rids itself of water. Water replenishes your body after you sweat and urinate, which helps balance your body temperature.

3) Flushes Toxins

The more water you drink the more waste you flush out through urination. This is a natural way for your body to detox and rid itself of toxins.

4) Improves Exercise Performance

Dehydration can drastically decrease performance levels. Losing as little as 2% of the body’s water content can lead to fatigue and reduced motivation.



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5) Boosts Brain Function

Dehydration can negatively impact concentration, memory and brain performance.

6) Improves Skin and Hair Health

Staying hydrated maintains skin moisture, delivers nutrients to skin cells and flushes toxins, such as bacteria, that may be harmful to the skin. Water intake also helps prevent wrinkles and other skin diseases.

7) Aids in Weight Loss

Drinking more water will boost your metabolism. Water will also make you feel

more full and reduce your caloric intake. It’s recommended to drink cold water because your body will use more energy to warm the water to meet your body temperature.

How To Start Drinking More Water

The best thing you can do is buy a reusable water bottle. Make sure it’s always full and take it with you everywhere you go. Remember that you need to make an effort to drink the water. The water bottle will be of no use if you fill it up and neglect it.

If you’re someone that struggles with drinking water because you don’t like the taste of it, start by trying other alternatives such as sparkling water or flavored water. You can even try unsweetened iced teas.

Additionally, if you’re making an effort to drink more water, try avoiding sugary drinks and drink water instead! It’s so easy for us to drink sodas and juices that contain unhealthy amounts of sugar, when plain water is the best option there is.

Sources: WedMD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Harvard Health Publishing.

Interested in writing for The Ionian?
Contact Stacey Franciamore, our
Editor-in-Chief, at
sfranciamore1@gaelsona.edu

‘Cherry’: a movie whose ambitions did not pay off

By: Jocelyn Arroyo-Ariza Assistant News Editor

Tom Holland is best known for playing Spider-Man in the MCU since his major film debut in 2016 in “Captain America: Civil War.” He is a beloved actor, crafting a personality around his quirks such as being the go-to for spoilers and his bromances with his co-stars. As of late, he is trying to break away from his family-friendly image as seen from his role as Arvin Russel in “The Devil At the Time.” When long-time collaborators the Russo brothers approached him to star in their first post-Marvel picture he gladly accepted. “Cherry” quickly gained traction as an experimental fourth-wall-breaking exposé of a soldier turned criminal. What we got instead was secondhand embarrassment.

Released in theaters on February 26 and to Apple TV+ on March 12, “Cherry” has gathered negative reviews from audiences and critics. The plot can be simplified to the main character Cherry falling in love with Emily (Ciara Bravo) who decides to study in Montreal, leaving him broken-hearted and enlisting in the army. However, Emily decides not to leave him but it is too late. Most of the story beats are spoiled by the trailers as another awards bait picture.

“Cherry” has a lot of questionable moments, but some are better unsaid. Other moments that are supposed to be serious are laughable at best, alarmingly so since the movie pertained to the opioid crisis. The story seems simple following Cherry falling in love, dropping out of college, joining the military and coming home suffering from PTSD. It is a plotline that you expect; perhaps the Russo brothers agreed to compensate for this by trying to spice up the runtime to an overly long two and a half hours.

Tom Holland and Ciara Bravo are miscast; both actors are still playing roles as teenagers and it feels awkward and unbelievable to have them as a married couple. They are both fine actors that are muddled in a lack of direction lost in the flashing style. Holland and Bravo both give it their best attempt, working with questionable lines that send the audience into disbelief that this is what the marriage between Spiderman and Katie from “Big Time Rush” would look like.

The two hours and twenty minutes drag, yet the actual story progresses quickly, creating an uneasy atmosphere. The audience has to fill in the blanks inferring what the characters are like with the movie providing so little. You

are expected to be familiar with the characters without knowing them. Cherry does not properly introduce the characters as they go from a cute college couple to robbing banks.

It is hard to imagine that no one in the cast or crew noticed how “Cherry” was portraying this story. The seriousness of the movie is replaced with framing deceives that would be found in an amateur student film that doesn’t know better. Yet, the Russo brothers do know better as they have arguably directed the best Marvel movies. If you are a fan of Tom Holland or any of the actors, I would suggest skipping “Cherry” because you are not missing much.



PHOTOS FROM APPLE TV+

“Cherry” features strong actors but doesn’t utilize them properly.

‘Raya and the Last Dragon’ shows potential but feels rushed

By: Joseph Ferrer Arts & Entertainment Editor

Debuting on Disney+’s Premiere Access, “Raya and the Last Dragon” has all of the ingredients for a story that should have been fantastic. The film is an action-filled adventure with an interesting world and character concepts as well as fantastic animation. However, Raya’s biggest flaw is that the scope of its story is far too ambitious to fit cohesively into a film with a two-hour runtime. As a result, the film feels incredibly rushed and never gives proper time to truly explore its world or its characters.

The film focuses on Raya (Kelly Marie Tran), a lone princess from one of five warring nations on a quest to save the world from ancient monsters known as Druun that turn people to stone. Along the way, Raya meets Sisu (Awkwafina), an ancient water dragon who travels with Raya to each of the nations to help revive her family.

“Raya’s” over-ambitiousness can immediately be felt with the film’s premise as the movie starts with a heavy, fast-paced exposition dump to explain its world. There are a lot of moving parts within Raya’s story but the movie moves so fast to focus on its

MacGuffin-centered plot that there isn’t enough time to fully explore any of the story’s elements individually. This is a great shame, especially because the world that “Raya” is trying to present is genuinely interesting.

For example, much of the world and its characters revolve around dealing with the petrifying Druun monsters, which are weak to water. The movie presents compelling ideas using these concepts such as a character who never leaves his boat after his family turned to stone or a kingdom surrounded by a canal for protection that struggles for resources due to their expanding population. These ideas are unfortunately only lightly touched upon as there isn’t enough time to fully explore them at an individual level.

The film’s excessive ambition negatively affects its characters and script as well. Raya is an engaging protagonist and her journey of learning how to trust others has a good message but her important character moments happen so quickly that the script constantly has to state aloud the film’s message of trust instead of giving time to let each moment speak for itself. As a result, the whole film suffers from telling the viewer information rather than showing it. Raya and the rest of the cast’s dialogue and interactions are also so brief that while they are enjoyable, there isn’t enough time to properly come to love them like with other Disney films.

The script also has the issue of being overly modern. Characters frequently talk and use phrases that relate to the real world but feel incredibly out of place in the ancient setting of the film. While the film was marketed as representing Southeast Asian cultures, the film doesn’t do a great job of making that clear. This can especially be felt with Sisu’s character design which looks more like a highly marketable animal mascot rather than an actual Southeastern Asian dragon.

Despite the issues with its narrative, “Raya” is beautifully animated and one of Disney Animation’s prettiest films. Fight scenes are energetically choreographed and the environments look stunning and unique during the brief amount of time the plot allows Raya to explore them.

Ultimately, “Raya and the Last Dragon” is a story that would have worked far better in a medium suited to long-form storytelling such as a series as that would have let it properly flesh out its ideas. While it can be enjoyable, it is not worth the extra \$30 alongside a Disney+ subscription to see.



PHOTO FROM DISNEY

“Raya and the Last Dragon” should have been great but constantly feels constrained.

Marvel Universe continues to surprise with latest entry: ‘The Falcon and the Winter Soldier’

By: Katherine Daly

Staff Writer

The latest series from Marvel, “The Falcon and the Winter Soldier” premiered on Disney+ on March 19. After the dust settles from the events of Marvel’s “Avengers: Endgame,” the series sees the resolved duo of the “Winter Soldier” Bucky Barnes (Sebastian Stan) and “Falcon” Sam Wilson (Anthony Mackie) struggle with everyday life. As they fight over simple things such as bank loans to complex issues from their experiences such as PTSD, they try to find their place in the world without good old Captain America and simply work out what it means to move forward.

Anthony Mackie and Sebastian Stan play their parts well which slowly draws the viewer into the show. The intro action sequence was spectacular and showcases what the Falcon can really do. Bucky, on the other hand, becomes more human, which is intriguing. He’s now a free man weighted with guilt as he tries to right the wrongs he once committed and feels left behind. Bucky is seen taking the help of a counselor with

the hope of bettering himself after his long period of being a pawn to Hydra.

The first episode was well-packed with action, a bit of humor and loads of emotion. It opens new horizons and shines a light on how Sam and Bucky are continuing their lives after the events of “Endgame.” It’s neat to watch Sam fight crime while supporting his family on the side.

A small flaw was the weak pseudo–Captain America created by the government. It’s meant to be a plot device to move our characters forward a bit quicker. It’s used as a clock because now time is ticking for our heroes to do something.

Overall, this show provides intriguing themes of legacy and how people waver under the pressure of filling someone else’s shoes. The show delivers on a simple premise, but it leaves plenty of room for questioning. It’s a well-meaning show with great action, a dark tonal shift and an organic, memorable feeling.



PHOTOS FROM MARVEL STUDIOS

“The Falcon and the Winter Solider” depicts superheroes trying to move on from traumatic events in their past.

Iona cross country continues domination in MAAC, finishes 10th at NCAA

By: Matthew Chaves

Sports Editor



PHOTO COURTESY OF ICGAELS.COM

Graduate Student Jack O’Leary received the United States Track and Field Coaches and Cross Country Coaches Association Fred Tootell Award for his performances this season. This is given to the best male runner in the northeast.

The Iona College men’s and women’s cross country teams have defended their titles in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference. It’s the 30th-straight title for men’s cross country and fifth for women’s.

In the men’s individual section, Iona took eight of the top 10 spots, led by graduate student Jack O’Leary with a time of 24:28.10. He was followed by junior Jamie Dee and graduate student Ehab El-Sandali. The two finished just behind O’Leary, only by milliseconds. Dee clocked in at 24:28.14 while El-Sandali clocked in at 24:28.19.

On the women’s side of things, Iona took four of the top 10 spots, led by graduate student Gemma Nuttall’s 21:43.93. She was followed by graduate student Kaitlyn Ohrtman with a 21:48.93 and freshman Holly Smith with a 21:55.24.

Head coach Joe Pienta spoke with icgaels.com in an interview regarding the upcoming cross country schedule in the NCAA. COVID-19 testing was successful with all negatives coming back from the tests, Pienta said.

Pienta is glad his team hasn’t lost focus despite the lack of action in the past year.

“I probably saw [the team] four times since last October,” Pienta said via video call.

“I was busy myself and wasn’t at practice a whole lot when we started February 1, but I think it’s a credit to them, all our student-athletes on the team and all our runners that they were just able to grind and get the job done.”

The challenges presented to Pienta were unlike any other this year. Despite the rocky road traveled by the cross country team, Pienta and the runners were able to trudge through to make the NCAAAs once again.

Of the seven runners who went to Oklahoma to compete in the NCAA championship, two finished in the top 30 in 10k. O’Leary finished with a time of 30:29.2 and El-Sandali finished with a time of 30:34.9.

Nuttall was the sole representative for the Gaels’ women’s team, finishing 198th out of 253, with a time of 22:26 in the 6k. It was the first ever NCAA Division 1 cross country event for the graduate student.

The Gaels now start their outdoor track and field season, with their next event being the Raleigh Relays on Thursday.

Opinion: Pitino eases Gaels’ worries in season of uncertainty

By: Giovanni Paolo Tagliafierro *Assistant Sports Editor*

This year Rick Pitino entered March Madness with his fifth different team. He is one of only three college hoops coaches to ever do so, cementing his name among the best to ever do it and fortifying his resume for the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame.

No one could have predicted such a story-book ending to a season that even an optimist would have considered “lost.” The Gaels trudged through two COVID-19 shutdowns, one that stretched from December to February, and another that ended their season five games short, forcing them to enter the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference tournament having not played in 17 days.

For maybe the first time in his coaching career, Pitino was toe-to-toe with an opponent that he had no game film of and no winning game plan against.

Yet Pitino helped rally his men over these major obstacles, keeping their heads up and eyes open towards the end goal of winning yet another conference championship. The storied coach did not come to Iona to surrender his winning mentality.

Pitino also kept things in perspective this season. In a press conference following the championship win over Fairfield, he shared the difficulties of the season but emphasized how the team never complained. Pitino reaffirmed daily that the realities of the pandemic were far worse and far more real for many others.

With the wisdom that is acquired over decades of coaching, Pitino preached to his players to work hard and worry about only what they could control.

This approach culminated into Iona’s best stretch of basketball at the end of the year, especially their concluding series against Monmouth which saw them put up 179 points over two games against one of the MAAC’s premier teams.

Pitino’s East Side accent and uptown swagger brings an attitude to the Gaels that an established mid-major needs to ultimately make it past the Round of 64. The notability of the Pitino name is a great addition to Iona athletics, but this season demonstrated that the hire was not a publicity stunt. Instead, it stood as a great leap forward for a program that year after year finds itself on the precipice of gaining national attention, and not because of the name of their head coach, but because of their play.

The coach’s fiery demeanor is an example of the spark that he brings to the hardwood. Pitino’s press conferences capture his candid nature, when he would be all-too comfortable highlighting a player’s bad shot selection to the media.

This shows the honest relationship he has with his players, and why they fought for him in the trenches throughout such a turbulent season.

Who can argue with the results?

After over 40 years of coaching in countless positions in leagues at every level, coach



PHOTO COURTESY OF ICGAELS.COM

Iona men’s basketball head coach Rick Pitino observes players during a practice in the Hynes Center at Iona College in New Rochelle, NY.

Rick Pitino made a statement in his first campaign in New Rochelle.

This season marked his first collegiate coaching job following the various scandals at Louisville which resulted in his termination, and the vacating of his 2013 national title. It was a devastating blow to the college basketball world, but it is obvious that Pitino has come to terms with his past, and is only looking forward to his next chapter here at Iona.

Yes, the next chapter looks very bright.

Pitino’s recruiting expertise gives Iona something they have never had before. The program now offers the chance to play under a legendary player’s coach to top recruits across the country. The addition of Trey James, the all-leader in blocks in the state of Kentucky, to the 2021 recruiting class fully demonstrated the “Pitino effect,” with many other impressive players sure to follow.



QUOTE OF THE ISSUE

“Just keep going. Everybody gets better if they keep at it.”
- Ted Williams

Gaels strike gold for fifth straight MAAC championship, but fall short against Alabama

By: Giovanni Paolo Tagliafierro *Assistant Sports Editor*

Iona men’s basketball capped off their 2021 Metro Atlantic Athletic Association tournament run on March 13 with a 60-51 win over Fairfield in the championship game, and extended their conference champion streak to five years in a row.

Iona went into the half with a 12-point lead, and while Fairfield fought hard in the second half to close the gap, the Maroon and Gold kept finding ways to fight off the opposition’s rallies.

Defense was the key to the Gaels’ winning effort in the tournament finale, as Iona held the Stags to a .30 shooting percentage and outrebounded them 38 to 30.

Head coach Rick Pitino commended the effort of the team in the post-game press conference, especially how they were able to play man defense, a style that the Gael’s don’t run often because of the lack of team practices throughout the COVID-19 interrupted season. Senior guard Isaiah Ross was key to this effort, as he was able to prevent Fairfield’s Jake Wojcik from having any real scoring impact over the course of the game.

Senior guard Asante Gist, who was named the Most Valuable Player for the MAAC Championship game, dropped in 18 points and went 6-6 from the free throw line, helping to close out the game for the Gaels.

Nine-seed Iona’s road to the MAAC tournament championship began against eight-seed Quinnipiac.

The game featured three Gaels in double figures, led by Ross’ 15 points, as well as an impressive all-around performance from junior guard Berrick JeanLouis. He scored seven points, grabbed 11 rebounds and knabbed 3 steals in the 72-48 rout over the Cougars in the opening



round matchup.

The Iona men’s basketball team celebrating a 60-51 win over Fairfield in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference men’s basketball championship game in Boardwalk Hall, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ICGAELS.COM.

A 55-52 victory over number one-seed Siena followed the quarterfinal round. The game was a defensive battle on both sides, but the Gaels were ultimately able to contain Siena stars Jalen Pickett and Manny Camper to seal the victory.

A tightly contested first half which saw both teams put up poor shooting numbers and take difficult shots was followed up by a more impressive second period. Siena went up 39-30 after an alley-oop dunk that was finished off by Camper with 9:54 left on the clock, and momentum seemed to have swung heavily in favor of the Saints.

The Gaels’ defense responded and locked down once again, preventing Siena from scoring for over eight minutes. A bucket at the buzzer by Siena made it a one-

Iona was not able to rebound the ball defensively which resulted in 13 offensive rebounds for Alabama.

The combination of more shots, more depth and more offensive ability on the Alabama side proved to be the deciding factor in the Iona loss, as ’Bama pulled away after an important three-pointer by senior guard Alex Reese, and sealed the win with a reverse layup by sophomore star Jahvon Quinerly at the 1:28 mark.

The two seniors, Ross and Gist, shined in their final game in Maroon and Gold. They had 19 and 16 points respectively, and served as the Gaels’ main scoring threats.

While the season’s conclusion is disappointing to the program, the team looks forward to next season that will hopefully see the ending of the pandemic, as well as a new recruiting class and a revamped schedule.

Schedule changes continue as spring sports start

By: Matthew Chaves *Sports Editor*

Schedule changes have become the norm for student-athletes and coaches alike in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, and it doesn’t seem like these changes are going anywhere.

Postponements and games being rescheduled have been the number one tool for the MAAC to make sure

student-athletes across the conference are able to play their respective sport during the pandemic. To the best of the league’s ability, it has been successful so far.

The way the MAAC men and women’s basketball championship was set up this season helped the men’s basketball team a lot. The Gaels were 6-3 in the MAAC

before the championship thanks to one of the longest breaks in the NCAA this season, which spanned 51 days. The Gaels were hit with a positive COVID-19 case in late December, which caused the break to happen. Another positive case later in the season ended their regular season early on Feb. 20.

This wasn’t enough to stop the Gaels though as they went through the MAAC championships and took home the trophy for the fifth time in six seasons. Nonetheless, the shaky schedule has kept both players and coaches on their toes.

Sports affected so far for the Gaels include volleyball, baseball and men’s soccer. Baseball had their game with Siena rescheduled to March 21 and 22. Men’s soccer had their season starter against Saint Peter’s postponed, instead starting their season against Rider on March 18. Volleyball had their game versus Saint Peter’s postponed as well. Additionally, they had a match added on to their schedule versus Quinnipiac on March 19.

Men’s water polo has been affected by these delays as well, though they compete in the Northeast Water Polo Conference rather than the MAAC. Nonetheless, they’ve experienced three postponements out of a possible seven games.

The MAAC has also made changes to the lacrosse schedules as well. These haven’t affected Iona, but they show the looming impact COVID-19 still has on college sports today.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ICGAELS.COM

Schools all across the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference have experienced schedule changes throughout the season.