Thomas Johnson
Capstone Project Title: Sailing to a Better Future: Pacific Islanders Using Ancient Traditions to Educate and Solve Current Problems
Abstract: “We wa’a be weak, he makes wa’a.” (The core is our island, the island is our core) is a saying common among members of the voyaging community that highlights the importance of environmental awareness and working together for a better future and community. Indeed, voyaging organizations are using voyaging to promote education and sustainability and to reach cultural values and traditions. Tommy focuses on three such organizations, the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS), Oceanic, and the ‘Ohana Wa’a Nā Kāne, to investigate their different perspectives, approaches, and methods.

Serena Michel
Capstone Project Title: Establishing New Roots: Fijian Women’s Experiences in the Hawai’i Diaspora
Abstract: This research takes a womanist approach to the agency of indigenous women. Serena focuses on the migration of Fijian women to Hawai’i and their diasporic experiences in establishing new roots on O’ahu. Through face-to-face interviews with Fijian woman on O’ahu, Serena seeks to answer the question of how ideologies of gender shape these women’s experiences and their sense of agency.

Evan LaRochelle
Capstone Project Title: Kaipuani Schools Impact on the Cultural Identity of Hawaiian Students
Abstract: Evan’s research focuses on Hawaiian immersion schools and their ability to positively affect the cultural identity of Native Hawaiian students. This semester he worked at Ke Kula Kaipuani ‘Aunue to investigate how this school has played a role in the revitalization of Hawaiian culture and creates impacts through its use of the Hawaiian language in the curriculum, its website, cultural practices, and sports.

Hinaikawaihiilei Keala
Capstone Project Title: Pu Moi La Ka Wa’a I Ka ‘Āina: Voyaging Hawai’i’s Youth to New Horizons in Education
Abstract: With the recent resurgence in traditional Hawaiian voyaging and navigation, many of Hawai’i’s teachers have started to implement voyaging practices and exercises in their classroom. This semester, Hina worked with the Kānehālōkula Voyaging Academy, a nonprofit organization that promotes education through voyaging and traditional coastal canoes. Hina hopes to shed light on the value of voyaging for cultural identity, sustainability, and ocean awareness, and she further investigates the effects and benefits of these voyaging practices for Native Hawaiian youth.

Alexis Mary Sue Abaya
Capstone Project Title: Cultural Misunderstandings: Looking Toward a New Future
Abstract: Alexis’s research focuses on the interactions between students and their teacher(s) in a classroom setting at Pāiloa Elementary. She highlights some of the cultural misunderstandings between Pacific Islander students and their non-Pacific Islander teacher(s), which sometimes arise from the circumstances of low-income households and the daily roles of household chores, caring for younger siblings, and working parents who are unable to guide their children’s progress.

Phil Meleisea
Capstone Project Title: Department of Land & Natural Resources (DLNR) versus Hunters
Abstract: Phil seeks to understand the dispute between the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and Hawai’i’s hunting community. His research is guided by interviews from the Wa’i‘anae town on O’ahu, the Office of State Representative Cedric Garey, and other various state agencies. He poses the question of whether sufficient common grounds and solutions exist for protecting Hawai’i’s watersheds while continuing to offer hunting opportunities suitable for members of the Wa’i‘anae community.

Joanna Santos
Capstone Project Title: Embracing Multicultural Education at Palolo Elementary
Abstract: Joanna’s topic explores the importance of culturally relevant teaching and understanding multicultural pedagogy in the context of Micronesian students in Hawai’i. This semester Joanna worked with a first-grade class at Palolo Elementary School in Palolo Valley. She wanted to answer the question, “To what extent does pedagogy inhibit or empower the relationships between educators and Micronesian students?” Through engagement with the students and their teacher at Palolo Elementary and drawing on the existing discussion on multicultural pedagogy, she proposes that incorporating culturally relevant strategies can enhance and strengthen relationships between Micronesian students and their teachers.

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Robi "Kaehu" Akina
Capstone Project Title: What Pacific Island Students Want Their Educators to Know: Students at Kaimuki High School
Kaehu’s presentation will focus on Pacific Island students attending Kaimuki High School who are enrolled in a program called the Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Among other things, AVID is designed to ensure that all students (especially the least served) will succeed and take part in mainstream activities at school and to help with their enrollment in four-year universities and colleges. Through surveys, ‘iho o‘one (‘iwi Hawaiian sayings), and reflection pieces, Kaehu seeks to address some of the ways that students experience the high school setting, learning, and interactions with their peers.