Amanda Dominique is a graduating senior majoring in International Relations & Diplomacy, and Religious Studies, with minors in French and History. She worked with Prof. Hugh Bayard Urban (Comparative Studies) on her thesis titled, “A Peyote Exemption: Examining Identity and Race Between the Native American Church and U.S. Law.”

The American legal context of religious freedom is an area marked by turmoil. Religious groups must seek explicit protection, boxing in their identity to fit the American Protestant mold of what a religion is. American Indians have faced a long battle for religious recognition and protection. This paper looks at the Native American Church (NAC), a group that follows peyotism in a culturally specific context. The NAC restricts membership to people with 25% American Indian blood, an ethnic requirement United States law seems to support. In 1990, the United States Supreme Court effectively declared peyote use illegal for all Americans under the current drug laws in the case of Oregon v. Smith. The NAC continued to fight for their religion and rights until 1994 when the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments created a legal exemption for members of federally recognized Indian tribes. Since the creation of the exemption, there have been several cases brought forth by white Americans seeking the right to practice the peyote religion. This project investigates these cases and other responses to the ethnic requirements for use of peyote in America. There are two main parts to this research project: analyzing the historical context that led to the creation of the peyote exemption and collecting contemporary reactions to determine the effects of the peyote exemption on the understanding of ethnicity, law, and religion in America. This research will be completed using a variety of reading materials from academic books, websites, court opinions, and journal articles.

This research also analyzes how the use of different identities, political, ethnic, religious, etc. are used to latch onto greater protections for the NAC. The legal debate surrounding peyote is far from over, yet the exemption remains in US law. Legal frameworks, political identity, and prioritized political rights play the biggest roles in upholding the ethnically restrictive peyote exemption.

A Peyote Exemption: Examining Identity & Race Between the Native American Church & U.S Law, by Amanda Dominique.
Kerry Stevens is a graduating senior majoring in Security & Intelligence and Chinese. She worked with Prof. Hollie Nyseth Brehm of the Sociology Department on her research project titled, “Recognizing the Chinese Marriage Trade as a Gray Market.”

China’s 1980 One Child Policy and the recent migration of women from rural to urban areas has left rural China with a large gender imbalance and a deficit of women to be wives. In result, a marriage trade in Northern China was developed by 3rd party brokers to supply the numerous Chinese bachelors with North Korean wives. Since the North Korean famine of the mid 1990s these women have been increasingly defecting to China. This emerging gray market assuages both the demands of traditional Chinese culture and China’s growing commercial sex industry. Some of these women willfully chose to be sold into marriage, and others were trafficked through methods of coercion and deception. My research introduces and emphasizes the power and ability that gray markets have on the current and future derailment of Chinese society by examining how various governments and organizations frame this issue. For example, do they label it as human trafficking, as a gray market or as a legal action? I have analyzed open access sources from the United States and Chinese government, the United Nations, three international non government organizations focused on the protection of human rights, three faith based organizations, and five non government organizations focused on the North Korean refugee crisis. I find that the majority of these organizations minimize the North Korean female voices in comparison to the praise they give to their financial support, their employees, and if applicable, their faith. The United States, the United Nations and these western organizations define this marriage trade only as human trafficking. Motivation aside, the minimization of these women’s voices, the heavy influence of Western opinion and money and China’s heavy censorship, make it difficult to recognize the gray areas of this situation. Furthermore these women are often only depicted as victims to be saved, allowing the trade’s dual functionality to be less acknowledged. The Chinese Marriage Trade is a gray market and its negative impact should not be ignored. Many nations are vulnerable to gray markets like this and it is imperative that we begin to recognize and target them.