



*This image shows a map of Nagorno-Karabakh, taken from the Caucasus Heritage Watch monitoring dashboard. Monitored locations are highlighted on the map with blue, yellow, and red dots. Blue dots represent sites that are threatened, yellow represents sites that are damaged, red represents sites that are destroyed. Image credit: Caucasus Heritage Watch. Used with permission.*

accountable for their actions, to inform the public about the silent erasure of these sites, and to deter perpetrators from further destruction of these sites.

*Research advisor Ian Lindsay writes: “Peyton made important contributions to monitoring historic cultural heritage sites threatened by ongoing territorial conflicts and created StoryMaps to bring these issues to the public. He applied new STEM-centered skills in geospatial technologies, including satellite remote sensing and GIS, to his background in history and anthropology to address real-world geopolitical crises.”*

## **Laughter and Madness: The Comic Horror of *Evil Dead II***

**Student researcher:** David Gowan, Senior

Infamous for its gruesome, gory, blood-soaked imagery—and still banned in certain countries—the low-budget horror film *The Evil Dead* saw modest box office success in 1981, launching director Sam Raimi’s



*In one of the film’s iconic scenes, Ash has a mental breakdown and laughs into the camera, breaking the fourth wall. Still taken from *Evil Dead II* (StudioCanal, 1987).*

career. With his 1987 sequel, Raimi opted to push the series in another direction, expanding upon some of the darkly comic elements of the original to develop *Evil Dead II* as a horror comedy.

This research sought to interrogate the interaction between comedy and horror within *Evil Dead II* by using different theoretical approaches to comedy. The two main comedic theories applied in this analysis were the incongruity theory of comedy, which suggests that comedy stems from the connections formed between seemingly incompatible or incongruous ideas, and the superiority theory of comedy, which holds that comedy stems from the audience’s perceived superiority over the “victim” of a joke. An in-depth analysis of the film was undertaken, and various scenes were dissected and examined.

Throughout *Evil Dead II*, laughter is intertwined with insanity and evil. The demonic spirits that torture the protagonist, Ash, do so in juvenile, Chaplinesque ways, for amusement—both theirs and ours. Only when Ash is pushed to the limit and has a psychotic break does he begin to fully appreciate his circumstances—that he is the butt of some cosmic joke—and join in laughing, becoming part of the madness. In this regard, the comedy of *Evil Dead II* builds another dimension to the film’s horror, enhancing the story, rather than undermining it.

*Research advisor Elena Coda writes: “David drew on various comedic theories to offer a nuanced understanding of the film’s use of visual gags and grotesque imagery. He successfully demonstrated how the film’s use of irony and parody subverted traditional horror tropes, and presented*

*a convincing argument for the effectiveness of the comedy-horror hybrid in this cult classic.”*

### **Examining the Examiner: An Amicus Brief on Conflicts Between Forensic Technology and Indigenous Religious Freedoms in Favor of Virtual Autopsies**

**Student researcher:** Peyton James, Senior

*Examining the Examiner* began as a classroom project on a topic that intersects technology and culture. Stemming from my degree in anthropology and interests in religion, law, and forensic science, I submitted my research in an amicus brief format incorporating all these aspects. An amicus brief is a legal document in which anyone not a party to a case assists the court by offering information, expertise, or insight that has a bearing on the issues in the case.

This amicus brief supports the use of virtual autopsy in the case of Mushkooub Aubid, a member and spiritual leader of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, whose death in a single-vehicle car accident in 2015 became the center of controversy when legal authorities insisted on a medical autopsy against the traditions of Aubid’s tribe. Due to Aubid’s history of cardiac issues, his family concluded

that he experienced a medical event while driving. While the state patrol did not request an autopsy, the local Minnesota medical examiner insisted on one, against Aubid’s religious traditions.

The objective of the amicus is to work with Indigenous People in determining the best way of handling the deceased during forensic investigations that does not inhibit practicing traditions. A practical solution could be a virtual autopsy, which would not leave any tissue damage on the deceased as a conventional autopsy would. With the current technology available in hospitals, performing a virtual autopsy is a viable option. For example, computed tomography scans can locate foreign objects within the tissue or bodily organs, as shown in a 2019 study of individuals in combat-related circumstances. Most notably, a 2014 study shows that virtual autopsies can identify 60–80% of injuries. This insight supports the procedure’s credibility in investigations that may not be caused by foul play.

*Research mentor Risa Cromer writes: “Peyton’s hypothetical amicus brief provides an evidenced-based argument for virtual autopsies within forensic investigations to respect Indigenous people’s rights to religious freedom. Peyton smartly argues that virtual autopsies are a viable alternative that avoids the need to dissect the decedent or interfere in time-sensitive practices related to death and burial.”*



*CT scans are one of many forms of technology that can be used to perform virtual autopsies.*

### **Efficacy of the Pedagogical, Cultural, and Advocacy Programming at Purdue University Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center**

**Student researcher:** Michael Kuczajda, Senior

Founded in 2015, the Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center (AAARCC) carries on the work of past groups and individuals providing pedagogical, cultural, and advocacy programming to help educate everyone on campus. AAARCC hopes to help students find a sense of belonging that contributes to creating a successful identity, both professionally and academically, while also helping the community be better educated and more inclusive. Through survey analysis, archival study, and participant observation, it has been shown that events consistently drew interested students (for example, the weekly Lunch and Learn program series), and most