



William Critchley-Minor, S.J.  
American Studies Department 2020 Collins Award Winner

The American Studies department is proud to name William Critchley-Menor, S.J., as our 2020 Outstanding Senior. A brilliant scholar and reader of cultural artifacts, Billy has made immense contributions in our classrooms, especially with his important work on racism and racial-justice activism within U.S. Catholic communities. This includes a penetrating, wide-ranging senior thesis on the 1960s Black Power movement and the National Black Catholic Sisters Conference.

There are myriad other qualities Billy's professors and peers admire in him: his personal and intellectual generosity, his unwavering determination to highlight and seek to rectify social injustice, his creativity as a thinker and a writer. But two characteristics make Billy a particular fitting recipient of the American Studies award.

First is his deep commitment to the project of interdisciplinarity at the heart of our field. By wrestling tenaciously to combine American Studies frameworks with methods from history, theology, philosophy, and the arts, Billy demonstrates how a critical interdisciplinary study of American culture can produce new understandings of power, oppression, and resistance over time.

Second is Billy's ardent insistence that the claims and insights we generate in our academic work ought to be connected with the social struggles ongoing beyond the campus gates. He is engaged in activist work on immigration justice; he writes for *America* magazine on topics like HIV/AIDS, indigenous rights, and anti-racist religious organizing; and he uses historical methods to catalyze a deepened sense of moral responsibility with the Jesuit Slavery, History, and Memory project. Throughout, Billy shows all of us in American Studies how our academic work might matter, and should be made to matter, in the broader social worlds we inhabit.

Billy is staying with us for an M.A. and we look forward to learning and growing with him next year.