During my spring 2019 leave, I began a monograph length study of the pregnant subject that aims to answer the following question: How do diverse readings of the body—readings of the womb, specifically—elide complex questions of female identity and agency and shape understandings of pregnancy? The book, now titled A Womb of One’s Own: Reading the Pregnant Subject, examines four archetypes of the pregnant subject and their role in enabling or disabling women’s embodied subjectivity: mother (Mary), protector (Athena), lover (Venus), and object of beauty (Barbie). I argue that what the female body is, what it does or performs, and what it represents remain significant for female subjects and the world they inhabit. If a woman is not a womb yet has a womb, to employ the language of Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex, she must navigate the changing forces that operate on her body and define her. If a woman is not a womb but has an impregnated womb, she must navigate the (sometimes tacit) norms of both womanhood and pregnancy: she is not her womb, but her womb is visible. Her uterus, normally unseen, is on full display: physicians measure it and technicians peer inside it. She cannot dictate its size, nor can she hide it. Her body precedes and defines her, eliding other aspects of her being and self-identity—her rational capacity, for one thing, and her particular historical and existential situation for another. Her womb becomes the element of her embodiment most conscious to viewers and, in some cases, most conscious to herself, reinforcing an already contracted understanding of the body.

Scholarly analyses of women’s objectification have served to expose and explain a significant source of female inferiority: women are their bodies in a way that men are not. While all subjects must negotiate the paradoxes of their embodiment—they must both be and not be their bodies—walking around with a growing, moving, living womb makes the negotiation a public endeavor. I maintain that the ambiguity of pregnancy offers women an occasion to rethink what it means—and how it feels—to live in this world as a woman. It also provides an opportunity to revisit women’s unique embodiment and reconsider the role pregnancy plays in women’s subjectivity.

My examination of female embodiment probes representations of pregnant subjects—anatomical illustrations, wax dolls, plastic models, and photographs—to expose their cultural meanings and interrogate the ideas of feminine subjectivity they suggest. I show how these representations can yield positive readings of the pregnant subject by encompassing both the negative moment of how women have suffered oppression vis-à-vis pregnancy, and the positive moment of how women can recast pregnancy as an empowering experience.
“The Crowd is Untruth!” Kierkegaard’s Social Psychology. Drawing on insights from Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and contemporary empirical psychology, ‘The Crowd is Untruth!’ Kierkegaard’s Social Psychology will argue that Kierkegaard’s recognizes the social challenges to becoming an authentic person and offers concrete strategies for self-actualization. This book draws together elements of my dissertation, my previously published articles, and my research on contemporary social psychology and emotion regulation. My dissertation argued that Kierkegaard’s holds a libertarian theory of moral responsibility and character formation, that is, that individuals make free choices and that those free choices form both the basis for our practices of holding each other responsible for our actions, and for the ability for the individual to intentionally become a certain kind of person. I also argued that Kierkegaard’s Christian Discourses contain implicit strategies that the individual can employ to regulate emotions and develop good moral character. However, this second claim was underdeveloped in my dissertation. I have now published three articles that further develop Kierkegaard’s emotion regulation strategies and demonstrate Kierkegaard’s continual relevance for character formation. However, my articles have not shown how prescient Kierkegaard was of contemporary social psychology, or the resources within Kierkegaard’s writings for responding to some of the pressing psychological questions of our time. ‘The Crowd is Untruth!’ Kierkegaard’s Social Psychology will deal in depth with two major insights in twentieth century psychology—the cognitive nature of the emotions and emotion regulation strategies, and the influence of social forces on individual decision-making. Kierkegaard anticipates both insights and offers unique strategies for regulating one’s emotions and making autonomous decisions in the face of strong social forces. I will conclude that my interpretation of Kierkegaard unearths an ingenious response to one of the gravest threats to character formation—situationism. Situationism is a principle from social psychology which states that social factors have a stronger influence on an individual’s behavior than personal factors like temperament or character traits. Kierkegaard’s regulatory strategies and his understanding of a human beings need for Divine commands such as you shall love your neighbor form the basis for the strategy an individual can employ to successfully overcome social forces.