

THANKS

We would like to thank Boston College, the Institute for the Liberal Arts, and the Office of the Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences for the financial support that makes this issue possible.

QUESTIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

If you have any questions, please contact the journal at elements@bc.edu. All submissions can be sent to elements.submissions@gmail.com. Visit our website at www.bc.edu/elements for updates and further information.

COVER

Mosque in Queens, New York

© Michel Setboun/Photononstop/Corbis

PERIODICITY

Elements is published twice an academic year in the fall and spring semesters.

The information provided by our contributors is not independently verified by *Elements*.

The materials presented represent the personal opinions of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of *Elements* or the Boston College community.

Elements, Undergraduate Research Journal, Volume 11, Issue 1, Spring 2015

Boston College, 140 Commonwealth Avenue, Service Building 103,
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

Printed by Flagship Press, 150 Flagship Drive, North Andover, MA 01845

Copyright © 2015 by the Trustees of Boston College

ELEMENTS STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MARISSA MARANDOLA

MANAGING EDITOR

FRANK A. DIRENNO

DEPUTY EDITOR

ELLEN WHITE

LAYOUT

BRANDON BAVIER, *Senior Editor*

BETTY YUNQING WANG, *Editor*

KELSEY XIZI ZHANG, *Editor*

TREASURER

LYDIA ORR

HUMANITIES

GRACE WEST, *Senior Editor*

PATTY OWENS, *Senior Editor*

JACOB CIAFONE, *Editor*

DOMENICK FAZZOLARI, *Editor*

ANNIE KIM, *Editor*

MARIE PELLISSIER, *Editor*

SCIENCES

CORLEONE DELAVERIS, *Senior Editor*

SALJOOQ M. ASIF, *Editor*

DAVID FU, *Editor*

ALEX GILLIGAN, *Editor*

MICHELLE KANG, *Editor*

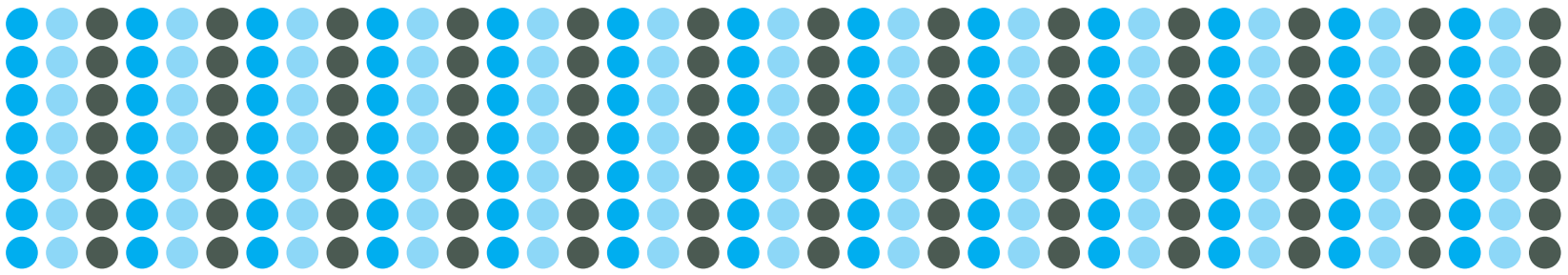
ALESSANDRA LUEDEKING, *Editor*

JINGZONG YAN, *Editor*

NICK YU, *Editor*

FACULTY ADVISOR

ELIZABETH CHADWICK



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

As an undergraduate research journal, we often confront the question of “so what?” Yes, this article is well written, meticulously sourced, and clearly developed; yes, it presents an interesting concept about a topic rarely considered in depth, but why should I read it? How is it related to my life? Why is this research significant in any sense beyond the purely academic? The “so what” problem presents a challenge to publications like *Elements* that gather work done by students in a wide variety of disciplines without a clear benchmark for “real world” applications. We find ourselves carrying an indispensable obligation to justify the relevance of research to our fellow students. This issue of *Elements* seeks to meet that burden by presenting a unique collection of pieces that clearly articulate why original research is more important in our increasingly complicated, globalized 21st century world than ever before.

In our cover article, Saljoq Asif tackles the endemic post-9/11 problem of “Muslim Identity in 21st Century America” through the lens of author Ayad Akhtar’s works. Given the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the Middle East, the recent shooting of three Muslim students at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and the impending trial of alleged Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the questions and conflicts Saljoq explores hold great importance to present and future efforts to resolve the problem of radical Islam and to offer full acceptance to Muslim Americans. Rachel Aldrich’s “Trauma, Fear, and Paranoia” further studies the domestic implications of 9/11 for Muslims in America, while Caitlin Toto examines the international consequences of these sociopolitical phenomena in “Behind the Veil.” These three articles, constructed through approaches and views from three distinct academic fields, offer us insight into some of the most pressing dilemmas, on a national and global scale, that our generation confronts.

Research allows us to better understand the world in which we operate. David Querusio contextualizes the constant debates about Michelle Obama’s role as “mom-in-chief” within the parallel traditions of black and white feminism in “From Mammy to Mommy.” The historical and socio-

logical narrative he creates helps the casual CNN viewer to grasp the layered issues underlying a seemingly superficial controversy. This function of research is not limited to matters of culture or politics, but also extends to our comprehension of the natural world. In “New Research in Solar Cells,” Michelle Solomon and Alison Johnson explain how recent advances in the study of urbach tails open a wide range of possibilities for innovative forms of alternative energy. The potential implications of her work present dynamic options for how we will think of fuel and power in generations to come.

The articles we publish make critical connections between events and issues past and present, tracing threads of intellectual and popular life through the centuries to their contemporary iterations. If *Elements* features a student’s work that provides analysis of the legal and technical nuances behind the Comcast-Time Warner merger, as Harrison Tune’s “Positive Law vs. Good Intentions” does, or unravels some of the complex historical strands that inform our ongoing debates about race in America, a task attempted by Danielle Nista’s “A Vigorous Affirmation of Life,” then we continue to prove the pertinence of research, of a liberal arts education, and of the university model itself. A publication like *Elements* ties together the too-often separated fields of research at a university like Boston College. We encourage you, as you peruse these pages, to look for the ways in which the diverse disciplines we have highlighted inform each other.

Happy reading!

Best,

MARISSA MARANDOLA

[Editor in Chief](#)