



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSuing TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2026

CONTACT:

Emily Stack Davis

517-803-3745

PR@hillsdale.edu

Follow [@HillsdalePR](https://twitter.com/HillsdalePR)

Hillsdale College Ph.D. Candidate Presents Doctoral Research on James Monroe

Samuel Lair presented research from his dissertation, 'Founder and Preserver: The Political Thought and Statesmanship of James Monroe.'

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College doctoral candidate Samuel Lair presented research from his dissertation, titled “Founder and Preserver: The Political Thought and Statesmanship of James Monroe.” Lair discussed Monroe’s theory about why self-government succeeded in America and what was necessary to preserve it. He gave his presentation on March 6 after successfully defending his dissertation before a faculty panel.

“What Lair’s dissertation was is the first book-length study of Monroe’s political thought,” said Professor of Politics Thomas G. West, who served as Lair’s dissertation chair. “Sam did a great job of showing the coherence and intelligence of Monroe’s approach to politics and political thought. What I found especially interesting was Monroe’s focus on the question of civic education and civic virtue as a necessary feature of a successful republican government.”

According to Lair, America was able to maintain its liberty after the Revolution because British colonial rule had given early Americans a chance to learn self-government.

“We had all the freedom of the state of nature, but we also had all the benefits coming from a civilized society,” Lair said. “America was able to kind of fiddle around with self-government in the colonial times, while still having the British Crown kind of guiding us, making sure we didn’t get too out of hand, right? And it’s that kind of moral process, this kind of apprenticeship in liberty, so to speak, that allowed America to be successful.”

According to Lair, Monroe strongly defended public education and the militia as two institutions that would help perpetuate the wise and courageous character needed to preserve American liberty.

Lair is the director of the Idaho Freedom Foundation’s Center for American Education. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 2019 and his Master of Arts in Politics from Hillsdale College’s Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship in 2022. Having successfully defended his dissertation, he will earn a Doctor of Philosophy in Politics and receive his diploma at Hillsdale College’s Commencement Ceremony in May.

For a headshot of Lair, click [here](#). For Lair’s student profile, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About the Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship

The Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship was founded in 2010 “to educate students in the language of American constitutionalism and to place its graduates in positions of public service in politics, in journalism, in the Academy, and elsewhere.” Its courses of study, which culminate in either a Master of Arts or a Doctor of Philosophy in Politics, are centered around the core texts from the Western and American traditions of political thought — what Thomas Jefferson called the “elementary books of public right.” All admitted students receive a full-tuition scholarship and admitted Ph.D. students receive an additional living stipend. For more information, visit gradschool.hillsdale.edu.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

###