

2024-2025

Rome

McMaster Fellow

Kathryn Phillips, Assistant Professor in Religious Studies - The Rome McMaster Learning Community is focused on issues facing refugees around the world. Italy is currently in the middle of a humanitarian crisis, receiving more asylum seekers than any other country in Europe. According to the International Rescue Committee, Italy received an estimated 700,000 asylum seekers and migrants from 2014-2020. Many of these were escaping war, religious persecution, and environmental issues such as famine among other crises. These McMaster scholars spend the academic year researching various issues refugees face including in areas of integration, education, and public policy. In Rome, the scholars work with our community partners, refugee organizations, to learn from experts in the field about best practices in assisting refugees in their new host countries.

McMaster Associate Fellow

Kate Davis, Krieger Visiting Scholar in Religious Studies

McMaster Scholars

Rachael Beardsley, Sophomore, Graphic Design & History - Her research focuses on how LGBTQ+ refugees face a unique and urgent crisis—disproportionately high rates of PTSD due to compounded trauma. Fleeing violence, discrimination, and criminalization, they endure dangerous journeys only to face further stigma and barriers to support in their host countries. The intersection of these challenges leads to exponentially higher rates of PTSD and C-PTSD. To truly support LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, this research seeks to understand the need for more specialized, culturally competent mental health services and stronger protection to ensure that safety and healing are accessible to all.

Cierra Holcomb, Junior, History - Her project is about the history of persecution of minority religions, like Jews and Christians, in ancient Rome. She hopes to draw comparisons to current refugees today that have fled religious persecution and to better understand their religious experiences in their new host countries.

Maile Misleh, Junior, Biology & Exercise Science - Her intent with this research is to see the common misconceptions with healthcare for refugees. What are the common illnesses and what do we as the welcoming community need to best provide for these illnesses. This project also provides a comparison between countries and what healthcare is provided for the refugee community.