I initially became interested in the topic of the Arminian or anti-Calvinism controversy after writing a research paper on Arminianism in the reign of James I. More generally, I wanted to continue researching the religious controversy that pervaded the first half of the seventeenth century in the British isles and the role that it played in the causation of the civil wars of the 1640s. I specifically became interested in the how the Church of England went from being controlled by Calvinist bishops and Calvinist in doctrine during the reigns of Elizabeth I and her successor, James I – roughly the 1560s to 1625 -- to being controlled by Arminians and officially anti-Calvinist in doctrine during the 1630s under Charles I.

Therefore in the first five years of Charles I’s reign the Arminians achieved the ultimate underdog victory, going from a small and beleaguered minority to the de facto ruling party of the Church of England in roughly half a decade. Thus my thesis examined the emergence of English Arminianism or anti-Calvinism beginning in the 1620s with an emphasis on the controversy over Arminian controversialist Richard Montagu’s two polemics, A New Gagg and Appello Caesarem, published in 1624 and 1625 respectively.

Many of the ideas contained in his writings were not unique or particularly novel, but the scope of the controversy was. Essentially, Richard Montagu forced the issue of Arminianism onto the English body politic. Long simmering debates were thrown out in the open: a vicious polemical waged through pamphlets and books defined clearly what issues were at stake, the two camps faced off and battled for royal favor in ecclesiastical conferences, and Parliament became involved in a way it had not before which forced the hand of the king and made him choose between the overwhelming Calvinist majority in Parliament and an insurgent Arminian clergy.

In my thesis, I first looked at Richard Montagu’s two polemics as well as two of his critics to determine what ideas were at debate, and in the second I examined what happened when this debate moved into the public sphere.

I looked religious polemics to determine what ideas were at debate. First I examined Montagu’s two books [Title pages] His first on the left, whose full title is [] and the second on the right, whose full title is []. Second I examined two of Montagu’s Calvinist critics and their works to discover what they found most objectionable about Montagu
and Arminianism. I chose John Yates’s *Ibis ad Caesarem*... and Henry Burton’s *A Plea to an Appeale*... both published in 1626 following Montagu’s second book.

Here is a sample from Montagu’s *A New Gagg* illustrating the format of the polemics. Usually, the author would take a proposition – in this case “That the apostolical traditions and ancient customs of the holy Catholique Church are not to be received, nor doe they oblige us.” The author would then attempt to disprove or prove the proposition using logic and rhetoric, but more importantly cite Scripture, the antique Church, and the writings of the Church fathers in order to prove to prove that they were not only correct but that their views were in fact the only true and correct doctrine and practice of Christianity. None of the parties involved identified themselves as Calvinist or Arminians; in their minds they were simply Christians and their views Christian, held in perpetuity since the days of the Church Fathers and the days of the Antique Church.

The debate was complex and touched upon a variety of issues, some centuries old debates about doctrine and practice. For example, Montagu’s first book had 47 propositions under debate and his second 37. For the sake of time, each side’s views can be broke down into some broad propositions. [riff on slide]

[bullet points on Arminianism vs. Calvinism] The most important and revolutionary aspect of Montagu’s thought, and the facet that irked the Calvinists the most was his redefinition of Puritanism. His first book was actually published in response to Roman Catholic pamphlet that attacked the Church of England and Calvinist doctrine, thus it was actually part of a very traditional genre of defending the Church of England from Roman Catholic attack. But Montagu took a novel tack in defending his church. Instead of defending the Calvinist doctrines under attack, he disassociated the Church of England from them.

These doctrines, like absolute and double predestination, were in fact “raked together out of the lay-stalls [dung heaps of deepest Puritanism” in his words. With this idea he was claiming that that the Church of England not Calvinist but that all Calvinists were Puritans. This represented a drastic change from how Puritanism was previously though of.

The Puritans wanted further reform of the Church’s liturgy and service, which they thought was still burdened with too many vestigial elements of Roman Catholic idolatry and superstition and some of them
wanted to get rid of bishops and the episcopacy altogether. But the key point was that there was no doctrinal element in Puritanism; they were nonconformist Calvinists. In other words, whether an individual Calvinist would be considered a Puritan depended upon whether he conformed to the liturgy contained in the Book of Common Prayer and their attitude towards the episcopacy.

So it was true that Puritans were Calvinists, but not all Calvinists were Puritans. But by Montagu's reckoning, all Calvinists were Puritans, even if they followed the strictures and regulations to the letter. By his logic, the vast majority of bishops and even the Calvinist Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot were Puritans.

This idea enraged his critics. Both Henry Burton and John Yates asked how they could be considered Puritans since they were obedient clergymen, who had indeed fought battles with Puritans in the parishes and localities over their refusal to conform. In their minds, they were not Puritans: they were obedient servants of the Church of England, both either current or former rectors, and to recast them as separatists and radicals was a cheap political ploy.

Both of them saw the frightening implications of this redefinition: if Montagu and the Arminians could convince the powers that be that all Calvinists were Puritans and therefore outside the accepted bounds of the church, it would be very easy indeed to wrest control of the establishment from the Puritans.

I then analyzed how these ideas played out in the public sphere. During the years 1624-1629 there was a concerted struggle between the incumbent Calvinists and the insurgent Arminians for control of the church and for the favor of court. The eventual Arminian triumph was due just as much to sheer blind luck as it was to the favor of the monarch. Overall, I discovered in this period that Arminianism became slowly entangled with the monarchy and its unpopular policies, helping Montagu and his allies secure favor with the king.

There were two important venues for Arminianism: the York House Conference of 1626 and the Parliaments of 1624-1629.

The York House Conference was a debate in 1626 supposedly called in an attempt to settle the growing controversy. Montagu defended himself in person for part of the debate and was defended in absentia by his allies [ ]. The conference was unlikely to stop the controversy, and the real aim of the conference was to win favor with the court. George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, a hugely influential royal
favorite, moderated the debate. Until the debate, he had showered patronage on both Arminians and Calvinists. I concluded that the conference, called by Buckingham’s Calvinist John Preston, was meant to force Buckingham’s hand on the religious question.

The conference did force Buckingham’s hand, but in the Arminian direction. Over the course of the conference, Buckingham repeatedly came down in favor of the Arminian side on a number of religious questions. This meant that the Arminians had won a hugely influential ally.

However, by this point Buckingham was exceedingly unpopular because of his hogging of royal patronage and would become even more unpopular after his failed naval expeditions. This exemplified a pattern wherein Arminians gained power and influence by connecting themselves to the court but at the expense of dramatically increasingly their unpopularity by associating themselves with unpopular policies and people, a pattern which would repeat itself during the parliaments of 1624-1629.

Next, I analyzed the parliamentary volumes of 1624, 1625, 1626, and the 1628 Parliament which convened gain I discovered when analyzing the Parliaments of 1624 through 1629 that opposition in Parliament grew at an essentially linear rate in relation to the amount of favor and patronage bestowed upon the Arminians.

This time period was also extremely crucial because the young king Charles, who succeeded to the throne in 1625, was an unknown quantity. It was still extremely unclear on which side of the debate he would choose to situate himself. Unfortunately, to borrow a phrase from Professor McGee, it was soon clear that Charles I didn’t have a political nerve in his brain.

Montagu first came before Parliament in 1624 in the reign of James I when John Yates, the author of *Ibid as Caesarem* petitioned the House of Commons concerning the troublesome cleric. Besides essentially two MPs motivated by a theological fire in the belly, the Commons was essentially uninterested in Montagu. He was a solitary heretic, merely a rude man with an annoying book. A commission was formed to investigate *A New Gagg* but no serious action was taken. Tellingly, the MPs could not even agree on what heresy, what –ism, to charge him with.

Montagu himself exacerbated the controversy by publishing his second book, *the Appello Caesarem, in 1625*. This stoked a wider
anger in Parliament than his views had done the year before. The Commons was angered by the arrogant act of publishing a second book while still under investigation for his first. This time, Parliament drew up a petition of grievances concerning Montagu which they presented to the king.

However, for reasons unknown, Charles I decided to intervene on Montagu’s behalf and made him a royal chaplain in ordinary. This temporarily freed Montagu from attack but also made him a more prominent target. Far from freeing Montagu from further attack, it only made him an increasingly prominent target. The king and parliament were increasingly on a collision course concerning the troublesome cleric.

Also Motagu’s arrogance had expanded the opposition in Parliament from two MPs to a small handful.

The year 1626 saw a great acceleration in the controversy. Several English divines involved with the publication of Montagu’s books were elevated to important positions in the Church of England, to the fury of Calvinists who felt that they “deserved fire and faggot rather than further preferment.” Furthermore, Charles I had attempted to stifle further debate by issuing a proclamation that forbid discussion of Arminianism. The Parliament in that year saw a rapid increase in the numbers of MPs concerned with the rise of Arminianism. Even if the theological niceties of the debate went over some MPs’ heads, no MP could misunderstand that the king and his royal favorite was protecting a man under investigation by Parliament for heterodoxy and his allies elevated to bishoprics.

However, Montagu was saved by the increasing unpopularity of the duke of Buckingham whose failed military expeditions and overlarge share of royal patronage seemed to enrage most MPs more than religious squabbles. Parliamentary opposition increased dramatically but the increasingly beleaguered cleric was spared further prosecution by the overwhelming unpopularity of Buckingham. However, the Commons had finally footed a bill for the better continuing of peace and unity in church and commonwealth that would have effectively outlawed Arminianism. He was only saved by a timely dissolution of Parliament by Charles I in order to protect his beloved Buckingham from further attack and not to spare Montagu.
The next time Parliament assembled, it again focused on Buckingham and temporarily sidelined Montagu. Unfortunately for Montagu, Buckingham was brutally murdered by one of his former soldiers during the session. Afterwards Montagu was elevated to a bishopric. Paradoxically, this was bad news. With Buckingham removed from the picture, Parliament would no longer be distracted from the religious grievances and his elevation to a bishopric only made him a more prominent target. The 1628 session was prorogued, meaning that the exact same MPs who sat in that session would return for the next. And, as one of Montagu’s ideological sympathizers remarked, they would fall upon church business immediately.

The 1629 Parliament was the nadir of Montagu’s fortunes. He was now the poster boy for English Arminianism which many MPs now saw as a conspiracy to subvert the established order and doctrine of the Church of England. Speaker after speaker launched vicious unrelenting attacks on Montagu’s person and the ideology that he espoused. Furthermore, Charles I had been pursuing a set of unpopular financial policies in which he levied extraparliamentary taxation was seen as supported by and inseparable with Arminianism since they sought to halt the calling of new parliaments in order to silence their opposition. Half of a decade of religious grievances came to head: it was agreed that Montagu’s ideas were contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England and a petition of grievances was drawn up accusing him and his likeminded allies of conspiring to undermine the church. The MPs were now ready to confront the Whore of Babylon, as one speaker labeled them.

However, Charles I, angry at the increasingly combative rhetoric of Parliament and ordered an adjournment. But when the aged Speaker informed the Commons that the session was over and tried to sit up from his chair, which signaled the close of a session, several young men leapt from their seats and pinned him down to the chair. With the royal representative now being physically held hostage by the Commons, the MPs hurriedly shouted in a series of bills that official declared Montagu a heretic and an enemy of the state. This time Charles I intervened decisively, ending the session by force and imprisoning many members
The king would not call Parliament for another 11 years. During this time period, Montagu and his fellows would enjoy nearly unrestricted freedom to implement their ideas. **Thus the battle lines were drawn, and my paper follows the struggle through the acrimonious debates that continued in and outside of parliamentary sessions between 1626 and the fiery dismissal of the last session of the 1628 parliament in March 1629.** Charles interpreted opposition to the Arminian style in religious matters as disloyalty and opposition to his own regime. This was a fundamental error that would eventually lead to civil war in the 1640s and his own execution by beheading in January 1649. Some historians depicted the “English Revolution” of the 1640s as the first “modern” revolution and a predecessor of the American, French and Russian revolutions in the modern period. But in truth it was not so much the first modern revolution as the last of the European wars of religion.