

DDRL Honors Class 2021

Sylvie Ashford
Greg Block
Audrey Bloom

Eva Hangartner
Sarah Myers

Giovanna Pincioli
Hiroto Saito



Sylvie Ashford

Major: International Relations

Minor: Arabic

Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Tentative Thesis Title: Authoritarian Development and Demands for Democracy in Oman

Advisor: Lisa Blaydes

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? Oman is a highly developed authoritarian country, a theory-defying combination in political science. Researching its understudied

model of benevolent dictatorship, through patterns of oil rent distribution and democratic concessions, can help us understand why democracy has failed to take hold and what the future might bring.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? The hands-on guidance offered by program leadership and high quality research produced by past cohorts makes CDDRL stand out. I am very excited to get to know my peers in the program and benefit from their interdisciplinary knowledge and skill sets.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: After completing a fifth year master's degree in International Policy, I hope to pursue a career in public service.

What are your summer research plans? Although COVID-19 has made travel impossible, I plan to dive in to online databases and interview international contacts remotely.

A fun fact about yourself: I love road trips! I've driven across the United States twice and visited 37 states.



Greg Block

Major: Economics

Minor: History

Hometown: Tiburon, CA

Tentative Thesis Title: Exploring the Changing Media Landscape: News Deserts, Political Polarization and Implications for Democracy

Advisor: James Hamilton

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? Newspapers and democracy have always been linked—a healthy and independent media ecosystem keeps the government in check and leads to a more informed public. When these mechanisms and relationships are weakened or damaged, democracy suffers. Much of the social science research today focuses on big picture shifts in national media, but the local news ecosystem is not as well understood. Since 2004, more than 2,000 local newspapers have completely shuttered, with many more outlets permanently altered or shrunk to irrelevance due to changes in ownership. This withering of local media has led to the formation of “news deserts,” local communities without any sort of trusted news outlet. These news deserts may have grave consequences for democracy. My research will assess the reality of these news deserts to better inform our understanding of the extent of the impact of local news on democracy and to characterize the democratic challenges posed by shifting media landscapes.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? The issues of journalism, technology, and political polarization that I find most interesting are inherently connected to democracy and the rule of law. I believe the CDDRL program will be a fantastic incubator for helping me explore these questions. Also, the chance to work closely with professors and students from diverse academic backgrounds will help me understand political, economic and social forces from different angles. I was attracted to the structured nature of the program, which will allow me to grow as a researcher, writer and thinker.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I hope to work in journalism—either as a reporter or on the business side—and then possibly attend law school. Before any of that, I want to drive an RV across America, and make a documentary or write about my experiences along the way.

What are your summer research plans? I will be interning at a media-focused investment bank, helping to design new media platforms and working on consulting projects. While I don’t have a formal research plan yet, I will also hopefully begin my research on news deserts and the state of journalism in America today.

A fun fact about yourself: I’m an old soul when it comes to entertainment and music—I enjoy old Saturday Night Live sketches, 90s sitcoms and classic rock music, especially Bruce Springsteen and the Eagles.



Audrey Bloom

Major: Human Biology

Hometown: Boston, Massachusetts

Tentative Thesis Title: The American and Japanese Political Economies of Chronic Disease

Advisor: Karen Eggleston

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? This topic engages with governance—both how law-making processes function and how non-governmental entities affect, hinder, or enhance the legislative process. How governments regulate the healthcare services and therapeutics markets impacts development and engages issues of the scope of the law.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? The like minded student cohort to learn with and the professors to advise me on developing my research.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Law school!

What are your summer research plans? I don't currently have any. I'm planning on doing research for my thesis during the academic year.

A fun fact about yourself: I'm a drummer in the LSJUMB where my band name is feeG, pronounced like the island.



Eva Hangartner

Major: History

Minor: MELLAC - Arabic

Hometown: New York

Tentative Thesis Title: Seeing the Unseeing: The Experience of Blind Palestinians

Advisor: Undecided

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? I want to study the experience of being blind through the lens of the Palestinian health and education systems because inclusion is an important part of democracy.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I was attracted by the opportunity to engage with peers from a wide array of disciplines, exposure to new faculty members, and the structure and accountability of a larger cohort.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Road trip across the country with my mom! Further down the line, I hope to advocate for blind refugees from around the world.

What are your summer research plans? I will be interning (remotely) at the UNHCR Innovations Team in Geneva and conducting research remotely. I am still hopeful that travel restrictions will ease and I can travel to Jerusalem before the summer ends!

A fun fact about yourself: My parents and step-parents are from four different continents.



Sarah Myers

Major: International Relations

Minor: Physics, German

Hometown: Swarthmore, PA

Tentative Thesis Title: The Future of the ICC: Connections Between International Rule of Law and Domestic Democracy

Advisor: David Cohen

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? The International Criminal Court is meant to act as a foundation for the international rule of law. Its success or failure will likely exert a significant influence over future attempts to build international law-enforcing institutions. Furthermore, researching the ICC's future can provide insights

about the relationship between domestic politics in the court's member states and their support for the court's work.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? Friends and acquaintances who have taken part in the CDDRL undergraduate honors program strongly recommended that I apply, and I believe that my thesis topic fits well with the program's focus.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I hope to attend law school and specialize in international law.

What are your summer research plans? I will be doing an internship on health policy and equity in Asia this summer. If circumstances allow, I will be working in China and Thailand, but it is possible that I instead work remotely.

A fun fact about yourself: I am disappointed that jackalopes don't exist.



Giovanna Pincirolì

Major: Management Science and Engineering

Minor: Economics

Hometown: Milano, Italy

Tentative Thesis Title: Between the late 1980s and today, what difference have Italian populist governments made on economic policies?

Advisor: Anna Grzymala-Busse

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? I will explore the economic policies of populist leaders. Specifically, I will be looking at the rule of law of populist vs. non-populist governments within the boundaries of a democratic nation, Italy.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I became intrigued by the thought of pursuing an intellectual experience that culminated with producing my own work, and writing a thesis through the CDDRL Program enables me to explore an issue of fundamental importance. The presence of a strong community of students who explore very different topics yet support one another is another very positive quality that attracted me to the CDDRL Program.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Work in Private Equity in London, then perhaps pursue an MBA

What are your summer research plans? I will be in Italy this summer. During this time, I plan to conduct thorough research within regarding the economic policies of populist leaders.

A fun fact about yourself: I will be remaining on campus for Spring quarter.



Hiroto Saito

Major: International Relations

Hometown: Charlotte, NC

Tentative Thesis Title: Transitional Governance: The Transfer of Power from Armed Non-State Actors to the Government of Colombia

Advisor: Gil-li Vardi and Harold Trinkunas

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? For more than 50 years, a low-intensity asymmetric conflict has been waged in Colombia between the central government and various guerrilla groups such as the FARC and ELN. A significant obstacle to the peace process has been the Colombian government's weak presence in the countryside where the guerrillas have established themselves. I would like to research

strategies in which the Colombian government could better administer these areas formerly under guerrilla control, with an emphasis on human rights, the rule of law, and sustainable development.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I heard great things about the support that participants receive from the program, and I also wanted to engage more with the CDDRL as I have not yet had the opportunity to do so.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I would like to pursue a career in public service, either as a civil servant or a commissioned officer in the US military.

What are your summer research plans? A lot is up in the air because of the pandemic, but I plan to work at the Department of Defense this summer and begin my research by completing a literature review and establishing contacts with academics and officials in Colombia.

A fun fact about yourself: I play violin in Mariachi Cardenal de Stanford and the Stanford Symphony Orchestra!
