

Honors College 2018 Students

Sima Biondi	Ayano Kitano	Jayaram Ravi
Isabela Bumanlag	Shivonne Logan	Carson Smith
Ben Gardner-Gill	Sophia Pink	Gabriela Torres-Lorenzotti
Ribhav Gupta	Lucas Rodriguez	Alex Trivella
Anjali Katta	Michael Rover	



Sima Biondi

Major: Political Science

Hometown: Palo Alto, California

Tentative Thesis Title: Governance implications of Anglo-Islamic case law in the Middle East

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? Inspired by policy questions on solutions to failed states in the Middle East and the recent uptick in terrorist incidents in the West, my thesis

will quantitatively grapple with the issue of Islamic and Western legal compatibility as a stable foundation for the development of state capacity. I hope to apply lessons from my research to shaping the U.S. policy approach to developing inclusive and coherent governance frameworks in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? As a student with diverse scholarly interests, I was attracted to the interdisciplinary nature of the CDDRL honors program.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Attending graduate school

What are you summer research plans? I plan on conducting additional archival research at the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

A fun fact about yourself: I am a student guide at Stanford's Cantor Museum.



Isabela Bumanlag

Major: Human Biology

Hometown: Harlingen, Texas

Tentative Thesis Title: Exploring the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Philippines through Risk Behavior and Policy Analysis

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? At Stanford, I have grown to appreciate the complexity and depth of global health. I soon realized that the factors that impact health went beyond the clinical sphere. Development and rule of law is inherently tied with issues of health and human security. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is not unique to the Philippines and continues to be an issue in many developing and under-resourced countries. The emerging HIV epidemic is useful lens to understand the current state of development and rule of law in the Philippines and the Southeast Asian region.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? The CDDRL honors program is unique in that it embraces interdisciplinary thought on issues of democracy, development, and rule of law. As a Human Biology student with a background on epidemiology (the population-based study of disease), I am thankful to be able to study how issues of DDRL can affect and influence issues of population health. CDDRL provides its students with the flexibility to use their own academic backgrounds to research a topic in DDRL. More importantly, I've met so many brilliant students in various fields in this program and I am excited to learn more from my peers and their own interests.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I am applying to medical school next year. For my gap year, I would love to work for an intergovernmental organization like the UN and pursue my passion in global health. I hope to attend medical school after my gap year, with the goal of practicing medicine and contributing to public health efforts.

What are your summer research plans? I am currently interning at an HIV non-profit clinic. In conjunction with this internship, I am conducting field interviews for my thesis.

A fun fact about yourself: My earlier childhood (teenage?) (early 20s?) aspiration was to be an international spy slash pop-songwriter.



Ben Gardner-Gill

Major: History

Hometown: Mountain View, CA

Tentative Thesis Title: Historical Memory in Contemporary Populist Political Rhetoric in the Czech and Slovak Republic

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? The most recent wave of successful populists in Europe has attracted widespread attention. Populists have existed for many decades, however. In the Czech and Slovak Republics, populism has been present in some form since the restoration of independence. I ask how politicians have employed historical memory in their populist rhetoric. The question is relevant to the three themes at hand because it examines the development of democracy in the two subject countries through a specific lens. Furthermore, because populists in power may pose threats to the rule of law, the question has implications for understanding how populists come to power, and why they do what they do once in power.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I was chiefly attracted by the cohort. I greatly anticipate the discussions I'll have with the other students in the program, and forming an intellectual community.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Something invigorating!

What are you summer research plans? I am traveling around Central Europe to meet with witnesses of Czech and Slovak history, as well as experts in the field. I am conducting around 15 interviews total, and am supported by grants from FSI and UAR.

A fun fact about yourself: I like trams and will talk to anyone about the postwar death of the American streetcar.



Ribhav Gupta

Major: Biomechanical Engineering

Hometown: Apple Valley, MN

Tentative Thesis Title: Impact of Missing Gender-Disaggregated Data on AIDS-Focused Interventions

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? A key component to long term, sustainable development is improving public health. However, without a thorough understanding of key opinions for people across all demographics, including gender, our understanding of a community's situation is skewed and heavily limited in its applications. Using skewed information to develop campaigns, such as that for AIDS intervention, may limit the potential impact seen. By gaining a better understanding of the sources of gender-biased information and the way missing data can alter proposed intervention strategies, we can assess some key weaknesses in public health work.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? The fact that the CDDRL program pulls students from across a variety of disciplines fascinated me as it gives me a chance to explore issues outside of my major and to interact and learn from students of all fields, each of who have a different outlook on a research topic.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I plan to go to medical school and hopefully split my time in research and as medical practitioner.

What are you summer research plans? I am working with a team focused on missing data across genders in healthcare to gain a better understanding of the current landscape of research and a firm understanding of how research in this space can be conducted. I hope to use the summer to gain a better grasp of methodologies I will use in my work and focus in on a particular question worth exploring.

A fun fact about yourself: I don't know if this is a fun fact but I really enjoy rock climbing. I'm not great at it, but so far it's been a blast!



Anjali Katta

Major: Engineering Physics

Hometown: Vancouver, Canada

Tentative Thesis Title: Evaluating Empowerment Outcomes of Connectivity for Refugees in Dzaleka

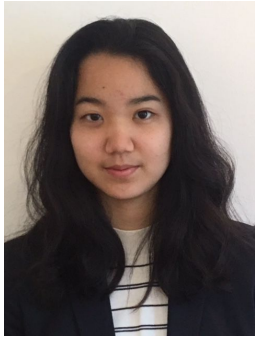
Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? Connectivity, through cell phones and the internet, can provide refugees with greater access to information and a stable mode of communication with family and those who they are separated from. Moreover, connectivity can bridge the gap between refugees and refugee service providers such as UNHCR. Information, communication, and accountability are all key factors in development and democracy and analyzing the impacts of connectivity with an emphasis on these factors can reveal how to further empower refugees to take charge of their own lives.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? It's interdisciplinary nature! I liked how a person any major could approach a relevant topic from any direction.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: No idea right now

What are you summer research plans? I'm working for an energy access non-profit in Lesotho and then will spend the last half doing thesis research in the Dzaleka camp in Malawi

A fun fact about yourself: I can name the capitals of all the countries in the world



Ayano Kitano

Major: International Relations

Hometown: Tokyo, Japan

Tentative Thesis Title: Assessing “Silver Preference”: Japan’s Social Security Policy in a Time of Population Ageing

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? My thesis will analyze how Japan’s social security system has evolved in parallel to its rapid population ageing—specifically, whether policy outcomes have exhibited a “silver preference” towards the elderly generation. This topic is important to the field of democracy because population ageing has led to the coining of the term “silver democracy,” a situation in which politics prioritizes the interests of the elderly over the young. By analyzing the trends in per capita state expenditures, I hope to shed light on whether silver democracy is increasingly becoming a reality in Japan.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? Across different parts of the world, threats to democracy have increasingly undermined the stability of political systems. In light of this situation, I was drawn to the CDDRL program because my thesis aims to shed light on whether instances of democratic recession can be identified in ageing Japan. CDDRL’s policy related focus also allows me to combine academic research and policy analysis. I am looking forward to using my research findings to provide concrete policy recommendations for the future.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I would like to obtain a Juris Doctorate degree and ultimately pursue work at the intersection of law and international relations.

What are you summer research plans? My plan for the summer is to collect relevant quantitative data on per capita government spending across different generations and use this to understand what factors have shaped policy outcomes. I also hope to find more Japanese sources and learn more about what Japanese scholars have said about my topic.

A fun fact about yourself: I had a British accent when I first started speaking English!



Shivonne Logan

Major: International Relations

Hometown: Palo Alto, CA

Tentative Thesis Title: Women's Place in Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? In Israel and Palestine, the eventual resolution of the conflict will be the fundamental basis for the development of the state(s) and government(s) there. Thus, the negotiations to get there are the most essential element of facilitating democracy and allowing for increased development and the rule of law in the region. Without equal representation in the peace process and in the governments or states that it produces,

those governments and states will not be based on the foundational elements of democracy. Further, women's involvement in the peace process facilitates the improvement of the rule of law there, and paves the way for further development in both states (or whichever states emerge from the process).

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? My thesis advisor and mentor, Lisa Blaydes, advised me to apply because she thought it was the best program to help me pursue my interests in the Middle East and its conflicts.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I want to work with refugee rights and transitional justice.

What are you summer research plans? I am currently working for Brookings Doha Center, and am doing my own reading and research outside of work. At the end of my internship, I will travel to interview relevant academics and organizations.

A fun fact about yourself: One of my life goals is to visit every country.



Sophia Pink

Major: Product Design

Hometown: Washington, DC

Tentative Thesis Title: The Crowd vs. the Tribe vs. the Expert vs. the Machine: When it Comes to Controversial Issues, Whom do we Trust?

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? In order for democracies to function, individuals must make informed decisions about which politicians and policies to vote for. However, people are now constantly bombarded with conflicting information from many sources, and have to repeatedly decide which ones to believe. It is essential that we understand which sources of information people use when making decisions about political issues.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I'm eager to learn from the cohort of amazing students. I think that working with students from different departments over the course of a year will help us all produce stronger research.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I hope use design methodology, data science, and behavior research to create better systems and experiences.

What are you summer research plans? I'm delving into research in psychology, political science, and other fields to learn about how people choose which information to trust. I hope to complete a robust literature review and plan for experiments and analysis in the fall.

A fun fact about yourself: I have folded way too many paper cranes out of Post-It notes.



Lucas Rodriguez

Major: Economics; Political Science

Hometown: Miami, FL

Tentative Thesis Title: Economic Origins of Subnational Authoritarianism in the Jim Crow South

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? This topic is important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law for a number of reasons. For one, I'll be studying a period of time

during which democracy seriously struggled to take hold in a region of a country that purports to be a bastion of democracy. However, perhaps more importantly, I hope my thesis will get at the connection between democracy and development, i.e. the way in which lack of democracy can combine with certain economic factors to debilitate both economic growth and democratization efforts. Indeed, from around 1890 until the Civil Rights movement, the South remained the poorest region in the country all while being dominated by one single political party that disenfranchised countless voters.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I was attracted to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program because of its interdisciplinary and collaborative natures. CDDRL's interdisciplinary set up allows me to combine my intersecting interests in Political Science and Economics in ways other programs would not. Furthermore, I was very attracted to the idea of being a part of a thesis cohort, and learning from my peers and their research regularly.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I hope to attend law school and pursue a public-interest legal career; hopefully one that gets at the intersection of law and policy.

What are you summer research plans? I am interning in Washington DC for 10 weeks of the summer and plan on doing some research there alongside my work.

A fun fact about yourself: I've seen the West Wing 5 times through in full.



Michael Rover

Major: Political Science

Hometown: Mount Kisco, NY

Tentative Thesis Title: Immigration in the European Union: Politicized Phenomenon or Driving Force of Euroscepticism? A case study on the French Front National.

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? Has the Front National in France profited from rising anti-immigrant sentiment driven by actual immigrant inflows? Or has it helped foment that very anti-immigrant sentiment, and

thereby gained political support without the need for real immigrants to precipitate the backlash? This question strikes at the heart of key challenges facing democratic systems that seek to uphold the rule of law within their borders. Far-right, anti-immigrant parties pose an existential threat to the European Union, which has come to shoulder much of the responsibility for Europe's future as a set of democracies governed by equitable legal systems. It is plain to see that these far-right parties, most notably the French Front National, German Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and British United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), among others, support policies that may directly conflict with European democracies' commitments to human rights, equal treatment under the law, and nondiscrimination. However, what is perhaps even more important is the seemingly simple fact of their Euroscepticism. The future of the EU and its many institutions and frameworks relies on the ability of its member states to address challenges posed by immigration. If immigration is tearing away at the pro-EU consensus, then better solutions are needed. If the current climate of animosity towards immigrants and international institutions was created by successful political campaigns timed to take advantage of relatively less significant real immigration inflows, then that is essential information for European policymakers and voters to know as well.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? This program sits at the nexus of several threads that have tied my undergraduate academic pursuits together, namely international relations, interdisciplinary cooperation, and policy research. I leapt at the opportunity to watch my peers delve into topics that lit fires under their seats, that merit far more than a year's worth of diligent research. I hope that I will be able to use a CDDRL honors thesis to hone my analytical skills so that when I return to public service for my career, I will be both better informed and more effective.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I hope to attend law school and pursue a career in international law and American government.

What are you summer research plans? I have been interning at the National Labor Relations Board in Washington, D.C. In my spare time, I have been reading up on the Front National and European immigration systems. I have also been working to identify sources of data on immigrants to France and the Front National that can form the backbone of my analysis.

A fun fact about yourself: I thought long and hard about majoring in Computer Science. I am something of a computer geek. I've fixed every computer my family has owned since I was a teenager (both hardware and software). If you see me walking around campus, there is a greater than 50% chance I will be carrying a bag of miscellaneous display adapters and cables just in case I need to set up a presentation. Haven't you ever wished you had the right cable?



Jayaram Ravi

Major: Political Science

Hometown: Issaquah, Washington

Tentative Thesis Title: The 1977 General Elections in India: Voting Out Authoritarianism

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? The 1977 Indian general election was an example

of an authoritarian leader, Indira Gandhi, who lost an election that she thought she would easily win. More profoundly than that, it was an example of how the Indian people rejected authoritarianism, how the opposition consolidated into a viable government for the first time, and ultimately how India's future as a liberal democracy was solidified. Through my analysis of this election, I hope to contribute to the growing body of literature that looks at what compels authoritarian leaders to hold elections, how the rules and norms of such elections are set, how transitions of power are institutionalized, and how transitions to and from democracy occur.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? Ever since joining Stanford, I took a number of classes with distinguished faculty at CDDRL and I wanted the opportunity to work closely with the program. I also wanted a rigorous research experience in democracy studies and CDDRL was the perfect avenue for that.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Foreign Service Officer

What are you summer research plans? This summer I will be a research intern for the Carnegie Endowment's South Asia program in Washington, D.C. Later in the summer, I will get a chance to head over to New Delhi, India to conduct some interviews and archival research.

A fun fact about yourself: I love hiking in the Pacific Northwest, and my favorite spot is the Capilano River Regional Park and the Capilano Suspension Bridge north of Vancouver, Canada.



Carson Smith

Major: Political Science

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Tentative Thesis Title: Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms and Their Jurisdictional Impact in the US and Canada

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? I hope to look at how these conflict resolution mechanisms are allowing tribes to expand their jurisdiction into state and federal arenas. Because of my thesis's focus on questions of jurisdictional powers and ultimately tribal sovereignty, it directly impacts our understanding of the 'rule of law' in Indian Country.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I really enjoy the interdisciplinary approach of this program. For example, CDDRL gave me an opportunity to work with professors at the law school, who have the most expertise in my area of research. Additionally, because we all study separate subjects, I have learned about a wide-range of methodologies and areas of research from my peers.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: Working with an NGO focused on indigenous human rights or court

What are you summer research plans? I am currently working at Columbia Law where I am researching with a professor who works on Peacemaking and mediation strategies, specifically in Native American communities.

A fun fact about yourself: I collect coffee mugs with historical figures on them. My first mug had Theodore Roosevelt riding a moose with party hats on its antlers. (Bull Moose Party pun)



Alex Trivella

Major: History

Hometown: Caracas, Venezuela

Tentative Thesis Title: The Communal State and the Collapse of Constitutional Order in Venezuela

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? As Venezuela faces a new political era of single-party dictatorship, the future of the country remains uncertain. It is still unclear how the party will proceed in its consolidation of power and what institutions will remain relevant. Studying the evolution of Communal State structures exposes the political framework available to the Venezuelan government and may reveal a path to redemocratization.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? The CDDRL honors program provided me the opportunity to engage with some of the complex questions I had about the socioeconomic collapse of my country. I was also excited for the new perspectives available through the program's multidisciplinary focus.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I would like to pursue a Master's in International Policy and possibly work in something relating to democratization. I also hope to help rebuild Venezuela in the future.

What are you summer research plans? I will be interning at the World Justice Project in Washington, DC for most of the summer. I will also be doing preliminary research on my thesis topic.

A fun fact about yourself: Last summer I decided to backpack across Eastern Europe for three months and visited a total of 22 countries.



Gabriela Torres-Lorenzotti

Major: International Relations

Hometown: Brooklyn, New York

Tentative Thesis Title: Democratization and Genocide: Preventative or Causal?

Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law? Despite quantitative trends that suggest democracies are less likely to experience genocide, qualitative data suggest that the process of democratization can heighten nationalist rhetoric, increasing tensions and violent conflict. Understanding the mechanisms that contribute to

genocide, will provide meaningful insight to its prevention. This is particularly important given the quantitative data that suggests a country is more likely to experience a future genocide if it has a history of genocide. What factors contribute to this re-occurrence? What role does democratization play in cases where genocide reoccurs and in cases where it does not? The answers to these questions have the potential to shape how scholars and policy-makers think about genocide prevention, democracy, and the rule of law.

What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program? I wanted to pursue writing an honors thesis through the CDDRL undergraduate honors program because of the department's interdisciplinary approach. Understanding mass atrocity cannot be done solely through a historical, statistical, or political lens, rather it requires a holistic evaluation of multiple academic perspectives and insights.

Future aspirations post-Stanford: I hope to attend law school and pursue a career in international human rights law.

What are your summer research plans? I am currently in Washington D.C. for the summer interning on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As part of the internship, I am responsible for tracking the developments in Myanmar/ Burma, which may or may not eventually be helpful in informing the application of my thesis. In addition to continuing to compile a literature review, and refining the case studies I will be using to examine my thesis question, I also plan on meeting with experts working on genocide prevention for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am primarily drawing from their statistical Early Warning Project.

A fun fact about yourself: A couple of years ago I spent part of the summer in Bonaire where I became a certified scuba diver!
