

# DDRL Honors Class 2021

## Students

Sylvie Ashford  
Greg Block  
Audrey Bloom  
Carolyn Chun  
Trey Connelly

Eva Hangartner  
Constanza Hasselman  
Sarah Myers  
Giovanna Pincioli  
Maggie Roache

Hiroto Saito  
Michal Skreta  
Avalon Wolfe  
Tiffany Zhu



### 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.

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### 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 CDDR 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.

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### Carolyn Chun

**Major:** History

**Hometown:** Oak Brook, Illinois

**Tentative Thesis Title:** Research in Practice: Methodologies and Definitions and the Consequences on World Bank Agricultural Projects

**Advisor:** Stephen Stedman

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law?** The projects and initiatives that hope to encourage robust global development must all depend on what is a narrow sliver of understanding predicated on studies and academic work which extrapolate out from limited information. The methodologies which motivate such extrapolations can lead to vast differences in conclusions and recommended actions, from close, narrative analysis to large-n regressions. Through an investigation of how methodologies and evolving trends in development research have altered Bank attitudes and the effectiveness of their projects, such a thesis would hope to bring to light the importance of acknowledging the influence and biases of different methodological approaches.

**What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program?** I study history because I want to understand modern problems in government and society. The discipline has heightened an awareness of methodological differences between the humanities and social science, differences which I believe to be important and can only bridge through greater inter-disciplinary work. The chance to do so with CDDRL, on the topics that most interest me, with a cohort of motivated peers, was one I could not ignore.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** I want to help folks live in a world with more justice, thoughtful and balanced discourse, and a fair shake for all.

**What are your summer research plans?** Pending further development of the current health crisis, I hope to begin the bulk of data and document collection this summer utilizing World Bank archives.

**A fun fact about yourself:** Road-tripping to national parks is a favorite pastime of mine — six and counting!



**Trey Connelly**

**Major:** Computer Science

**Minor:** Math

**Hometown:** Phoenix, AZ

**Tentative Thesis Title:** The Role of Traditional Media in the Spread of Fake News on Social Media

**Advisor:** Larry Diamond

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law?** The increasing fragmentation of accepted truth and information, especially through the spread of fake news, is deeply troubling for democracies new and old. While it's tempting to blame social media as the purveyors of this

information, no media operate in a vacuum. I hope to analyze the interactions between social media and the traditional media environment that accelerate the spread of fake news and misinformation.

**What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program?** I'm interested in the intersection of technology and democracy, and this program is a great opportunity to expand my horizons and apply my technical experience to important social science questions while developing research skills and working with a cohort of interesting peers.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** I hope to use technology in civil service.

**What are your summer research plans?** I will likely conduct a literature review and gather the datasets that I will be working on in the fall.

**A fun fact about yourself:** I trained to run a half-marathon freshman year, then broke my foot three weeks before the race.



**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.



**Constanza Hasselmann**

**Major:** Sociology's data, markets & management track with a human rights minor

**Hometown:** Rio de Janeiro + Washington, D.C.

**Tentative Thesis Title:** "Rebranding the hustle": Entrepreneurship programs' attempts to reduce recidivism in the Brazilian criminal justice system

**Advisor:** Undecided

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law?** This thesis examines the outcomes of entrepreneurship and business education programs aimed at current or former inmates in Brazil,

relevant because of resources from civil society actors to pressure state and local government to fund and approve of these programs. From this I hope to extrapolate lessons that are generalizable to other countries' pursuits of a fair, accountable criminal justice system. Throughout, I will ask what the existence of a prison-industrial complex means for justice and the rule of law in Brazil. The topic grapples with contemporary questions of transparency and intersectionality.

**What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program?** Research can be a lonely process and test of mental fitness; however, thinking through ideas and developing frameworks doesn't have to be. I admire the level of commitment from professors, approach to problem-solving and incentive to share ideas across fellows that is evident at CDDRL. My goal is to create a piece of writing that presents a strong, fresh argument on a matter of social importance and personal significance.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** I hope to further my education in preparation to become a social entrepreneur.

**What are your summer research plans?** I endeavor to visit the Brazilian National Archives in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to speak with representatives of organizations working in this space. This would set me up for a successful writing journey in subsequent quarters depending on the possibility of international travel in the coming months.

**A fun fact about yourself:** When I was 12, I went bungee jumping in Taupo, New Zealand. My mom thought I would chicken out; instead, she watched me jump Superman-style off the platform.



**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.

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**Giovanna Pincioli**

**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.

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## Maggie Roache

**Major:** Political Science

**Hometown:** Chicago, IL

**Tentative Thesis Title:** The Aftermath of Forgetting: How Spain's Decision to Forego a Transitional Justice Process Impacts the Country Today

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law?** The primary focus of my thesis is the Spanish transition to democracy following civil war and decades of dictatorship without a transitional justice process, and the lasting impact which it has on Spanish society today. A key component of transitional justice, which focuses on punitive and/or truth seeking measures in the aftermath of mass

atrocities, is restoring faith in the rule of law. Given its successful democratic consolidation, Spain isn't often criticized for its lack of a transitional justice process. However, in Spain's most recent national elections, a far-right political party became the 3rd largest party in Spanish parliament, demonstrating the perhaps negative and lasting repercussions of the official policy of forgetting in their transition to democracy.

**What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program?** The interdisciplinary nature of the program, as well as the community which builds amongst the cohort drew me to the CDDRL honors program. I am also incredibly excited for the opportunity to learn from the experiences of professionals in these fields through the preparatory honors college in Washington, D.C. and through events with CDDRL faculty.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** After Stanford, I hope to continue research on transitional justice, either in the UK or Latin America through a post-graduate fellowship or in pursuit of a master's degree.

**What are your summer research plans?** This summer I plan to work for the Guernica Centre for International Justice, a transnational non-profit which provides legal representation for victims of extreme human rights violations. In addition to conducting research on Spain in my free time this summer, I expect to learn a lot of information relevant to my thesis through my internship, as the Guernica Centre prosecutes most of its international human rights cases in Spain since the principle of universal jurisdiction began there.

**A fun fact about yourself:** In high school, I wrote a letter to Lin Manuel Miranda, the creator of Hamilton, and he wrote me back.

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## 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!



## Michael Skreta

**Major:** Economics and Political Science

**Hometown:** Warsaw, Poland

**Tentative Thesis Title:** Comparative Impact Evaluation of Philanthropic and Governmental Investment in International Development

**Advisor:** Larry Diamond

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law?**

This topic lies at the very intersection of democracy, development, and the rule of law. From the

perspective of democracy, it tackles the question of the ability of democratically-elected governments to reflect societal preferences rather than to focus on clientelism and vested interests when devising development interventions; it also addresses the questions of governance and oversight behind philanthropic activity. The development perspective is key here, as the topic centers on whether private or public actors are better suited to engineer economic development solutions in the developing world. Finally, from the perspective of the rule of law, the topic ponders the question of investors' accountability, as well as the incentivizing power of national governments to attract outside investment by maintaining adequate domestic standards of the rule of law.

**What attracted you to the CDDR undergraduate honors program?** The combination of an interdisciplinary academic focus, an opportunity for in-depth research, and a vibrant and intellectual FSI community. To me, the CDDR Honors is a truly unique program in which students work with exceptional faculty on research projects with direct relevance for policy making. I firmly believe that the program exemplifies the best of what the Stanford undergraduate education has to offer.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** I hope to continue my interdisciplinary education in graduate school, and to ultimately pursue a career at the intersection of private and public sectors with a strong international focus.

**What are your summer research plans?** As fieldwork opportunities have been disrupted by the pandemic, I plan to spend this summer on quantitative data collection and on interviews with relevant stakeholders. Additionally, I plan to further explore some computational and econometric tools that could be useful in my analysis.

**A fun fact about yourself:** I once got lost on a volcano in Guatemala.

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### **Avalon Wolfe**

**Major:** Political Science

**Minor:** Computer Science

**Hometown:** Fort Worth, TX

**Tentative Thesis Title:** Hey Siri, Who Owns My Data?  
Examining Factors That Give Rise to Data Protection  
Legislation

**Advisor:** Francis Fukuyama

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development, and the rule of law?** Amidst a decade marked by data breaches and concerns about the vast troves of data that companies collect on consumers, there has been an unmistakable rise in the number of data protection laws enacted by states across the world. Some states have

attempted to extend their power through weak data protection laws that allow for government access to personal data. Other states have used data protection laws to reassert their sovereignty in the face of the rising influence of large companies. My thesis centers on analyzing why some states adopt more robust data protection laws than others. This will

provide insight into the variance in data protection legislation across states with differing levels of democracy.

**What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program?** The CDDRL program excites me because of its emphasis on mentorship from professors and on collaboration with students from various disciplines. I look forward to the opportunity to receive feedback from a variety of perspectives while also learning about the research interests of others in the cohort.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** I plan to attend graduate school in Europe with the hopes of eventually working at the intersection of technology and law/policy

**What are your summer research plans?** I was excited to research EU tech policy at Carnegie Europe in Brussels; however, due to travel restrictions, I will be helping to advise companies on tech policy at the Brunswick Group in DC. I hope to use this experience, alongside research that I do in my free time, to further develop my thesis.

**A fun fact about yourself:** I've tried to break my coffee addiction a thousand times but have yet to succeed.



**Tiffany Zhu**

**Major:** Economics, Slavic Languages and Literatures

**Hometown:** Santa Clara, CA

**Tentative Thesis Title:** The Impact of ProZorro on Medicine Availability in Ukraine

**Advisor:** Grant Miller

**Why is this topic important to the field of democracy, development,**

**and the rule of law?** Every government has a procurement process, or a process by which it purchases goods and services from the private sector. This process is vital for the provision of basic services like healthcare and infrastructure. Yet in many places, the procurement process becomes a site of corruption, whereby prices are inflated, goods under delivered, or contracts provided to companies run by relatives of officials (or officials themselves) rather than the most qualified companies. Not only does corruption in the procurement process hinder economic development and undermine the rule of law, it often serves as a flashpoint of conflict between civil society and the state and becomes a key part of civil society's argument for more or better democracy. This was the case in Georgia in 2003 and, more recently, Ukraine with its 2014 Euromaidan Revolution. My thesis focuses on recent reforms of the procurement process in Ukraine after Euromaidan. In particular, I look at ProZorro, an online e-procurement platform launched in 2016 that centralizes and digitalizes the procurement process. E-procurement systems are a popularly proposed solution to corruption across the former Soviet sphere, and I hope that my study can illuminate the role e-procurement systems play in fostering development and the rule of law.

**What attracted you to the CDDRL undergraduate honors program?** Corruption is a slippery topic that needs to be approached through an interdisciplinary lens. Every discipline has something to say about corruption, not just my two home departments of Economics and Slavic Literatures but also history, anthropology, political science, and many more. CDDRL's interdisciplinary nature gives me the freedom to study corruption as a whole without being bound to a single disciplinary lens. Additionally, I'm excited to bounce my findings off other members of the CDDRL cohort who may be researching adjacent topics in development and see the implications of my findings outside of Eastern Europe.

**Future aspirations post-Stanford:** After graduating, I plan to spend a few years working on the ground in the former Soviet region and gaining a firsthand perspective on the development challenges faced there. Eventually, I hope to pursue a master's in Russian, East European, and Eurasian studies, and embark on a career designing and implementing development programs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

**What are your summer research plans?** Pending the international travel situation, I hope to spend this summer interning at VoxUkraine, an economic research think tank in Kyiv, Ukraine. If things don't work out, I will study Russian intensively at Middlebury College before independently traveling to Kyiv to meet with experts and collect data.

**A fun fact about yourself:** I'm a huge fan of Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian rock music, and I translate Russian rock songs in my free time. Thus far I've translated almost 70 rock songs. Hit me up if you want recs!