

School of International Service – American University
International Economics Relations
IER Summer 2014 Newsletter



From left: IER Student Patrick Wang, Program Director Dr. Arturo Porzecanski, Graduate Advisor Kristin Richards

Welcome New Students

We are pleased to welcome the following new students who are entering, and ongoing students who have formally transferred into, the International Economic Relations Program:

Pouya Ahmad

A transfer student previously with the Comparative and Regional Studies (CRS) program, he came to AU in Fall 2013 after earning a BA degree in International Studies, with minors in Economics and Arabic, at Portland State University in Oregon. While attending college, he was employed by Symantec Corporation and did technical work on a search engine that can recognize and distinguish between different languages. This summer Pouya went backpacking in his native Iran and later traveled to Brazil to attend the World Cup soccer games.

Lee Arcuri

A transfer student hailing from the United States Foreign Policy (USFP) program, he is a former graduate of the University of California at San Diego with a major in Political Science and International Relations. Prior to arriving at AU in Fall 2013, Lee spent a year with AmeriCorps in New Orleans assigned to reconstruction activities, including electrical and carpentry work, attached to the St. Bernard Project non-profit organization. His interests center on transnational organized crime operations and illicit network activities as threats to economic security.

Shona Carter

One of 20 recipients of the Charles Rangel Fellowship, Shona is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth with a BA degree in Political Science. Shona has worked with the Clinton Global Initiative and the Streit Council for a Union of Democracies; has gained experience as a substitute teacher in District of Columbia schools; and was previously an intern in the office of former Senator John Kerry and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Angelo Curto

An undergraduate student at AU who has been admitted to the accelerated BA/MA-IER program, he was a Gilman Scholarship Recipient and spent Fall 2013 as a student at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management and as an intern with the Chinese law firm T&D Associates. This year Angelo had a Spring internship with the Atlas Economic Research Foundation in Washington DC and a Summer internship with the Empire Center for New York State Policy in Albany, NY.

Leticia Donoso

The winner of a Fulbright Scholarship in her native Ecuador, Leticia earned a degree in International Business Administration from the Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María's campus in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city. In the past three years, she has been working as a Trade Promotion Analyst for CORPEI (Corporation for Export and Investment Promotion), a private-sector consulting company which promotes exports and foreign investment into and out of Ecuador.

Brian Gilbert

A graduate from Susquehanna University, Pennsylvania, with dual BA degrees in Economics and Political Science, he spent a semester studying in Edinburgh and was an intern at the Scottish National Parliament.

Philana Grant

She comes to us with rich professional experience as a website developer, as well as graphic and interior designer, working in the District of Columbia and in Fairfax, Virginia, and prior to that as an investment advisor for the Vanguard Group in the Philadelphia area. Philana is a graduate of Temple University with a BA degree in Political Science who recently studied economics at George Mason University.

Kevin Horvath

He is a recent graduate of George Washington University, where he earned a BA degree in International Affairs with a Minor in Economics. Born in and with strong family ties to Brazil, Kevin also got to live for six years in Seoul, Korea, which is where he attended high school, and he spent the Fall 2012 semester in London, England.

Emily Kaput

Emily is coming to us from the San Francisco Bay Area. She attended Mills College in Oakland, receiving an interdisciplinary degree in Political, Legal, and Economic Analysis of International Relations. She has spent the past year working as a research assistant for a global payments startup in San Francisco and also spent some time with a venture-capital firm in the Silicon Valley.

Teri Lee

She is a recent graduate from AU with a BA in International Studies and a keen interest in East Asian affairs and international economic issues. Teri spent an academic year attending Waseda University in Tokyo, where she perfected her Japanese and took a variety of courses. Prior to starting college, Teri interned for ten months at the National Security Agency in Fort Meade. She was born and raised in Southern California.

Sudhanshu Neema

A recent graduate of India's Symbiosis Law School in Pune, a city often described as "the Oxford of the East," he has completed several legal research internships including at Ernst and Young India. Sudhanshu was born and raised in a small town in central India, and he has developed a keen interest in international affairs.

Kristina Olney

A transfer student previously with the Comparative and Regional Studies (CRS) program, she came to AU in Fall 2013 after working for several years in Washington DC, at first with the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), and currently she is on the staff of the Foreign Policy Initiative. A dual American-Australian citizen, Kristina earned a BA degree in International Relations and French at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Rochelle Osei-Tutu

Originally from Los Angeles, she attended George Washington University and was awarded a BA degree in International Affairs. Rochelle's senior-year thesis was on the role of women in the informal economies of Ghana and Morocco. She spent the Fall 2010 semester studying in Brussels and the Spring 2011 semester in Rabat, Morocco. Rochelle has worked at the Greater Washington Urban League, at the law firm of Schagrin Associates, and lately for Union Privilege, a provider of consumer benefits and hardship assistance to labor-union members.

Aleksandar Pavlovich

He joined the United States Marine Corps in 2005, was deployed to Iraq in 2008 within a combat role providing security for two camps. Aleksandar subsequently attended the California State University at Sacramento, where he earned a BA degree in Government and International

Relations while serving in the US Marine Corps Reserve, currently with the position of Platoon Sergeant. He has traveled extensively in Europe, but especially in the countries formerly part of Yugoslavia.

Jaqueline Pierson

A recent graduate of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where she earned a BA degree in Economics and a minor in Political Science, Jacqueline had a nomadic upbringing as an “Army Brat” which sparked her passion for international relations. She has developed a keen interest in European economic and political affairs, with a focus on Germany but also on Iceland and Ireland, as of late.

George Siegel

The recipient of a BS degree in Economics from the Pennsylvania State University, with a minor in Information Systems and Statistical Analysis, George subsequently completed training in bank credit analysis offered by the Risk Management Association and worked for two years as an analyst for Peapack Gladstone Bank in New Jersey. He is a lifelong athlete (an avid golfer, in particular) and a personal trainer.

Tetyana Sydorenko

She comes to us from the Ukraine, having attended the Sevastopol National Technical University, from which she recently obtained BS and MS degrees in Business Management with a specialization in International Business. Tetyana previously spent a year as a high school student in Houston, Texas, as part of the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program sponsored by the US government. She has spent two summers as an analyst with Istochnic Plus, a retailer in Sevastopol.

(William) Harrison Wagenseil

A transfer student previously with the Comparative and Regional Studies (CRS) program, and a candidate for the MBA degree from the Kogod School of Business, he came to AU in Fall 2013 after several years in both the commercial real-estate business, in San Francisco, and in the tech industry at Oracle Corporation. Harrison earlier received his BA degree in Political Science from Tennessee’s Sewanee-The University of The South.

Meet Two of IER's Spring 2014 Graduates



Alena Sakhonchik

At the SIS Awards Ceremony in May, Alena Sakhonchik was one of two Spring 2014 IER graduates to be honored: she took home the Charles H. Heimsath Memorial Award for Excellence in Style and Substance of Written Work in International Relations. Alena earned the award while completing the 5-year BA/MA-IER program, and she calls the award, along with the two published works that helped earn it for her, the most rewarding end of her time at AU. Alena, a native of Belarus, focused on Eurasia, Russia, and international trade issues during her time in the IER program. She is about to begin a consultancy at the World Bank Group, and eventually she hopes to break into foreign policy, possibly within the United Nations.

Her recommendation is that students should be sure to take advantage of the many opportunities available in the Washington, DC area. “Think-tank and embassy events are particularly useful for networking. Do not be afraid to approach your professors for help and advice in terms of job opportunities and contacts: they are primary sources of information on what’s going on around town and with our alums. Even if you don’t plan to stay in DC after graduation, internships and work experience here, accompanied by a degree from one of the largest schools of international affairs in the world, will do much to allow you to build a solid foundation for a career somewhere else.”

Alena believes that a good knowledge of economics is a must to be competitive in almost any field of international affairs. “I have realized that in order to become a good foreign-policy analyst, understanding and ability to manipulate economic concepts and facts is a precondition for any other issue area or concentration. This is one of the reasons why I chose IER, instead of international politics or global governance.” On a related note, she also believes that “quantitative analytical skills and abilities in Excel and Stata are priceless in the modern job market.”



Ben Duncanson

Another Spring 2014 IER graduate, Ben Duncanson grew up on his family’s farm in southern Minnesota. He then attended Luther College in northeast Iowa, where he planned to study history and political science – until the global financial crisis hit and he took his first economics class to understand it, which prompted him to change his major. While studying abroad in the Brazilian Amazon in his senior year, his interest in international economics was awakened when he witnessed firsthand the effect that changes in global market conditions have on trade and financial flows to rural economies. Now Ben hopes to pursue a career focusing on international agricultural trade between the US and Latin America; currently, he is working at the Farm Credit Council, on a demographic study of access to credit among beginner and small farmers.

His advice for future students mirrors that of Alena, in that he emphasizes how crucial it is that students take full advantage of the abundance of networking opportunities and events in

Washington, DC: “Not only is it a great way to network, which is the reason that most people would tell you to attend, but it’s a chance to learn something firsthand from people that are on the ground or are doing the foremost research on a topic you find interesting. Plus, it’s knowledge that you don’t have to pay for – not to mention the free food!” He recommends that students should take as many quantitative methods classes as possible: “I came to AU with very few quantitative skills; I hadn’t even taken pre-calculus. But I realized that such skills would be important when it came to looking for jobs, so I even used up my elective to take an additional econometrics class and, although it was difficult, I learned a lot. It is one of the things that I have found the most useful in the workplace and in my job search.”

In addition to advising students to get to know their professors really well, Ben emphasizes not to neglect peer relationships: “Whether it was through study groups or IER happy hours, I became very close with a number of my classmates. I think this is important because not only are you making connections for later in life, but you’re learning from and helping one another.” He also recommends taking courses outside of SIS wherever possible, citing a Kogod Business School class, *Global Supply Chain Management*, as helping him to think differently about economics.

In Conversation With...



Prof. Randall (Randy) Henning

For Professor Henning, who teaches two of the IER program’s core courses (“International Political Economy” and “International Financial Relations”), the recent European financial crisis has been a source of inspiration for his latest work on regional financial integration, international economic institutions, and macroeconomic governance.

“Why did the Eurozone countries turn to the International Monetary Fund for help when many Europeans initially wanted to solve the problem on their own,” he questions. How were conflicts among the IMF, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank handled and

resolved? Should the countries of the euro area create a European Monetary Fund? Should the emerging-market countries, for that matter, create their own institutions? “These issues drive my research agenda. They are primarily political and institutional, but we all need to understand the economic underpinnings before we can attempt to answer them.”

The ability to identify those economic underpinnings and apply them to burning issues in international affairs, says Dr. Henning, “is the distinguishing virtue of the IER program: the study of politics and institutions, on the one hand, in combination with economic and financial forces, on the other. This is why I strongly encourage students to dive deeply into both, including good training in research methods, to maximize their options in the professional world.”

Prof. Henning, who earned his BA in Political Science from Stanford University and his PhD in International Political Economy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, enjoys outdoors activities in some of the country’s most beautiful locations: “When I’m on vacation, you’ll find me backpacking in New Mexico, skiing in the Cascade Mountains, or whitewater rafting on the Snake River.”



Prof. Stephen Silvia

Dr. Silvia recently stepped down from his role as the inaugural director of SIS's innovative Online MA in International Relations. "It's important to distinguish what we're doing at SIS versus what's out there," he said, noting that while other online international relations programs do exist, many of them are Blackboard-style chat room-and-email courses, often containing pre-recorded seminars which participants simply watch on their own before submitting assignments.

What is unique about AU's Online MA is that it comes closest to being an on-campus experience.

Half of the program is made up of recorded lectures and the other half of small "classrooms" of live discussion involving 10-15 students. The future is in online education, he believes, will look more like this format, and thus he is sure that the SIS program is sure to garner increasing attention. Moreover, he feels that SIS will develop more online programs of increasing quality, wherein the discussion will take courses to the next level, making them more closely comparable to the on-campus experience.

Prof. Silvia, an expert on European economics, especially German labor policy, is currently focusing his academic research on the German automobile industry, including Volkswagen's union policies. Silvia remarks that the idiosyncrasies between the U.S. and Germany on works councils have been costing the company can be found in his most recent work, "Holding the Shop Together: German Industrial Relations in the Postwar Era." Dr. Silvia earned a BS in industrial and labor relations before obtaining his PhD in political science from Yale University.

Dr. Silvia also recently spoke with AU about his teaching activities and the university in general

Alumna Profile

Stefanie Perrella, IER Alumna

IER Alumna Stefanie Perrella has worked her way up to Vice President of Duff & Phelps since her 2008 graduation. A BA/MA graduate, Stefanie was initially attracted to international economic policy, but found herself drawn into the microeconomic world of solving business-specific problems in her first job in economic consulting, and has continued on that road. "Over the past five years, I have developed an expertise in valuation, specifically pricing," she says, "...but as a consultant, the type and scope of my engagements can vary – one project may be on behalf of a global health NGO to negotiate sustainable vaccine pricing with multinational biopharmaceutical manufacturers to procure product for developing world countries, while another is to determine fair market royalty to license patent rights to an innovative cancer drug from a start-up shop to a large-scale manufacturer for commercialization."

At AU, Stefanie concentrated in Finance, and suggests that all students interested in following in her footsteps take full advantage of the customization allowed for by the degree and choose MBA courses such as international finance, derivatives, and risk management, many of which are within Kogod. These courses can add more than just nominal value to one's coursework, she suggests: "[Such courses] provide the groundwork for certifications like the CFA, which is highly respected among the professionals I work with, and in many cases is seen as at least equal to an MBA by those making hiring decisions."

Stefanie now works in New York City, but often misses many things about Washington, DC. "NYC is... more diverse in every sense of the word—there are artists to financiers from every corner of

the globe, and they all consider themselves to be New Yorkers. That said, for me, the charm of DC is the history, the low buildings, and the ability for it to feel like home—to really “know” the city inside and out. I think it could be a lifetime before I find this in NYC.”

A Note from the CIER E-Board

The Council for International Economic Relations is a student organization established by graduate students in the IER program to promote a dialogue between students, staff, and faculty at AU on topics of interest in the fields of economics, finance, and international affairs. CIER is open to all students interested in IER, and even undergraduates attend meetings and events. Last year, CIER hosted three alumni panel events at which IER alumni were invited to share their experiences and interact with students and faculty. We also organized several networking “happy hours” throughout the year. CIER remains active throughout the summer, holding events designed to welcome incoming students into the program. At the beginning of the Fall semester, CIER will resume its biweekly meetings. They can be reached at cier@american.edu.

Jennifer Harkins, President
Gabriel Hernandez, Vice President
Kyle Toman, Treasurer
Cody Countryman, Secretary

Program Director, Dr. Arturo Porzecanski
Program Coordinator, Shannon Hilsey, ier@american.edu
<http://www.american.edu/sis/>