

School of International Service – American University

International Economics Relations | International Economics

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SPRING 2016: New Faces in IER/IE

Welcome New Students!

We are pleased to welcome the following new students who have entered, and also an ongoing student who has formally transferred into, the International Economic Relations or International Economics programs:

Fatima Mujtaba: Born in Pakistan but raised also in the United States, Mexico and Italy, Fatima attended New York University, where she obtained a B.A. degree in Middle Eastern Studies, and later also the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, where she received an M.S. degree in Violence, Conflict and Development. While in London, she worked for Cooperation for Peace and Unity, an Afghan-led, non-profit organization which promotes peace and social justice. She then returned to her native Pakistan, and while based in Islamabad, Fatima worked at first for the Australian High Commission's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, then the British Council, and lastly for Pakistan's Ministry of Planning and Development. She is pursuing an M.A. degree in International Economics.

Robert Vainshtein: A graduate of Cornell University with a B.A. degree in History, Robert initially came to American University's SIS and joined the U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security program, but has since transferred into International Economic Relations. After finishing college, he joined the firm Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, an opinion research and strategic consulting firm based in Washington DC. After a couple of years, Robert moved to the Boston area, where he worked at the law firm Carney & Bassil (now JW Carney and Associates), later joining the Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration & Finance, which manages the state's finances. Since returning to DC, Robert has served as a financial policy analyst with the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

Shivani Vakharia: A recent alum of the University of Georgia, where she earned B.A. degrees in Political Science, International Affairs, and Spanish, Shivani had a study-abroad experience in Stellenbosch, South Africa, where she helped to teach elementary-school children, and also had a stint as an English-teaching volunteer in Managua, Nicaragua. Prior to starting her graduate studies at American University this past January, having been accepted into the International Economic

Relations program, Shivani completed a Fall 2015 experience as a Congressional Intern with the U.S. House of Representatives, where she is working now as a staff assistant.

Alumni Profiles

Carolina Peguero Fernández, IER '11



Carolina Peguero with Amb. Michael Froman, US Trade Representative, at the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference, Nairobi, Kenya December 2015

Carolina works and lives in Geneva, Switzerland, and is Minister Counselor at the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Her typical work day involves attending meetings either at the WTO or at the sister organization UNCTAD in order to voice the priorities and concerns of the Dominican Republic, and report back to her superiors in Santo Domingo. She participates in meetings to develop common group positions, and also welcomes and advises delegates from her home country who visit Geneva for specific meetings.

She has been with the WTO for over a year and her responsibilities include to represent the Dominican Republic in meetings and negotiations related to the Council of Trade in Services, Committee on Trade and Development, Committee on Regional Trade Agreements, and Committee on Trade and Environment in the framework of the WTO. Carolina also represents the Dominican Republic in meetings and negotiations related to the United Nations Conference on Trade and

Development (UNCTAD). Finally, Carolina defends the interests of the Dominican Republic in the negotiating groups to which it belongs, such as Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP), Small and Vulnerable Economies (SVEs), Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), and Group of Countries G77+China (G77+China).

Carolina is particularly interested in the fate of regional and mega-regional trade agreements. As an economist working at the WTO, she notices every day how its member countries are moving away from multilateralism and choosing to pursue agreements outside of the WTO, as is the case of the recently negotiated Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the ongoing work on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). She is following how these agreements impact on the preferences imbedded into existing bilateral and regional free-trade agreements, and on the future role and relevance of the WTO.

Previously, Carolina worked in Washington, DC as a Counselor in the Economic and Trade Section of the Embassy of the Dominican Republic to the United States, then in Santo Domingo as a Counselor to the Vice Ministry of Economic Affairs and International Negotiations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

She graduated in 2009 Magna Cum Laude from American University with a B.A. degree, having double-majored in International Relations (Spanish/Latin American Affairs) and Economics, and then went on to obtain her M.A. degree in International Affairs: International Economic Relations in 2011. While she was a student at SIS, she worked as a Program Assistant at the [Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law](#) at American University Washington College of Law, and previously Carolina interned at the [United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (ECLAC) and the [United Nations Development Program](#) (UNDP), as well as worked as a Research Associate at the [Center for Latin American and Latino Studies](#) (CLALS).

On what skills, background and experiences have proven useful in the job market and her career path, Carolina recalls that "the most useful experiences were by far the wide range of internships that DC has to offer, and that I could take advantage of. Ever since I was young I knew I wanted my future job to include being able to represent my country and work in a field related to economics for the public sector."

"While in DC, I was able to hold internships at an NGO ([Hispanic Heritage Foundation](#)), two UN agencies (UN-ECLAC and UNDP), and work in academia (at AU's University College Program and WCL's Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law). These experiences reinforced my interest in international economic relations and in international trade, specifically."

Justin Hoffmann, IER '08



Justin's entire career has focused on U.S. foreign trade policy. He's had the opportunity to work on the issue from the perspective of the private sector, the Executive branch, and now the U.S. Congress. Having a deeper understanding of how these three "groups" interact with one another, and their differing points of view on trade policy issues, has proved to be quite valuable in his career path.

Justin has been working as a Senior International Economist at the Office of Trade Negotiations and Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce for the past 8 years - starting there before completing his M.A. degree in International Affairs: International Economic Relations. He has received different awards from Commerce such as the Silver Medal Award (in 2013 and 2014) and the Quarterly Star (2012), and was nominated for the Stephen Kaminski Memorial Award (2015) and the Naomi Warbasse Memorial Award (2010).

At Commerce, Justin is responsible for conducting economic analysis to enhance U.S. market-access opportunities in bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations. Most recently, he prepared the U.S. tariff offers and requests in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations, and he is proud to say that the negotiating team was able to achieve a very ambitious outcome that provides ample new opportunities for U.S. exporters. A typical work day at Commerce involves gathering large amounts of quantitative (e.g., tariff rates and import/export figures) and qualitative data (e.g., company comments on export interests and notes from previous negotiating rounds). He then uses that

information to prepare U.S. tariff offers and requests utilized in trade negotiations, trying to find a balance between "asks" and "gives."

Justin is currently on a temporary assignment away from Commerce because he was accepted into the Brookings Institution Legis Fellows program, which has placed him as a fellow in the office of Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI). He will have the opportunity to be exposed to other subjects, such as tourism policy and international education. In Senator Schatz's office, Justin tracks legislation on international economic issues and conducts research on them, preparing briefing papers for the Senator and senior staff, and helping to draft related legislation and amendments.

After finishing his undergraduate studies at American University in 2000, having double-majored in International Studies and Economics, he worked briefly as a Public Affairs Assistant at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. Thereafter, and until 2007, he worked at the Trade Partnership Worldwide, first as a Trade Policy Analyst then as Director for Public Policy Analysis. The Trade Partnership is a small consulting firm that applies economic analysis to produce clear, concise and useful information about the impacts of trade policy. While there, Justin produced reports and materials in support of various trade agreements and trade initiatives.

When reflecting on his time during the IER Program, Justin recalls taking Prof. Robin Broad's class on International Development, which helped him gain a much deeper understanding of the issues facing developing countries. "This experience proved to be very useful when negotiating with developing countries like Vietnam and Malaysia. By knowing about the pressures and challenges these countries faced as they developed, that proved very useful in trying to understand their negotiating position in several areas."

Justin advises students who are about to begin their careers that "If you ultimately want to land a job in Washington, I highly recommend taking advantage of as many networking opportunities as possible. Attend think-tank briefings and join professional groups like the Washington International Trade Association. Networking played a big role in finding my Commerce job and my position before that. In my current capacity in Senator Schatz's office, networking is key to getting things done on Capitol Hill. And don't be afraid to maintain contact with your networks over time. I also think that professionalism and people skills are important and don't always get the attention they deserve. When you are trying to network and reaching out to new contacts, try to bring something of value to the conversation, because networking is not a game of who can collect the most business cards. While many folks are more than happy to sit down and talk with you, be respectful

of their time. Don't request a meeting only to then reschedule it -- never mind doing so time and again."

Faculty Profile



Prof. Daniel Bernhofen

Prof. Bernhofen joined the SIS faculty in the Fall of 2013 with long research and teaching expertise in international economics, and particularly in the field of international trade. He has carried out extensive research on the theoretical, empirical and historical aspects of international trade, and his work has been published by several of the leading economic journals. Bernhofen did his undergraduate studies in Germany and then attended Syracuse University, obtaining an M.S. degree in Mathematics (1987) and a Ph.D. degree in Economics (1994). He then accepted a faculty appointment at Clark University (1994-2006).

Prior to coming to Washington, DC, Bernhofen was Professor of International Economics (2005-2013) and Director (2008-2013) of the [Globalization and Economic Policy Centre](#) at the University of Nottingham. When asked how he likes the District of Columbia as a location for study, research and practice in international economics, he said: "DC is a vibrant place to study international economics and the forces behind policymaking. Negotiators come to town to carve out trade agreements; special-interest groups come here to lobby Congress and the Administration; and there are a myriad of academics and public intellectuals who either reside here or come to visit regularly."

On whether he thinks that the era of multilateral approaches to international trade facilitation is over, and that bilateral and regional solutions are here to stay, Bernhofen opines: "Although the Doha round of multilateral talks has made only limited progress, I would not say that the multilateral approach is over as yet. WTO governance of dispute settlements is still in operation. But the path towards further trade liberalization has clearly gone via 'preferential' (bilateral or regional) trade agreements."

As to his advice to IER/IE graduate students on making the most of their time on and off campus, Bernhofen says: "On campus: study hard and take as many quantitative courses as you can digest. Off campus: look for those things you really enjoy. When you start looking for a job, try not to get overly worried and follow your instincts."

On what specific skills our M.A. students should be picking up in order to maximize their chances of professional success, Bernhofen offers: "Develop your ability to think conceptually. Taking rigorous courses that challenge you intellectually will help that. Try to nurture your ability to see connections that did not exist before, something which will spur your creativity, and taking a broad range of courses will help you to do that. But ultimately, do what you love."

Finally, we wondered how he felt being affiliated now with a program like IER which attracts faculty and students with backgrounds and interests in political science and international relations, but also those with backgrounds and interests in conventional international economics. Is this cross-disciplinary environment something which suits him? Bernhofen's reply: "After having taught for 19 years in economics departments prior to joining SIS in 2013, I was enticed by the opportunity of working in a multidisciplinary environment -- and I have not been disappointed. The IER program embodies wonderful synergies between international economics and international political economy that keeps us faculty stimulated, and more importantly, prepares our students for a broad range of careers."

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