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## UNDERGRADUATE CONCENTRATION IN PUBLIC POLICY CLASS OF 2021

# Engaged Analysis Senior Theses and Capstone Projects

Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs  
Brown University



Public Policy

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## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR HONORS THESES**

### **Grace Valanne Banfield, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Recasting the Iron Triangle Fails to Serve our Nation's Veterans Partial Privatization of the VHA under the Veterans Choice and VA MISSION Acts*

Readers: Robert Hackey, Public Policy & Margaret Weir, Political Science

In 2014, The Department of Veterans Affairs became the center of scandal when a series of deaths in Phoenix were tied to exorbitantly long wait times for care. The scandal, in combination with a specific set of political conditions, led to the partial privatization of the VHA under the Veterans Choice Act. The legislation recast the iron triangle governing veterans' healthcare by introducing private market interests as a key stakeholder in the policy space. Four years later, a desire to appease traditional stakeholders and new private market interests led to the passage of the VA MISSION Act to liberalize eligibility requirements and provide access to private care for 3.7 million veterans. The divergence of interests within the new issue network has driven skyrocketing costs as legislators have sought to fully fund both traditional and private VHA care. The paired funding approach is unsustainable in the long-run and has served to deteriorate quality of care in the short-run. Partial privatization, as legislated by the Veterans Choice Act and VA MISSION Act, is not in service of our nation's veterans.

### **Isabelle Belleza, Public Policy**

#### *Desegregating Suburban School Districts: Understanding Challenges and Evaluating Practices for Effective Policy Implementation*

Readers: Kenneth Wong & Jonathan Collins, Education

Rapid demographic change is reshaping the suburbs, yet the implications of these changes on segregation in suburban school districts remain understudied. This thesis examines the challenges faced by policymakers in implementing desegregation policies within the context of demographically changing suburbs. By comparing desegregation efforts and equity reforms across four suburban school districts, this thesis concludes that competing policy priorities and community politics are the primary impediments to the implementation of desegregation policies. The findings from the comparative analysis inform recommendations for effective strategies at two levels. At the policymaking level, school boards should develop a unified commitment to integration to ensure focused attention on integration and the longevity of policy, create policies with specific integration targets, and consider varied implementation strategies. At the community level, districts should build support for integration through consistent engagement, an incremental policy implementation approach, and an emphasis on the collective benefits of integration.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR HONORS THESES**

### **Katherine Bennett, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *The Rise and Fall of Charter Schools: The Disappointment of Choice and a Broken Promise for Improvement and Equity in American Public Education*

Readers: Margaret Weir, Political Science & Jayanti Owens, Sociology

Long a mainstay of the school choice movement, charter school proponents have advanced these public schools as a market-oriented mechanism for improving educational quality and outcomes. For many states, this improvement as a policy goal has centered on the educational outcomes of historically underserved students, including students of color and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Backed by a diverse coalition of supporters, charter school enrollments have grown substantially across the country over the last 20 years. However, the ability of these schools to achieve better academic results and create greater educational equity has been a long-contested topic. In contributing to this discussion, this thesis examines charter school enrollments nationwide from 2000 to the present, identifying separate trends of both growth and decline across various states. Using these trends, this thesis then creates a novel analysis of both charter school enrollment growth and decline, focusing on two case study states, Nevada and Ohio, to explore the drivers and impacts of charter school enrollment changes over the past ten years. Ultimately, this thesis presents several results: (i) In both case study states, charter schools tend to enroll disproportionately large shares of high SES students, reinforcing the claims of the “white flight” hypothesis. (ii) In many districts, charter schools tend to reinforce segregation along racial and ethnic lines. (iii) On average, charter schools tend to underperform traditional public schools along academic metrics. (iv) For states experiencing charter enrollment declines, the poor quality of these charter programs appears to be an important factor in both reducing the number of charter schools operating as well as actively driving students out of the charter system.

### **Viknesh Kasthuri, Public Policy & Computer Science - Economics**

#### *Defensive Medicine: An Elusive Beast*

Readers: John Friedman, Economics & Susan Moffit, Political Science

In this thesis, I investigate the role of medical malpractice pressure on the practice of positive defensive medicine. I exploit variations in the size of the rise in medical malpractice premiums between 2000-05 to identify the intensity of medical malpractice pressure on physicians. I apply this novel identification strategy to investigate defensive medicine practices surrounding three medical conditions: Bell's Palsy, ischemic stroke, and acute myocardial infarction (AMI). I compare the results of my identification strategy to those of the literature standard, the passage of caps on noneconomic damages. Overall, I find that there is little evidence of defensive medicine in the care of patients with Bell's Palsy and AMI. I do find evidence of defensive medicine in stroke care, but my two main identification strategies find contradictory results. These findings suggest that medical malpractice reform should not be motivated by its potential to reduce the practice of defensive medicine.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR HONORS THESES**

### **Audrey Kim, Public Policy**

#### *Holding States Accountable: Open Records Laws and Institutional Design at the Subnational Level*

Readers: Susan Moffitt, Political Science & Michael Moffitt, Law (University of Oregon)

State governments have grown substantially since the mid-1900s, prompting the question: how are they kept democratically accountable? One potential pathway exists within transparency policies, such as open records laws. All fifty states passed open records laws inspired by the federal Freedom of Information Act of 1966, abetting public access to government records. State open records laws remain under-researched despite their potential importance to state accountability. This thesis aims to: 1) provide an account of how state open records laws operate and 2) suggest future areas of promising research, including further study of how state agencies' designs bear on the operation of open records laws. First, this thesis describes how state open records laws vary and operate. Second, it tests whether aspects of states' institutional design bear on how state open records laws operate. Third, it generates hypotheses about the relationship between agency design and the operation of open records laws through a comparative case study. My results highlight the importance of institutional design and pave the way for future research on abetting state accountability through state open records laws.

### **Audrey Shapiro, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Bridging Innovation: A Program Evaluation Of Young Entrepreneurs Of Providence (Yep!)*

Readers: Jayanti Owens, Political Science & Alla Baranovsky, Public Policy

With wealth inequality at an all-time high and social mobility at an all-time low, there is a dire need for interventions to spur economic activity in under-resourced communities. The vast imbalance in wealth in America is exemplified by the high poverty rates of communities surrounding universities and contentious town-gown relations. Young Entrepreneurs of Providence (YEP!), a high school entrepreneurship incubator hosted at Brown University, aims to develop capable entrepreneurs who are empowered to grow the wealth of their communities. In doing so, YEP! seeks to grow the confidence of its participants and heal town-gown relations. In order to investigate whether YEP! can achieve these three goals, this study presents findings from interviews conducted with 40% of YEP!'s alumni. While there are limitations to the results of this study due to its nature and limited sample size, the results suggest that YEP! has made demonstrable gains on all three fronts.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR HONORS THESES**

### **Emily Skahill, Public Policy**

*The Price of Liberty: Implications of Digital Contact Tracing for Privacy, Public Health, and the Economy*

Readers: Timothy Edgar, Watson Institute & Robert Hackey, Public Policy

Public health emergencies have always generated a tension between personal privacy and the need for public health authorities to gather sensitive information to track the spread of infectious diseases. Developments in technology have made it possible to trace people's whereabouts and contacts in a way that was unprecedented just a decade ago, elevating this tension between privacy and public health. While several countries seized on the opportunity to harness these advancements in surveillance technologies to conduct digital contact tracing, leading to fewer deaths and relief from mass lockdowns, other countries – the United States in particular – missed an opportunity to leverage the power of this promising technology due to privacy concerns. This thesis surveys uses of digital contact tracing technologies in China, South Korea, Israel, Singapore, the European Union, and the United States in order to better understand the ethical, legal, and policy implications of digital disease surveillance.

### **Mandana Małgorzata Vakil, Public Policy & Economics**

*Invisible Children and the Invisible Effect? An Analysis of the Implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*

Readers: Matthew Kraft, Education, Economics & Faatimah Muhammad, U.S. Dept. of Education

This thesis investigates the effectiveness of the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVHAA) through case studies of New York and Pennsylvania. The MVHAA mandates that states reduce homeless students' barriers to accessing an equitable education. To analyze the act, I compared a high-performing state (New York) to a low performing state (Pennsylvania) using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitatively, I analyzed homeless student identification and staffing patterns in both states. I conducted semi-structured interviews with policy advocates, program administrators, and homeless liaisons. New York more effectively implements the MVHAA because, independent of the act itself, it dedicates more resources, infrastructure, and attention to homeless students than Pennsylvania. The key barriers to improving the identification of homeless students and implementation of the MVHAA are underfunding, limited capacity of homeless liaisons, and lack of community awareness. Based on these findings, I provide policy recommendations regarding the implementation of the MVHAA in state EHCY programs.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR HONORS THESES**

**Lucia Winton, Public Policy & Economics**

*Private Wealth for Public Good? A Critical Examination of The Role of Philanthropic Foundations in American Democracy*

Readers: Ben Armstrong, Public Policy & William Allen, Public Policy

America is experiencing unprecedented levels of inequality. In reckoning with fundamental social problems, Americans have turned to the venerated field of charity: donating private funds towards public ends. Meanwhile, political scientists are skeptical of seemingly elitist foundations, which play a pivotal role in funding the U.S. nonprofit sector. Critiques of such institutions contend that foundations are inherently unaccountable and unable to solve the root causes of social problems. This thesis addresses the question: how can publicly subsidized institutions of philanthropy—private foundations—best pursue social progress while aligning with American ideals of democracy, equality of opportunity, and justice? Through a historical analysis of American philanthropy, an examination of modern-day critiques, and a case study of the Ford Foundation, this thesis delineates how foundations can successfully navigate their role in financing social change. This thesis imparts a broader understanding of the complexities and propriety of using private wealth to fund social programs.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **John Andrews, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Disaster Relief: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Rhode Island Office of the General Treasurer*

Advisor: Alan Harlam, Watson Institute

This capstone reflects on my internship at the Rhode Island Office of the General Treasurer during the summer of 2020. At the time, the coronavirus pandemic had caused widespread shutdowns across the country, and the external pressure created by the pandemic forced the Office of the Treasurer to shift its priorities to crisis management and the administration of disaster relief funds. Drawing on several research projects I completed, I discuss how the Treasury manages state debt and assets, and what role the Treasurer himself plays in the prioritization of projects. I examine how the work of the Treasury was critical to ensuring housing, banking, employment, and other policies remained effective during the pandemic. I emphasize the importance of community outreach, cooperation between public and private institutions, and the expansion of resources to underserved communities.

### **Morgan Awner, Public Policy & Latin American and Caribbean Studies**

#### *The Failure of the Treatment of Low-level Offenders in the Juvenile Justice System*

Advisor: Steven Bloomfield, Watson

The juvenile legal system was created to rehabilitate youth, instead of forcing them into the harsh, punitive system that is the adult criminal legal system. However, every day, there are 48,000 youth in secure detention facilities around the United States. By employing a critical race lens on the juvenile legal system from its origins in post-slavery America, this paper shows how the juvenile legal system functions exactly as intended: to punish low-income, youth of color. This historical analysis, as well as an investigation into Supreme Court jurisprudence that fails to extend all due process protections to youth offenders, illustrates a juvenile legal system in desperate need of reform. The rehabilitative benefits promised in the juvenile legal system have failed low-income, youth of color caught in this system.

### **Mathew Bailey, Public Policy**

#### *A Post-Shelby Protection Program: Statewide Independent Election Commissions*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

This capstone paper begins with a thorough quantitative analysis of historical voting discrimination in the United States, the effects of *Shelby County v. Holder*, and the state of voting rights in the absence of federal preclearance. It then describes the success and popularity of independent redistricting commissions, as well as the robust jurisprudence protecting such commissions. Finally, it considers these commissions as a model for state-by-state election administration reform, suggesting Independent Election Commissions as an avenue to restoring independent oversight of American electoral administration.



## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Alenette Ballesteros, Public Policy**

#### *Telehealth in Mental Health Care Delivery*

Advisor: Robert Hackey, Public Policy

Since the COVID-19 pandemic swept through the U.S., telehealth has become a lifeline for medical practices and patients living in rural areas with little access to care. Consequently, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid temporarily expanded payment policies to reimburse a wider range of care through telehealth, including group psychotherapy, home visits for established patients, and care planning services. In addition, Medicaid, which has been the largest payer for mental health services in the U.S., continues to play a large role in the reimbursement of substance use disorder services. After the calendar year, CMS must decide whether to permanently allow for the 200+ telehealth services that are currently covered by Medicare and Medicaid during the national emergency. I discuss the significance of mental health care, outline relevant Medicaid coverage and reimbursement policies, survey the outcomes of telehealth expansion during the COVID-19 pandemic, and consider the future of telehealth in mental health services post-COVID.

### **Roxanne Barnes, Public Policy**

#### *Advocacy for Human Rights: The Complex Structure of Community and Legal Organizing Against Solitary Confinement in Rhode Island*

Advisor: Edward Steinfeld, Watson Institute & Political Science

This capstone outlines my experience in legal advocacy and organizing against the use of solitary confinement in Rhode Island. I trace my understanding of the institutions involved in this fight through my internship with the Center for Justice, my experience volunteering with the coalition Close High Side, as well as work I have done to expand my understanding in Brown classes and publications. I describe the political situation that keeps solitary confinement in use in the state of Rhode Island, highlighting the poor accountability within prison system, the forces of unions and state contracts that ensure jobs and autonomy for Rhode Island Department of Corrections staff, and the systematic dehumanization of communities of color that facilitate the use of torture in prisons. I describe further the national history of super-max facilities, and how Rhode Island legislation has been crafted in order to combat the reliance on indefinite solitary confinement in prison management.

### **Rose Beatty, Public Policy**

#### *2020 and The Rise of ESG: How The Past Year Demonstrated the Value of Private Sector Sustainability Practices*

Advisor: William Allen, Public Policy

The galvanizing events of COVID-19, public attention to social injustice and massive shifts to virtual operations generated newly adjusted concern for sustainability in corporate America. The events of 2020 illuminated the importance of ESG factors in mitigating risk. While there were significant tailwinds for ESG integration before COVID-19, the past year has demonstrated the value of sustainable finance and catalyzed the movement towards leveraging the private sector for social impact. Focus on events over the past twelve months reveals how businesses were presented with material displays of how their inclusion of sustainable practices (or lack thereof) can directly impact their bottom line.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Nidhi Bhaskar, Public Policy, Anthropology & Health and Human Biology**

#### *A Case Study of Daily Dump, India's Disruptive Environmental Entrepreneurship Initiative*

Advisor: William Allen, Public Policy

Social entrepreneurship represents an effort to source solutions to widespread social issues by sourcing community-based initiatives to create an impact at the scale of the original problem. Following a semester-long course in Social Entrepreneurship, this case study on Daily Dump, an India-based organization whose mission to make composting and environmental awareness accessible and aesthetically designed, was created as an exercise to explore and evaluate the organization's Theory of Change. The mission of Daily Dump serves to radically change the way that individuals interact with their trash and waste products and to create community-based solutions to decrease the amount of waste that proceeds to landfills. In evaluating the organization's theory of change, the activities and current outputs of the organization were observed as a means of gauging the efficacy and scalability of the organization's mission and actions. Through this case study, it was found that, while Daily Dump's current activities, impact, and focus on local communities posed them for a transformative impact, they would benefit from a greater focus on scalability and accessibility.

### **Luqmaan Syed Bokhary, Public Policy**

#### *Targeting Muslims and Civil Liberties Prevention: An Analysis of CVE and TVTP's Infringements on First Amendment Rights*

Advisor: Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

The post-9/11 world has ushered in a growing infatuation with securitization and counterterrorism programs, much of which have blatantly targeted and infringed upon the rights of Muslim communities in the United States. In 2011, President Obama announced the creation of the Countering Violent Extremism Task Force, a counterterrorism program, housed in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice, dedicated to preventing violent extremists and their supporters from further aiding extremist groups and ideology. Countering Violent Extremism programs sought to use community engagement and partnerships with law enforcement and government agencies to expand surveillance and intelligence gathering capabilities on Muslim communities. In this paper, I argue that Countering Violent Extremism programs in light of existing Court precedents and tests infringe upon the First Amendment rights of American Muslims, as the programs have a chilling effect on their freedom of speech, freedom of association, and free religious exercise, in addition to discriminating against them on the basis of their religion.

### **A.J. Braverman, Public Policy**

#### *Grassroots Power's Potential: Learnings from Organizing with Renew New England and Renew New England Alliance*

Advisor: Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

For the last six months I have worked as the RI Organizing Director for Renew New England and Renew

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

New England Alliance – a coalition of 150 racial justice organizations, indigenous tribes, climate activists, labor unions, faith groups, and frontline community organizations working to build racial, economic, and climate justice in Rhode Island. My capstone analyzes the structure of the Renew movement, key tactical choices to prioritize “outside” pressure over “inside” lobbying, the interplay between electoral and legislative organizing, and how my experience developing a legislative advocacy campaign while laying the groundwork for Renew New England’s 2022 electoral efforts influences my views on the Renew movement’s tactical decisions. It also argues that the Renew movement’s structure has the potential to create sweeping left-wing change at the state level across New England.

### **Sophie Brown, Public Policy & American Studies**

#### *Reformulating Foreign Aid and the Humanitarian Ecosystem*

Advisor: David Polatty, Watson Institute

Humanitarian response as it relates to short-term crisis response and long-term development has suffered as a sector from a lack of innovation and organizational effectiveness. When foreign aid is distributed, it often makes no difference in the communities it seeks to serve or even ends up doing unintended harm. This issue is situated in the inefficiency of the humanitarian ecosystem and the impossibility of mediating efforts between a complexity of actors with differing agendas. In this work, I propose that the administration of foreign aid should be shifted by building capacity at local and national levels rather than primarily being funneled through the U.N. whose role could theoretically be shifted more effectively to a regulator of these efforts. Utilizing lessons from the science of social entrepreneurship yields the understanding that solutions are best created by consulting and building them around those affected, using appreciative inquiry to understand what works as a guideline strategy for thinking innovatively.

### **Sarah Calame, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *The Politics of Medicaid Expansion and Work Requirements*

Advisor: Robert Hackey, Public Policy

Drawing on three themes that have long been used to weaken social safety net programs, conservatives argued that traditional Medicaid expansion would promote welfare dependency among the so-called “undeserving poor,” overburden state budgets, and increase federal control over state Medicaid programs. For Republican state politicians seeking to adopt or extend Medicaid expansion, however, supporting work requirements allowed them to do so without challenging prevailing conservative narratives about social safety net programs. To help shed light on these political dynamics, this paper recounts New Hampshire’s long and contentious debates over Medicaid expansion and work requirements. The case study reveals that advocating for Medicaid work requirements was not a harmless political exercise, as it put the health care coverage of tens of thousands at risk and reinforced false and damaging stereotypes about Medicaid recipients.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Victoria Caruso, Public Policy**

#### *Documenting the Impact of COVID-19 on Living Conditions for People Experiencing Homelessness in Rhode Island*

Advisor: Alan Harlam, Public Policy

This capstone is an exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on living conditions for people experiencing homelessness in Rhode Island. I worked as a PhotoVoice researcher under the guidance of the Community Action Partnership of Providence. PhotoVoice is a research methodology that asks community researchers to document and reflect on issues in their area to encourage social change. Interviewing willing participants at shelters, tent encampments, and nonprofit organizations across the state, I documented the situation on the ground and compiled my research into a paper and poster board to be displayed at a symposium for policymakers across Rhode Island.

### **Evelyn Chavez, Public Policy**

#### *Democratic Erosion in Ecuador*

Advisor: Robert Blair, Political Science & Watson Institute

While Ecuador has seen three episodes of populist government since 1980 (1996-1997; 2003-2005; 2007-2017), scholars identify 2007 as the beginning of Ecuador's democratic backsliding with the election of President Rafael Correa. While Correa retained popularity throughout his administration, he is also attributed with fomenting the democratic erosion that the country now struggles to escape from. This paper will describe two precursors to this democratic erosion: (1) the 1998-99 economic crisis and (2) weak political parties (that follow regional divides). It will also describe two symptoms of erosion: (1) constitutional revision, specifically in the form of executive aggrandizement, and (2) media repression, through the use of libel laws, censorship, and regulations that increase the cost of doing business. It will conclude by analyzing acts of resistance from local politicians and international actors.

### **Hyun Choi, Public Policy & Computer Science**

#### *The Long and the Shortage of It: Physician Shortages in South Korea and the U.S.*

Advisor: Robert Hackey, Public Policy

In recent years, health policy experts in South Korea and the United States have projected a deficiency in the number of physicians available to provide medical care for their people. The most prominent proposals in both countries that attempt to address this issue generally include a blanket increase of physician supply, whether through an increase in medical school admissions or an increase in resident physicians. This paper explores the background behind medical education and physician supply, as well as the proposed solutions to physician shortages, in each country. This paper then explains why these proposals do not properly address the underlying issues behind physician shortages in rural areas and underserved specialties. Finally, this paper proposes potential solutions to these issues that are more targeted toward the underlying problems causing the shortages, as well as discuss the limitations of the proposed solutions.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Maya Dayan, Public Policy and Applied Mathematics**

#### *Interning with the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights: A Brown in D.C. Reflection Essay*

Advisor: Izetta Mobley, Watson Institute

I spent my practicum in the Brown in Washington program interning with The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights whose mission is to build an America as good as its ideals. I worked with the Education Equity and Census 2020 teams. The education team works to advance the school climate principles, defending students' civil rights and educational access. I compiled daily press clippings for this team and wrote memos on current affirmative action cases, among other tasks. The census team is working to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 census count. On this team, I assisted with various projects, but particularly in organizing the Census Civil Rights Summit.

### **Henry Drewes, Public Policy**

#### *An Absolute Right: Freedom of the Press*

Advisor: Jeffery Robbins, Political Science

This paper examines the First Amendment of the Constitution and the extent of its guarantees of freedom of the press. It does so with regard to the Supreme Court decisions in *Near v. Minnesota* and *New York Times Company v. United States*, which carved out exceptions to freedom of the press, permitting enjoyment of publication in certain circumstances. In examining these decisions, I consider the influences and intent of the Framers, the original understanding of freedom of the press in the 1700s, philosophies of freedom of the press, and the arguments presented by the majorities in both cases. I conclude that the current jurisprudence, permitting prior restraint on publication in "exceptional cases," is antithetical to the text of the Constitution, intent of the Framers, natural liberty, and democratic values. Freedom of the press is an absolute right.

### **Vanessa Fajardo, Public Policy**

#### *The Effects of Water Scarcity and Frameworks for Solutions*

Advisor: Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

With dwindling supply of freshwater exacerbated by climate change, water insecurity threatens the very livelihood of everybody on this planet, with vulnerable populations disproportionately affected. Syria and the Lake Chad Basin are early case studies of how lives can be uprooted as a result of water scarcity. Locals have been forced to flee in search for a better life, while those that stayed behind compete fiercely for the limited resources that are left. Both circumstances had set the scene ripe for exploitation and unrest, and violent uprisings ensued. Other regions may soon meet the same fate if aggressive action isn't taken. As nations come together in search for a solution to the growing water crisis, it's important to remember that water insecurity is a transdisciplinary issue, and its solutions should reflect that. It's important to have a complex, multifaceted framework that gives all stakeholders a voice when implementing proactive or reactive measures in their own communities.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Lucas Fried, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Rhode Island Housing Court During the Covid-19 Pandemic*

Advisor: Emily Oster, Economics & Watson Institute

Using a novel dataset that codes in-depth case proceedings in Rhode Island Housing Court, the CDC Eviction Moratorium did not stop evictions but appears to have depressed total monthly legal eviction filings by 2/5th relative to historical trends. Decomposing by type of eviction, however, the CDC Moratorium has had the unintended consequence of raising the type of evictions it does not cover, which may extend to illegal evictions happening outside of court. I also find that defaults in housing court are over two times higher this year than in the past, indicating that many tenants lost their cases because of the risks of coming to court during a pandemic. Finally, I find that eviction filings differences across the state are modulated in part by landlord filing habits, where landlords that file a large number of evictions over one month's rent accounts for most the evictions during the pandemic.

### **Marin Furuyama, Public Policy & Business, Entrepreneurship and Organization**

#### *Employee Representation on Corporate Boards: An Analysis of the Accountable Capitalism Act and Codetermination in the United States*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Watson Institute

There is a growing sense of distrust of corporations and American-style capitalism as economic inequality in this country widens. There is a clear role that unrestrained shareholder primacy played in the problem, and this paper examines whether the Accountable Capitalism Act and codetermination more specifically can address this challenge. The paper begins with a focus on codetermination in Germany where worker representation on corporate boards is an established part of the economic system. This German codetermination model has been a core area of empirical research; yet current research demonstrates inconclusive results on key metrics such as employment outcomes, wage, and firm performance. Thus, I argue that the results do not currently merit a case in support of the implementation of worker representation on corporate boards in the United States. This paper concludes with other possible reforms to address economic inequality and the wide distrust of the economic system.

### **Arjun Ganga, Public Policy & Neuroscience**

#### *Electronic Privacy Jurisprudence in the Digital Age*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

As computers and cell phones become more ubiquitous, so does the data they generate. This vast amount of data can be misused by data brokers, adversarial state powers, and law enforcement. This vast amount of data can be misused by data brokers, adversarial state powers, and law enforcement. Despite the prevalence of data abuse, the United States does not have comprehensive federal legislation governing electronic data. Thus, it has largely been up to the courts to decide how companies and the police can gather and use data. In *Katz v. United States*, the Supreme Court first established a person's reasonable expectation of privacy.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

In subsequent landmark cases, the courts have expanded or curbed this expectation in the context of electronic data, debating whether expectations of privacy hold when data is given to third parties. The courts have ruled narrowly and continually point to Congress to legislate, continuing the uncertainty of what protections exist for electronic data in an increasingly digital world.

### **Ghazi Ghumman, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *The Impact of Masculinity in Police Culture on Policewomen*

Advisor: Magda Boutros, Watson Institute

This literature review examines the role and strategies policewomen in the U.S. take to confront masculinity in police culture. The history of women in policing as serving in feminine roles has allocated their work today to be limited. They receive worse assignments and are perceived to be unfit for “real” police work. Masculinity in policing is conditioned in officers as early as training. They are taught to disregard, sexually harass, disrespect, and exclude women. Organizational factors also promote isolation of women through shift work, making promotions dependent on informal networks from which women are excluded, and not offering women mentorship. The result from these factors is a common theme throughout the literature—no matter how they respond to masculinity in policing and the judgment they receive for their gender, they remain isolated socially and professionally.

### **Eli H. Spencer Heyman, Public Policy**

#### *Abolishing Qualified Immunity: How and Why*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

In the political debate over police misconduct and racism in the United States, qualified immunity has recently garnered attention from judges, legislators, and the general public. While some have urged its elimination, it retains many powerful defenders. This paper combines politics and policy, exploring the doctrine’s history and the arguments for and prospects of eliminating it. Ultimately, it recommends to policymakers that they abolish qualified immunity and urges activists to push for such action as part of a broad antiracist platform, rather than as a standalone measure.

### **Bernadette Hicks, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *The Effect of the Felony Drug Ban on Welfare Dependency and Crime Rates*

Advisor: Daniel D’Amico, Economics

The Felony Drug Ban, passed in 1996, made people who had prior drug felony convictions ineligible to receive benefits through the SNAP or TANF programs. The policy was enacted with the goal of reducing drug crimes and dependency on welfare. However, some states decided to opt out of the ban. This paper compares Missouri, where the ban was implemented, to Oklahoma, where the ban was never implemented. I use aggregate crime data to measure the effects of the policy on crime rates, and a difference-and-difference strategy to measure the effects of the policy on labor market participation and welfare dependency. The results show that the ban has not met its goals: welfare rates increased in certain populations, while there was little effect on employment. Additionally, crime rates increased faster in Missouri, where the ban was enacted, than in Oklahoma, where they opted out of the ban.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Gustav Hirschfeld, Public Policy & Education**

#### *Statutes of Limitations for Childhood Sexual Abuse: Are Children Given a Fair Chance at Justice?*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

This paper examines the current state statute of limitations for childhood sex crimes and the respect or lack thereof these statutes provide children in their search for justice. There are many arguments for and against statutes of limitations in both criminal and civil cases. These arguments attempt to balance the rights of the accused alongside the opportunity for justice for a survivor. I have found that many of these laws are outdated and do not account for the delayed disclosure or delayed recall that many childhood survivors of sex crimes experience. To obtain justice for these survivors, the vast majority of states must begin to reconcile with and change their current statutes of limitations to better support criminal and civil justice for victims of childhood sexual abuse.

### **Jacquelin Ho, Public Policy**

#### *Can Bureaucratic Work be Meaningful? Examining Administrative Costs in the Healthcare Bureaucracy*

Advisor: Alexander Gourevitch, Political Science

I aim to answer the question of whether or not bureaucratic work—in public and private spheres—can be meaningful work, with respect to both the individual and society as a whole. I will first defend a definition of meaningful work which includes work that is either 1) socially indispensable or 2) personally fulfilling and self-realizing. I will then examine the circumstances that gave rise to today's cumbersome healthcare bureaucracies, and reasons why such labor is resistant to dismantling despite being unpopular with both bureaucratic workers and people subjected to the bureaucracy. I propose that automation will improve the quality of bureaucratic work by relocating workers in the information economy, providing avenues for making bureaucratic work more meaningful.

### **Xiaoyu Huang, Public Policy, Music & English**

#### *What is a False Claim? Reflecting on an Internship at Pollock Cohen LLP*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

This paper reflects on my experience as an intern at Pollock Cohen LLP, a New York/San Francisco plaintiff-side litigation boutique that focuses on False Claims Act (FCA), commercial, and impact litigation, and public policy. While most law firms deal with policy issues at the appellate level, at Pollock Cohen, I worked as part of a team which interacts intimately with policy (i.e. Congressional/legislative intent) at the level of state and federal district courts. Pollock Cohen also leverages local and national press, polls, and policymaker comments/interviews as part of their litigation strategy. These approaches are unique. The paper also presents five policy considerations that emerge from the practical effects of the FCA, some of which cut against its efficacy and use. I close with a discussion of my subsequent research on the viability of expected FCA litigation against nursing homes impacted by COVID-19.



## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Nathan Kakalec, Public Policy**

#### *Police Unions and the Labor Movement*

Advisor: Richard Synder, Political Science

In June 2020, the WGA East unanimously passed a resolution calling for the AFL-CIO to disaffiliate with the International Union of Police Associations. The resolution charged police unions with upholding systematic racism by reducing accountability and standing in the way of reform. My paper examines the literature connecting police unions, the labor movement, and race. I argue that police unions perpetuate racial inequalities and reflect the historical legacies between labor and race. I first review the history of organized labor in supporting overtly racist and “race-blind” policies to benefit white workers. Next, I look at how modern police unions preserve this history by exploiting collective bargaining to protect systems of racial injustice. I briefly consider contentions for including police unions in the labor movement along with calls for reform. Although much of organized labor today are staunch supporters of racial justice, police unions continue to uphold the status quo.

### **Elisabeth Keck, Public Policy**

#### *Beautycounter: Combatting the Policy Gap in the Personal Care Products Industry*

Advisor: William Allen, Watson Institute

The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Safety Act of 1938 is currently the only legislation governing the cosmetics industry. There are roughly 2 pages of legislation that regulate the entire \$50 billion a year cosmetics industry. When consumers are harmed by personal care products there is little the FDA can do. In 2019 I worked on the advocacy team at Beautycounter. The company advocates for more health protective laws at the local, state, and federal level to combat a huge policy gap while formulating high quality products while avoiding 1,800+ ingredients that are known to be harmful to human or environmental health. Beautycounter is an example of a business regulating itself when the government intervention is insufficient. Consumers want safe products and Beautycounter is creating safe products and leading the fight to ensure that safe products are available for everyone.

### **Grace Kim, Public Policy**

#### *Illicit Economic Actors’ Responses to COVID-19*

Advisor: Peter Andreas, Political Science

This research paper explores the various ways in which illicit economic actors responded and adapted to the new global circumstances that emerged from the sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Widespread restrictions on travel, interaction, and movement as well as the global prioritization of the pandemic reshaped political, social, and economic landscapes, and the illicit markets experienced the same initial shocks as licit businesses. This paper specifically focuses on how criminal actors and organizations adapted to their distinctive markets, focusing on the illicit drugs, migrant smuggling, and newly emerging illicit COVID-19 relief markets. Actors in these illicit markets were able to respond quickly by implement innovative changes in their strategies and businesses throughout the pandemic. They were able to exploit the disruptions, fears,

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and hardships experienced by states and individuals, ultimately reaping economic, social, and/or political gains thus far. While the long-term effects of the pandemic are yet to be seen, these illicit economic actors have indicated their receptivity and ability to adapt accordingly to market disruptions and will likely do so in the future.

### **Leah Lam, Public Policy & Computer Science – Economics**

#### *Crime Versus Health: A Review of Scholarly Research on Policing Mental Health Crises*

Advisor: Magda Boutros, Watson Institute

As of 2019, at least 25 percent of fatal shootings by the police involved a person experiencing a mental health crisis. Often, the police are the first responders to a call for assistance regarding a mental health issue and can exercise a wide range of discretion when handling the encounter. This literature review analyzes scholarly works that investigate how institutional training and individual backgrounds affect the response of police officers to mental health crises. I explore the existing landscape of resources to support the mental health of law enforcement, the present mental health training models widely used in police organizations, and the current ways in which police interact with persons with mental illness in order to understand whether new training methods should be developed, or public resources should be allocated toward other social services.

### **Luke Landis, Public Policy**

#### *Operation Gladio: How the CIA's Network of Underground Armies Maintained American Occupation of Europe*

Advisor: Stephan Kinzer, Watson Institute

Following World War II, the CIA, with the help of MI6, set up a network of secret armies across non-Communist Europe to form the core of a resistance against a feared Soviet invasion. Once in place, the mandate of these groups grew from patiently waiting for signs of the Red army to actively suppressing domestic left-wing movements. Operating within a clandestine NATO division, the tactics of these armies ranged widely, from blackmailing politicians, conducting false flag terrorist attacks, to leading coups against elected leaders. These armies played a pivotal role in maintaining American interests throughout Europe, both undermining the strength of insurgent Communist Parties at key moments and priming the public to embrace right wing ideologies.

### **Peter Lees, Public Policy**

#### *Race, Federalism, and American Fiscal Policy: How Decentralized Administration of US Welfare Has Enabled Racial Exclusion*

Advisor: Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

In the United States, “welfare” can be a dirty word, due in part to the deep racialization of American fiscal and social policy. Compared to fiscal policy in similarly developed countries, the distributive fiscal policy of the United States is modest and decentralized. In this paper I explore the history of race in US welfare policy

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policy from its most active period of expansion under Franklin Delano Roosevelt to its gradual devolution under presidents from Nixon to Clinton. I then argue that in both eras, federalism, decentralized administration, and parochialism in welfare policy have been key enabling factors in the racial segregation of welfare. Finally, building on theory from economist Richard Musgrave, I propose a framework for a fiscal policy to maximize economic health while minimizing racial inequality and exclusion.

### **Eli Learner, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Preneestino: Creating Connections: Reclaiming Lost Space and Reinforcing Social Bonds*

Advisor: Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

Italy is a country heralded for its traditions, societal culture, and rich history. While these are the foundations that give the country structure and undying significance, they are also often the bane of Italy's ability to grow and prosper. In this field study of the Preneestino neighborhood, we explore the historical evolution of the area, trying to understand how its progression throughout time has been affected by the conflicting ideals of historical and cultural preservation against economic growth and viability and immigration. Through tireless field work and discussions with lifelong residents, new incoming families, and community groups and organizations, we conclude that many of Preneestino's downfalls as a neighborhood stand to be resolved through viable adjustments and additions to its urban planning. These solutions mostly stem from the misuse of community space and lack of unity, both of which would benefit from the reclaiming of these community spaces.

### **Jacob Lockwood, Public Policy & Economic**

#### *California v. Texas: How the Supreme Court's Severability Doctrine May Save or Strike Down the Affordable Care Act*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

In the Supreme Court case of *California v. Texas*, the Affordable Care Act faces another existential challenge. Opponents of the landmark healthcare law contest the constitutionality of only one of its provisions, but they do not stop there — instead, they argue that the Court must strike down the entire ACA. The outcome of this case — and the fate of the ACA — could hinge on the doctrine of severability, which guides the Court's decisions on how much of a law it should invalidate when it holds a provision unconstitutional. The Court generally prefers to save as much of a law as possible by severing any unconstitutional provisions, but it also sometimes entertains arguments that the remainder of a law cannot function without its invalid provisions. The challengers of the ACA make such an argument in *California v. Texas*, and the Court — which has grown more conservative since the ACA survived its last major legal challenge — could take this opportunity to declare the law unconstitutional and inseverable. This outcome would have disastrous policy consequences, depriving millions of people of health coverage in the midst of a global pandemic. However, the Court's preference for severability could remain strong enough to save the ACA and avoid upending the nation's healthcare system. This paper will explore how the Court may rule on severability in *California v. Texas* in order to shed light on the critical question of whether the ACA can withstand judicial scrutiny once again.

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### **Cynthia Lu, Public Policy**

#### *Better Housing Policy through Messaging: How the Impacts of Covid-19 Present Opportunities and Challenges for Housing Advocates to Shift Mental Models*

Advisor: William Allen, Watson Institute

The United States has been facing an ongoing “housing crisis” for decades. Despite this, within the arena of advocacy messaging, a gap exists between what policy experts know regarding the root causes of and solutions for housing problems and what the public believes based on preexisting mental models. If we want to tackle the issues of homelessness, growing housing costs, the structural inequities within the housing system, etc., we must start with gathering broad support around these issues through effective messaging. In past year, the coronavirus pandemic and its social and economic impacts have provided both opportunities and challenges for advocates to shift popular narratives. It has brought housing-related issues to the forefront of the public conversation, providing a platform for four key topics: housing from commodification to human right, the role of the government, a growing awareness of systemic racial inequities, and the fallacy of individual responsibility.

### **Sean Lumkong, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Closing the English Learner Achievement Gap in San Diego, California*

Advisor: Jonathan Collins, Education

This paper explores San Diego Unified School District, my home school system, specifically focusing on the district’s greatest challenges surrounding its English learners. In it I analyze the barriers holding back the local English Learner community through board meeting observation, data analysis, and secondary research. I then put forward a small governance amendment and an in-depth policy proposal to combat the achievement gap hurting our English learner community and highlight the best steps for a democratic and equity focused district-wide implementation. The inspiration for this piece came from attending public school in San Diego and previously failing to act when confronted with its deep, systemic issues of inequality. Writing this piece brought me back home and allowed me to engage and grow closer to my local community. I’m thankful for my professor and advisor, Jonathan Collins, for supporting me during this process.

### **Ari Mazza, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Revisiting Patent Protection Strategies and The Evergreening Issue*

Advisor: Robert Hackey, Public Policy

My capstone project is a paper on the effect of patent law and protections in the pharmaceutical industry. I begin with an analysis of current drug prices, public opinions on the pharmaceutical industry, and previous government attempts at reform to curb inflating drug prices. Then, I center the discussion on patent laws. I delve into the history of pharmaceutical patent laws in the US, the current landscape of drug development, and how the US’ patent framework led to this landscape. Next, I explain patent protection strategies employed by pharmaceutical companies. I focus more specifically on evergreening, which is the process of artificially extending the life term of a drug patent to gain longer exclusivity and protections, enabling pharmaceutical companies to increase their monopoly period over their drugs. I end my paper by discussing solutions to curtail these strategies.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

### **Tenaya McCoy, Public Policy**

#### *Disparate Impact Liability Under the Fair Housing Act: A Review of Inclusive Communities and the Need for More Robust Protections*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Watson Institute

The Fair Housing Act was passed with the dual, interrelated purposes of eradicating discriminatory housing practices and promoting racial integration. Disparate impact liability is a critical tool to further these purposes. The Supreme Court formally upheld disparate impact liability under the FHA in its 2015 landmark case *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.* However, the Court's burden-shifting framework could be read to unduly limit disparate impact liability in a manner inconsistent with the FHA's purposes. The opinion's lack of clarity on the standard for disparate impact liability has resulted in contradictory applications in the lower courts. An erroneous final disparate impact rule issued during the Trump Administration has added to the confusion. This paper advocates for two new disparate impact rules under the Biden administration: one that will establish an expansive reading of Inclusive Communities, and one that will affirmatively further fair housing.

### **Allison McGeehan, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *Addressing Food Insecurity and Policy Responses as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Advisor: David Polatty, Watson Institute

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity across the globe has spiked at alarming rates. Immediate impacts including supply chain disruptions, market closures, depressed incomes, and the stoppage of typical food distribution programs over sanitation concerns are expected to push an additional 51 million people into states of food and nutrition crises. Beyond empty stomachs, the true emergency is alchemical. Lasting effects of hunger, including cognitive impairment, decreased productivity, and backward progress with regard to gender equality after decades of efforts made, all contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. This paper will seek to explore some of these complications of pandemic-related food crises and their long-term impacts. Further, a critical review of proposed and implemented policy solutions will act as a reflective and prescriptive guide with regard to mitigating COVID-19 exacerbated food insecurity.

### **Emely Medina, Public Policy & Education**

#### *The Problem of Racialized Inequality in U.S. Schooling Systems: Why Abolition is Necessarily the Answer*

Advisor: Ross Cheit, Political Science

During the first thirty years of compulsory education in the United States, public schooling systems were defined as "separate but equal." In reality, the "state-sponsored [racial] segregation" which defined public policy at the time necessarily produced schools which were both separate and "inherently unequal." Despite numerous attempts at school reform, past and present, students of color now experience systematically lower academic achievement levels, and greater discipline and punishment rates. Since their inception, American

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public schools have underserved students of color, while privileging the needs and the education of their white counterparts. Decades of differential treatment have created public schools in which students of color continue to be marginalized, punished, and forgotten. While decades of reform have prompted undeniable change and progress, they have not done enough for students of color, and it is time to consider a new approach to the problem of racialized inequality in U.S. schooling systems: Abolition.

### **Natalie Montufar, Public Policy & Public Health**

#### *Issues with and Recommendations for the United Nations Population Fund's Last Mile Assurance (LMA) Process: How to Grow*

Advisors: Ari Gabinet and Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

The United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) aims to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. The Last Mile Assurance Process (LMA Process) is a cross branch initiative in the UNFPA that aims to ensure, through monitoring and evaluation, that reproductive health commodities reach the women and girls who truly need them. This paper begins by illustrating the intricacies of the Last Mile Assurance Process through my experience at the organization. Then, I dissect four major issues found with the LMA Process and the UNFPA, as an entity, and I aggregate those issues with tangible recommendations that the organization can utilize to improve upon its work. I also touch upon the role of UN Bureaucracy in hindering the goals of the organization and my work. Ideally, with the recommendations provided, the LMA Process and the UNFPA as a whole, may continue to become more effective, efficacious, and conscientious.

### **Christopher Morillo, Public Policy & History**

#### *Proscribable Thoughts: U.S. Hate Crimes Statutes and the First Amendment Objection*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

This paper attempts to wrestle with a central legal and philosophical objection to U.S. hate crimes statutes — the objection from the First Amendment. After providing an overview of hate crimes statutes and the relevance of the First Amendment, this paper identifies and analyzes three approaches to responding to this objection. In essence, opponents of hate crimes statutes are probably correct that these statutes regulate expression, so it would be wise for proponents of these statutes to justify such expression as constitutionally proscribable. This paper employs a conversation between several notable Supreme Court decisions, especially *R.A.V. v. St. Paul*, *Wisconsin v. Mitchell*, *Virginia v. Black*, and *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire*, and also incorporates the work of legal theorists and policymakers.

### **Benjamin Myers, Public Policy**

#### *Challenges and Opportunities in GIS for Municipal Operations*

Advisor: Anthony Levitas, Public Policy

Geospatial information is part and parcel of how the USPS picks up and safely returns mail-in ballots, how

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local governments collect tax revenue and provide services, how Amazon can deliver packages on time, and how environmental activists can identify inequities in community exposures to synthetic toxins. GIS programs such as ArcGIS and QGIS have revolutionized how entities - particularly local level government bodies – can tackle these challenges equitably and efficiently. Using GIS in an effective fashion requires the user be able to store, manipulate, and interpret geospatial information from a variety of perspectives. Because of these requirements, GIS infrastructure is not universally adopted. Spring-boarding from an internship with the GIS department in South Kingstown, RI, I explored the systemic challenges and opportunities to GIS for municipal operations and found that additional funding (including by municipal revenue and asset sharing) and training are the two biggest opportunities for GIS adoption.

### **Bailee Peralto, Public Policy**

#### *Realizing Rhode Island's Needs: Informing Approaches to Achieving Behavioral Health Equity for BIPOC in the State of Rhode Island*

Advisors: Anthony Levitas, Watson Institute & Tanya Benitez, Center for Health Equity

Behavioral health equity for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) in Rhode Island's healthcare system, while an increasing public health and policy priority, has yet to be fully achieved. Access to care for mental health and substance use conditions demonstrates significant racial and ethnic disparities in the state. Minimal knowledge of the racial and ethnic identities of people accessing care, in a number of settings, also prevents the development of an understanding of the disparities that exist. Through collaboration with the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island, Realizing Rhode Island's Needs is a collection of projects aimed at both highlighting known disparities and setting the groundwork for further identifying behavioral healthcare inequities that exist. The development and dissemination of policy recommendations throughout the work also ensures that essential findings do not stop at presentation but continue to be acted upon in policy work in the state going forward.

### **Antonella Portugal, Public Policy, Political Science, Latin America and Caribbean Studies**

#### *Status Matters: Legal Challenges to DACA and Policy Remedies*

Advisor: Ari Gabinet, Public Policy

the only policy shielding 645,000 first-generation Americans from deportation. As administrations crackdown on undocumented immigration, the question of undocumented children remains unanswered. These young immigrants are often by many considerations Americans; however, their undocumented status largely denies them opportunities for higher education and advanced professions. No remedy for their status existed until the Obama Administration created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in 2012. The program provides recipients with a renewable two-year period of work authorization and deferred action from deportation, though it does not grant legal status nor a pathway to it. In 2017, the Trump Administration rescinded the program. Since then, cases such as *Dept. of Homeland Security v. Regents of Univ. of California*, *New York v. Trump*, and *Wolf v. Vidal* have been brought to the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of this rescission. DACA is far from a perfect policy, but it is currently the only one that deals with the issue of childhood arrivals and provides some form of deportation relief for

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undocumented immigrants. As court cases try to keep DACA alive, legislative attempts to create a pathway to citizenship have failed. Legal status matters, and until a proposed policy is successful, DACA is the only policy shielding 645,000 first-generation Americans from deportation.

### **Lauren Reischer, Public Policy & Education**

*How Should the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) be Adapted to Respond to the Outbreak of COVID-19 and Post-Pandemic Life?*

Advisor: Ross Cheit

This paper examines many of the challenges facing Americans with disabilities as we continue wrestling with the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores discriminatory medical triage policies, a national shift in how we think about workplace accommodations, and how the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) might be adapted in the future to protect these individuals from discrimination in post-pandemic life. It also charts a brief history of how the ADA came to be, to provide context for the nature of disability-oriented legislation to date before understanding what it could look like in the future. What the research conducted in this paper reveals, is that before the next evolution of disability-legislation emerges, we as a society first need to reexamine how we look at and define “disabilities” all together, to create definitions and understanding that more holistically reflect the ever-changing needs and demands of people with disabilities.

### **Jack Riccardo-Wood, Public Policy & Literary Arts**

*The LGBTQ+ “Panic” Defense: A Justice System Epidemic*

Advisor: Susan Moffitt, Political Science & Watson Institute

The LGBTQ+ “panic” defense, which uses the sexual orientation or gender identity of a victim as a justification for murder, has plagued courtrooms in the United States for far too long. As of 2021, this defense is still acceptable and applicable in a court of law in 38 states. Over the last two summers and a semester, I worked as a Policy Intern for the National LGBT Bar Association, where I dedicated a majority of my time to advocating and lobbying for the elimination of this defense from our justice system. Despite the political and social progress that has been made on LGBTQ+ issues, legal protections remain imperative to ensuring LGBTQ+ citizens are treated equally to their cisgender heterosexual counterparts, both inside and outside the courtroom.

### **Pablo Richter, Public Policy**

*Student Policing in US Public Schools*

Advisor: Magda Boutros, Watson Institute

This paper is a literature review of existing research about the policing of students by student resource officers and school administrations. Through it I am to understand what academics have had to say about how the school to prison pipeline is actualized on a daily basis in US public schools, and how much it aligns with what I have seen in my own schooling experiences in Baltimore City public schools. The articles and studies covered show that US public schools largely cooperate with local police departments, in ways which blur the



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lines of the two spheres legally and result in greater police jurisdiction in school buildings. Schools implement zero tolerance policies, student resource officers, and surveillance technologies to police their predominantly Black and low-income students and feed young people to the prison system before they have graduated K-12.

### **Bailie Salk, Public Policy & Political Science**

#### *The Next Mutation of Warfare: An Analysis of How Cyberwarfare Changes the Landscape of U.S. Coercive Diplomacy and the Possibility for Cyber Deterrence*

Advisor: Reid Pauly, Political Science

With the increasing reliance on digital technology as the internet age progresses, the ability to protect the cyber domain is of critical importance to the continued welfare of the United States. As a result, there has been an increased inquiry into whether cyber deterrence is even feasible, and if so, how to effectively engage in successful deterrent tactics. This paper assesses how cyber activities now alter the landscape of coercive diplomatic measures and addresses the difficulties of deterring unwanted cyber activities. It evaluates how deterrent efforts failed to prevent Russian forces from perpetrating the 2017 NotPetya malware cyberattack on Ukrainian systems. By analyzing the context and developments of NotPetya, this paper will seek to answer the question, can cyberattacks be deterred? It will propose potential U.S. cyber policies upon the impending transfer of presidential power into the Biden administration.

### **Olivia Siemens, Public Policy & History**

#### *Institutional Power and Politics on Capitol Hill*

Advisor: Izetta Mobley, Watson Institute

I spent the fall of 2019 in Washington, D.C. with the Brown in Washington program, where I completed a full-time academic course load while interning for 25 hours per week in the office of Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). During my capstone semester in D.C., I came to both recognize and solidify my primary long-term goal: expanding equal access to our nation's institutions of justice and democratic governance through a career in democracy reform, policy innovation, and public interest litigation. My work on Capitol Hill opened my eyes to the extent to which money—particularly of the untraceable sort—has corrupted the U.S. political process, diminishing the voices of everyday Americans and undermining the basic principles of democratic equality.

### **Krista Stapleford, Public Policy & Economics**

#### *The Fentanyl Phenomenon: A Case Study: Analyzing New Hampshire's Policy Responses to a Public Health Crisis*

Advisor: Robert Hackey, Public Policy

The United States has been plagued by an opioid crisis over the last three decades that has cost thousands of lives. Beginning about a decade ago, fentanyl ushered in a far more deadly stage in the epidemic. Public intervention in opioid abuse has long been haphazard, reactionary, and ineffective, failing to address the root causes of addiction or provide sufficient resources to ailing communities. The fentanyl crisis in particular,

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however, failed to make it onto the national public agenda for some time, leaving states with little support despite fentanyl's visible, unique threat. There is currently little research or analysis on the effectiveness of existing state-level policy responses. This paper uses New Hampshire, often considered fentanyl's "ground zero," as a case study to evaluate the roles and effectiveness of local actors and initiatives in the state's response. It analyzes lessons learned that can contribute to the formulation of more coherent, effective policymaking, generalizable to any state in the country, to effectively combat the ongoing nature of this national plight.

### **Ronnie Strode III, Public Policy**

#### *Public Policy in Action: Lessons Learned from My Time in D.C.*

During my internship on Capitol Hill in the Office of Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler, I served as a policy and constituent services intern. The purpose of Congress is to aid and represent the will of the people. I served the individuals of Washington's Third District by engaging in policy research and helping constituents navigate through the complex maze of federal agencies. However, my greatest lessons learned did not come from Capitol Hill, but rather from my time exploring the rest of the federal district. As a unique territory, Washington D.C. lacks Congressional representation and a clear stratification of responsibility and funding. This makes confronting public policy dilemmas, such as funding of the metro, addressing gentrification and housing displacement, or fixing pollution and soil erosion, complex and difficult to navigate. In my capstone, I connect my observational experience to Public Policy concentration themes.

### **Quentin Thomas, Public Policy**

#### *Diversifying the Rhode Island Teacher Pipeline to Promote Gender Equality*

Advisor: Susan Moffitt, Public Policy

There is a clear need for Black male teachers in the United States. In an effort to address this lack of Black male teachers, this memo examines the teacher pipelines of multiple states in order to (1) gain a better understanding of what is causing this shortage, and (2) thus identify possibilities for reform that will meaningfully increase the number of Black male teachers in America. The state of Rhode Island is a prime site of intervention given its smaller size. Comparative Analysis with neighboring Connecticut, as well as Maryland, yields useful insights into what diversification of the teacher pipeline can look like for Rhode Island. Ultimately, this memo calls for the implementation of a small-scale, gender equality-focused teacher preparation program aimed at recruiting and training Black male teachers that will serve the diverse student population of Rhode Island. The feasibility and implications of such a program are also considered.

### **Moriah Tom, Public Policy & Education**

#### *Barriers to College Access: Addressing Social Reproduction of Systemic Inequality in College Preparation and Higher Education*

Advisor: David Rangel, Education

When looking at the opportunity gap that exists between students with privilege and students that are lower-income, first generation, and/or racially underrepresented, it is vital to focus on methods that can reduce

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systemic inequality in higher education. In recent literature, however, another considerable factor in underprivileged students' under-enrollment and lower application volume to college has been less obvious: a seeming "self-selection" phenomenon where even high-achieving students from these less privileged backgrounds do not even attempt to apply to colleges that they are most certainly qualified for. Looking beyond more mainstream framing of these poorer educational outcomes for underprivileged students, where targeted interventions seek to tackle more systemic and institutional problems within the college system, this paper seeks to explore literature and the author's own internship experience in college access to better understand the social factors that reproduce unequal outcomes and lead to this harmful self-selective phenomenon for these students.

### **Youma Traore, Africana Studies & Public Policy**

#### *Who is the Black Martyr?*

Advisors: Emily Owens & Juliet Hooker, Africana Studies

In this essay and accompanying zine, "Who is the Black Martyr?" dissects notions of worthiness in Black political movements, focusing particularly on those killed by anti-Black violence within the United States. Analyzing the treatment of Emmett Till, Martin Luther King Jr. Malcolm X, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, Walter Wallace Jr., and Elijah McClain, this work seeks to understand the meanings behind martyrdom, its goals, and who is afforded this status. Drawing from Christianity and analyses of Black death, this work hopes to uncover who is deemed grievable in political spaces and social justice movements. The goal is to illuminate those who are often placed at the margins of society and need to be recentered within Black movements, uprisings, and generally within American social justice movements.

### **Gabriela Trevino, Public Policy**

#### *Zoned Out: Evaluating Holistic School-Discipline Reform Through the Political Economy of Baltimore City*

Advisor: Mahasan Chaney, Watson Institute

In 2018, a bomb cyclone hit the East Coast of the US, yet students in Baltimore City were mandated to continue attending school in buildings with failing heating systems. That same year some schools received funding to implement restorative practices, an alternative approach to traditional, punitive school discipline. This paper examines this tension between school discipline reform within school walls and the material conditions of the failing infrastructure through a case study of the Baltimore City Public School district (BCPS). Using a political economy framework, the paper evaluates how conditions of poverty and violence in Baltimore City led to punitive and harmful zero-tolerance school discipline policies in the 1990s and early 2000s. Then, it turns toward how this framework can engage education stakeholders at all levels of the political economy of public schools in creating a holistic approach to school-discipline reform.

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### **Paola Vazquez, Public Policy**

#### *Is Decentralization Dysfunctional? A Case-by-case Analysis of the Education Governance*

Advisor: Kevin Escudero, American Studies & Ethnic Studies

As of 1992, Mexico has a decentralized education system, whereby its 31 states have autonomy over their education systems, limiting the role of the central government. This paper presents an overview of this decentralized system, in the context of Mexico's high level of income inequality and its ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. In order to improve the quality and design of education services throughout the nation, this paper also explores three policy directions: school-based management cash grants, participation councils, and the establishment of education regions. Evidence from these programs suggest that while parental and societal engagement on education issues have increased, the success of better education governance hinges upon improved regional management. While the implementation of these policies has allowed for significant efforts to be made across the education system, further research on this matter is necessary.

### **Samer Wahood, Public Policy**

#### *Reflections on Interning in the Office of United States Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)*

Advisor: Izetta Mobley, Watson Institute

I served as a Legislative Intern in the United States Senate at the Office of United States Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) in Washington, D.C. The mission of Senator Duckworth's office is to represent the people of Illinois by helping them get ahead, holding Washington accountable, protecting civil rights, fighting for troops and veterans, strengthening Illinois, and building jobs. I specifically handled legislative tasks related to issues of healthcare and veterans' affairs. I met with lobbyists, took notes at Congressional hearings and briefings, consolidated notes into memos for staffers, wrote constituent correspondences, sorted through constituent mail, and answered phone calls on behalf of the Senator—noting constituent concerns and opinions. I wrote and pitched a policy proposal, which was edited by the Senator's healthcare legislative staff, to the Senator on expanding access to mental healthcare services for resettled refugees in the U.S. This Capstone includes reflection papers from my experience.

## **PUBLIC POLICY SENIOR CAPSTONES**

**Yashi Wang, Public Policy & Economics**

*Toward Freedom: The Structure of Unfreedom in Work and Policy Approaches to Reduction*

Advisor: Alexander Gourevitch, Political Science

Is work unfree, and how can it be made more free? This paper seeks to answer these questions through uniting philosophical views of the labor experience with first-hand accounts from workers and perspectives from the policy field. This includes research results from the Workforce of the Future initiative at Brookings, where I have interned for the past year. The first section of the paper seeks to establish the structure of unfreedoms faced by workers in and out of discrete workplaces, as well as in and out of work itself. Then, drastic reimaginations of social organization are explored, but while their potential to increase freedom is high, their feasibility seems relatively low. Instead, policies such as contract determination, portable benefits, flexible hours, etc. may be able to help mitigate the unfreedoms found in and around the workplace in current society.

## **POLICY STUDENTS WHO WROTE SENIOR THESES IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS**

### **Jacquelin Ho, Neuroscience**

*Sensory congruence in early development shapes multisensory integration in *X. laevis* tadpoles*

Advisor: Carlos Aizenman, Neuroscience

This project studies early environmental effects on multisensory integration pathways. After rearing *Xenopus laevis* tadpoles in environments with decreased visual and/or auditory input, neurodevelopmental changes to mechanisms for multisensory integration were characterized on behavioral, morphological, and electrophysiological levels. Altered sensory environments disrupted normal schooling behavior, changed dendritic branching patterns of neurons in the optic tectum, and broadened the range of inter-stimulus intervals. Altogether, the results seem to suggest that tadpoles reared in altered sensory environments demonstrate neurodevelopmental phenotypes like tadpoles in earlier stages, adding to prior research in cat and rodent models of altered neurodevelopment of multisensory integration processes.

### **Krista Stapleford, Economics**

*The Americans with Disabilities Act Revisited: An Analysis of the Act's Implications for the Higher Education Outcomes of People with Disabilities*

Advisor: John Friedman, Economics & Watson Institute

This study uses a difference-in-differences approach to analyze the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act on the post-secondary enrollment and degree completion of people with disabilities and on the returns to higher education for workers already in the labor market. I find that the ADA did not increase the likelihood that disabled individuals broadly would enroll in either college or vocational school, though I do find a positive and statistically meaningful impact on college enrollment for people with non-severe disabilities. I do not find evidence that the ADA had an impact on the degree completion rates of people with disabilities, suggesting that degree persistence still remains a significant barrier. Finally, I do not find that the ADA had a meaningful impact on the returns to higher education for educated workers.

### **Yashi Wang, Economics**

*Fabricated Borders: Effects of HOLC Redlining on Local Household Economic Outcomes*

Advisor: Neil Thakral, Economics & Watson Institute

This paper examines the effects of security mapping by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation on selected economic outcomes for local households in case studies from across the United States. A regression discontinuity approach is utilized to investigate income and other selected outcome differentials from 1940 to 2018. The resulting estimates imply that redlining led to significant wealth gaps in households and that for many regions this impact differential has expanded since 1940. Findings suggest that the wealth gaps are not entirely racial in the present day, but that the heterogeneous effects by region might be related to racial attitudes.



# Public Policy