

IR Matters!



Greetings from Lewisburg!

An extraordinary academic year has come to an end. There is so much to reflect upon and look forward to. To say this is an unusual year is clearly an understatement. Hopefully the post-pandemic world will bring something more positive and uplifting.

We are all looking forward to a new academic year ahead when life is likely to gradually return to normal and we can have more face-to-face interactions, both inside and outside the classroom.

It has been a long and exhausting academic year. We did our best to keep connected, lift each other up when we needed a boost and reassurance, and got the most out of this extraordinary year of challenge and triumph. Now everyone deserves a break. When we return in the fall, we expect things to look and feel much more like they did in pre-pandemic times. All of our classes will be in person and we look forward to welcoming our returning students as well as the class of 2025 refreshed and ready to tackle the most pressing problems of the world.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *IR Matters!* In the following pages, you'll find an analysis of the Venezuelan crisis by Prof. Larrabure, a piece by Presidential Fellow Madison Rugh '24 on the legal complications of protecting people displaced by the effects of climate change, a piece by me on hate crimes against Asian Americans and what it means to be American, reflections from alumna Kate Sidlowski '18 on going back to school during a pandemic, and pieces written by three IR students (Avery Blasko '21, Nicole O'Connor '21, and Isaiah Mays '23) about how the intersections they forged between IR and their second majors in the humanities and engineering.

I am reaching the end of my term as the chairperson of the department. It has been my pleasure to lead this vibrant community over the last four years. My colleagues in the Department join me in wishing you and your loved ones healthy and happy days.

Zhiqun Zhu

Professor of International Relations
and Political Science
Chair, Department of International Relations

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May is graduation season. And what a graduation season it was! We had three separate graduation ceremonies in the stadium under mostly clear skies. While graduation certainly looked different, we were thrilled that we could still share this special day with our graduates and their families, in person, and with no less enthusiasm despite a pandemic year that only strengthened our resolve. On behalf of the IR Department, I wish to congratulate our 27 seniors on competing their studies and earning a bachelor's degree in International Relations. Avery Blasko '21 and Connor McMenamin '21 were this year's recipients of the Bucknell Prize in International Relations. Congratulations Avery and Connor!

This year, one of our very own, Audra Wilson '94, a champion for racial and economic justice and an IR and Spanish double major, delivered our commencement address. Ms. Wilson, who is the president and CEO of the Shiver Center on Poverty Law also joins the Board of Trustees this year. We thank her for her wise words and her commitment to Bucknell and congratulate her on her many accomplishments and wish her the best on what is to come.

As we celebrate our seniors and wish them well in their new endeavors, we are excited to welcome 24 newly declared majors to our dynamic program. Here is our Class of 2023:

Ardo Ali, Jessica Atwood, Alec Baker, Arya Bedi, Maxwell Chen, Abbie Coscia, Katelyn Craven, Kyra DeVoe, Kaylee Donnelly, Sarah Haas, Charlotte Hoffberger, Nabeel Jan, Lindsey Kulp, Madison Kurtz, Jack Lewis, Isaiah Mays, Alexandra Miller, Claire O'Brien, Matthew Rayski, Maddie Rehak, Will Tanner IV, Adrien Touzot, Maya Wadhwa, and Lisa Zoch. Welcome to the major everyone!



The Venezuelan Crisis

Is there any way out for Venezuela in the current conjuncture?

...

Unfortunately continued decline seems to be the only clear path for the time being.

Professor Larrabure

It is very common today to read about dictatorship and authoritarianism in Venezuela, under the presidency of Nicolás Maduro, something that is proving to be increasingly true given the most recent evidence: increasing political detentions, militarization of social conflict (including against the poor), clientelism, weakening of grassroots democratic structures, election irregularities, and lack of democratic accountability. However, it is important to remember that criticisms against Chavismo began the moment Hugo Chávez was elected as president of Venezuela in 1999. A fair and balanced review of the Chávez governments (1999-2013) would have to highlight the impressive democratic achievements of the country during this era, including an explosion of formal democratic processes (elections, plebiscites, referenda), as well as grassroots level democracy, including neighborhood councils, participatory budgeting and experiments in workplace democracy. To this one could add impressive improvements in human development indicators such as poverty, inequality, literacy and health. This reality raises a very obvious question: how did the country end up in such a mess? Let us take a look.

By the end of the 1990s, Venezuela found itself in a deep political and economic crisis: skyrocketing poverty and inequality, widespread mistrust of existing political institutions, shrinking oil revenues, and increased violence against popular sectors. Facing this situation, Chavismo sought to remake the country through a project that was ultimately dubbed “21 st -century socialism”. This project relied on a number of pillars. First was the recovery of the oil wealth by the state, achieved through the renationalization of the oil industry and the successful campaign within OPEC to raise the price of oil in the world market. Second was the immediate redistribution of wealth towards popular sectors via a number of new social programs and institutions. Third was the development of a new popular sector of the economy, which in theory would serve to include the mass of informal workers in the country into productive activity, while also developing new socialist values such as democracy and cooperation. Fourth was the development of a domestic capitalist class, willing to work with the state to increase the country’s domestic production capacities. These four pillars of Chavismo were then the key domestic mechanisms for managing the country’s position within its global context. Let us now discuss each of these.

The first mechanism, the recovery of the country’s oil wealth, can ultimately be said to have been spectacularly successful, at least initially. Oil revenues were at a record high throughout the first decade of Chavismo. However, management of the state and oil

company proved to be a tremendous challenge for the government, leading to the national oil company’s slow decay. The second mechanism, redistribution of wealth, was also a great success. Popular sectors gained access to a whole new range of products and services, significantly raising living standards. The third mechanism, the development of a popular economy was ultimately a failure. This is not to say that significant achievements were not accomplished, such as an impressive growth of cooperatives and co-managed enterprises, and that in many cases workers and communities did gain new capacities and abilities. However, the popular sector simply did not have sufficient independent forward momentum. The fourth mechanism, the development of a domestic capitalist class, was also a dramatic failure. Despite Chavismo’s often repeated calls for a responsible capitalism and a “patriotic bourgeoisie”, these sectors ultimately engaged in predatory behavior, particularly as the economy began to sink.

So, was Chavismo doomed from the beginning? The answer is yes and no. Since oil was discovered in Venezuela in 1914, the country began to experience what Fernando Coronil masterfully conceptualized as the emergence of the “magical state”, that is the widespread cultural belief and practice that the state, because of its control of oil, can accomplish any task imaginable, no matter how outlandish. This creates a feedback loop between popular sectors and governmental elites that enables development projects that far exceed the actual capacities (economic, political, and cultural) of the country. In this sense, the project of “21 st –century socialism” (like neoliberalism previously) was always going to be difficult, and was likely to corrupt Chavismo’s highest ideals. On the other hand, Chavismo is the first political project in the country to openly try overturn the legacies of the magical state and for at least a decade there was some progress. Three key events however proved to be the death knell of the project: the death of Chávez in 2013, the collapse of oil prices in 2014, and the beginning of an international sanctions regime led by the United States that same year.

Is there any way out for Venezuela in the current conjuncture? Unfortunately, a clear path out of the crisis is difficult to see. Reform within Chavismo appears difficult given the increasingly authoritarian tendencies. The opposition is divided, largely undemocratic and has no project of its own. Civil society and popular sectors appear to be resigned to an uncertain and difficult future. The United States remains wedded to the current sanctions regime, which only hurts people and empowers the most authoritarian tendencies within Chavismo. Unfortunately, continued decline seems to be the only clear path for the time being.

Back to School

I graduated from Bucknell in 2018. After a few years on the job, I have recently decided to go back to school. With the COVID-19 pandemic came uncertainty and doubt. Plans that had once seemed so concrete were now out of reach, anxiety was at an all time high, and we found ourselves with an excess of time — to Zoom, to bake, or in my case, to apply to graduate school. After graduating with my degree in International Relations from Bucknell University, I interned with and was subsequently hired by an organization called InterAction, a consortium of US-based humanitarian and development agencies. In my role with InterAction, I advocate on behalf of our humanitarian members, operational in a number of crisis contexts, working daily with a variety of stakeholders, including counterparts at the US Government and United Nations. I have what you might call a very *niche* DC job. This is just one direction an IR degree from Bucknell can take you in. I have classmates working in consulting, banking, direct service abroad and more — you can apply the IR degree and experience it provides in any number of ways.

Applying to graduate school wasn't the easiest decision. Like most former IR majors, I knew I would need a secondary degree eventually. Graduate experience has become an unavoidable check box for most mid-level jobs in my sector and many others. That said, after two years in DC, I had always seen myself transitioning to a field-based role. Enter the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on travel, remote work, and a challenging-at-best job market. All of these push factors solidified my decision to apply to American University's School of International Service. To use a contrived phrase, when life gives you lemons in the form of a global pandemic, you make lemonade and go to graduate school! I will be pursuing a degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution come Fall and am looking forward to exploring all the opportunities a city like DC has to offer students of international affairs.

Kate Sidlowski '18

Katie Sidlowski '18 decided to go back to school. Learn why.

Climate Change, Displacement, and International Law

The world has already begun to see the detriment that can come as a result of climate change. However, one often-overlooked yet substantial consequence of the world's changing climate is human migration. Migration in response to climate change can be seen as a result of both slow-onset climate events like sea-level rise and desertification and fast-onset climate events like storms or droughts (de Sherbinin, 2020). Displacement and migration in response to the effects of climate change is an issue that will affect large numbers of people globally, yet the current international system fails to protect the rights of these people and only serves to exacerbate their struggle.

While there are varying estimates of the scale of climate change migration, the Stern Review estimates that 150 million to 200 million people may become permanently displaced by 2050 (Kälin & Schrepfer, 2012). This number includes individuals who will be displaced within their nation's borders and individuals who cross borders to find refuge (Kälin & Schrepfer, 2012). There are not currently any figures to specifically describe the scale of cross-border displacement and migratory movements in response to climate change but those movements are already taking place and are likely to increase in the coming years (Kälin & Schrepfer, 2012).

One of the most interesting contentions in this field is that of terminology. When looking at existing international law, there is no basis for the oft-used phrase *climate change refugee* (McAdam, 2012). This is because the effects of climate alone do not count as persecution pursuant to the definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention (de Sherbinin, 2020). Therefore, one may find it more appropriate to refer to those who are displaced as a result of the effects of climate change.

Overall, the current international regime serves these displaced persons dual adversity. First, the present international system has a gap both in rights and funding (Arenilla & Rada, 2020): The funding gap is a reference to the fact that there is no source of international funding that is dedicated to helping developing countries offset the costs they may incur as a result of supporting people displaced due to the effects of climate change (Arenilla & Rada, 2020). There is also a gap in terms of rights which presents the failure of the current international regime to provide legal rights to individuals to permanently remain in another country due to environmental degradation in the country of origin (Arenilla & Rada, 2020).

In this piece Madison Rugh '24 explores the inability of the global refugee regime to adequately address climate-induced migration. She draws out a funding gap and a rights gap which, together, leave people contending with the consequences of climate change vulnerable and insecure.

Climate Change, Displacement, and International Law, Cont'd

This rights gap can present a grave danger to people who live in countries whose environments are being ravaged by the effects of climate change, which became evident in Burundi. The nation's severe drought in 2008 resulted in widespread hunger, forcing many citizens to go to Uganda to look for work or seek protection in a refugee camp (Kolmannskog, 2009). However, the rights gap presents a challenge because environmental effects alone do not permit someone protection under international law. Therefore, many of the Burundians crossing the border due to drought-induced hunger gave another reason for their migration that would grant them a form of protection under international law (Kolmannskog, 2009).

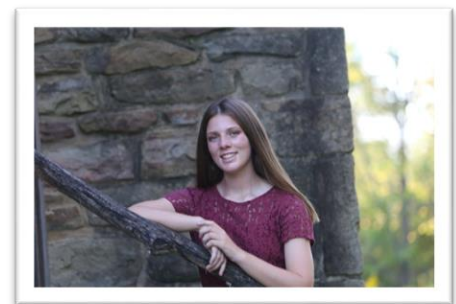
The rights gap leads to a second challenge: the only situation in which international law could provide protection is when environmental drivers combine with the established grounds of protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as the narrow definition of persecution makes it difficult to apply the Convention to climate migrants (Francis, 2019). Therefore, persons displaced due to climate change must show that they are impacted on two different counts to receive refugee protection. There are signs, however, that this difficulty is being taken up in creative ways in recent cases. The 2020 ruling of the case *Teitoia v. New Zealand* has set a new precedent for the use of international law in the context of climate change-induced displacement (Mahecic, 2020). In the ruling for this case, the UN Human Rights Committee (UNHCR) stressed that some individuals fleeing the effects of climate change may have valid claims to refugee status under the 1951 Convention (Mahecic, 2020). However, clearing the bar for a well-founded fear of persecution is still formidable for many affected by environmental degradation. More importantly, however, the UNHCR determined that it may be unlawful for governments to send people back to countries where the effects of climate change expose them to life-threatening risks as that would be a violation of the individual's right to life according to Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Mahecic, 2020).

Climate change was possibly preventable. Yet, the international community failed and only succeeded in accelerating the warming of the earth and it is now those in the countries the least equipped to adapt that are dealing with the brunt of the impacts. It is now imperative that the international community does not fail the people of these nations by continuing to deny people displaced due to climate change any concrete

protection under international law. There is no way to completely reverse the effects of climate change anytime soon, so the international community must act to aid those who have been hurt the most by them.

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Madison Rugh '24

Madison is a Presidential Fellow and worked with Professor Uçarer this year. This article is grounded in that research.

There is no way to completely reverse the effects of climate change anytime soon, so the international community must act to aid those who have been hurt the most by them.

Madison Rugh '24

Presidential Fellow

Asian Hate Crimes: What Makes an American?

Racist violence and rhetoric against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have been rising at an alarming rate in the US. Recent anti-Asian hate crimes, including the death of six Asian Americans in Atlanta spa shootings on 16 March 2021, call into question why anti-Asian racism has persisted in America.

AAPI groups, joined by people of other racial backgrounds, have gathered in communities across the US to denounce hate crimes. However, combating racism in general and racism against Asian-Americans in particular will be a long and difficult journey.

First of all, anti-Asian racism is deeply grounded in American history and American society.

Anti-Asian racism — a long history

Anti-Asian racism did not start yesterday. In the second half of the 19th century, Chinese immigrants were first welcomed as laborers in gold mining and trans-continental railway construction. Soon they became the targets of racism as economic conditions worsened. Major anti-Chinese violence included the lynching of Chinese in Los Angeles in 1871 and mass killings of Chinese in Rock Springs, Wyoming by white mobs in 1885. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, passed by US Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur, prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the US. This was the first and the only racist legislation that prevented all members of a specific ethnic or national group from immigrating to the US. Chinese immigrants were blamed for depressed wages and rising unemployment and were considered carriers of disease.

Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, about 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated in concentration camps between 1942 and 1946 by President Franklin Roosevelt's executive order. Even American leaders could not make a distinction between a foreign government and US citizens of foreign descent.

In June 1982, Vincent Chin was beaten by two white men in Detroit at a time when the Japanese auto industry became highly competitive. Like today's China, Japan was viewed as a threat to America. Chin, a Chinese-American, was assumed Japanese and fatally attacked by the two laid-off autoworkers.

Anti-Asian racism began to rise again recently, coinciding with Trump's election in 2016. Trump repeatedly incited racism across the board, infamously calling Mexican immigrants "drug dealers, criminals and rapists". He propelled anti-Asian racism by making

hateful and irresponsible comments such as "Kung Flu" and "Chinese virus" during the pandemic. Whenever he used those racist slurs in rallies, his supporters always responded with cheers, and Trump received nearly half of all legitimate votes during the 2020 election.

A failure to educate

Second, American schools have failed to provide proper and adequate history and civic education.

The US is a melting pot with people from all parts of the world, but it was the English and other Europeans who began to arrive and settle down first in the early 17th century, exploiting and killing Native Americans in the process. For a long time, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) dominated American economy, politics, education, culture, and pretty much every other aspect of American life.

As a result, American education remains Eurocentric today. The World History course at public high schools is basically European history, with almost no coverage of other parts of the world. Most college students have never heard of the Chinese Exclusion Act before. When it comes to studying abroad, an overwhelming majority of American college students go to Europe. Before the pandemic, the number of American students studying in China was roughly just one-third of American students studying in the UK each year. Other Asian countries received even fewer American students.

One of the most frequently used and most offensive racist insults against Asian Americans is: Go back to where you came from! These people do not realize that except native Americans, everybody in the US is an immigrant or a descent of immigrants. America is home to all its citizens. When you tell Asian Americans to go back, you might as well tell yourself to go back to Europe, or Africa, or Latin America, or wherever your immigrant forefathers came from.

Due to inadequate history and civic education, many Americans consider Asian Americans foreigners or second-class citizens. There are also enduring stereotypes about Asians and Asian Americans, such as Asians are good at math, they eat dogs, and they are bad drivers, etc.

Lacking political visibility

Third, AAPI remains woefully underrepresented in American political life. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing minority group in the US.

In this piece, Prof. Zhu asks: "What makes an American?"

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“What Makes an American?” Cont’d

Eligible Asian American voters have doubled since 2000. AAPI accounts for over 6% of the total US population, but they only account for 2% of the Senate and 3% of the House of Representatives in the 117th US Congress.

Asian-Americans have long been viewed as a “model minority” working hard and not making trouble or getting involved in politics. Encouragingly, AAPI are becoming more vocal and more actively involved in politics now. In the recent spate of anti-Asian racism, many Asian American members of Congress, such as Grace Meng (D-NY), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Young Kim (R-CA) and Michelle Steel (R-CA) have spoken out condemning hate crimes and racism.

Grassroots groups such as Stop AAPI Hate have been formed to track and raise awareness of incidents of discrimination, hate and xenophobia against AAPI. As Phil Ting, assemblyman of the California State Assembly, noted, “We can’t solve a problem without knowing how big it is.” Ting helped secure US\$1.4 million in California state funding in February 2021 to help combat anti-Asian violence and racism through the Stop AAPI Hate reporting center.

Asian unity a challenge

Fourth, Asian Americans are not a monolithic group and are not always united.

Asian Americans hail from almost 50 countries, and if Pacific Islanders are included, AAPI covers over 70 different national backgrounds. On some issues, Asian Americans may find themselves in opposing camps. For example, Chinese Americans from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong or Taiwan may hold totally different views regarding US policy toward China. There are also vast differences in languages, cultures, income levels, foods, and even facial features between East Asians and South Asians.

“Asian Americans” is a huge umbrella under which people may not identify with each other or support each other. Sery Kim, a former Trump administration official and Korean American candidate vying for the Republican nomination in the race to represent Texas’ 6th Congressional District, said at a recent forum while responding to a question about the US immigration crisis, “I don’t want them here at all,” referring to Chinese immigrants. “They steal our intellectual property, they give us coronavirus, they don’t hold themselves accountable.” “And quite frankly, I can say that because I’m Korean,” she added. Kim has been widely condemned for her insensitive and erroneous

remarks but she has refused to apologize so far. At a time when all AAPI should stand in solidarity, such divisive and self-righteous comments are hurting the anti-racism cause.

Finally, racism in America raises fundamental questions about American identity. Who are Americans?

Who are Americans?

There are no cookie-cutter Americans. Asian Americans have been part of the American family. Racism against one group is racism against all. To fight for the rights of AAPI or any other minority groups is to defend and preserve American democracy and diversity.

Given the long history of racism in America and the complexity of contemporary politics and economics, it is impossible to wipe out racism in American society in the near future. In fact, in the midst of a global pandemic and intensifying US-China rivalry, racism against Asian Americans is likely to grow. Just like gun violence, racism is a political virus and social ill that Americans may, unfortunately, have to live with.

However, one should also keep in mind that the US remains an open society. All these political and social problems are publicly debated and discussed. Despite all the challenges, the US remains an immigrant country, where realising the American dream through hard work is still possible.



Professor Zhu

This article first appeared on April 15, 2021 in [ThinkChina](#) (Singapore).

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Professor Zhu

Intersections: The Many Faces of IR

We in IR believe that our major is quintessentially liberal arts and combines and sets in conversation a number of disciplines that inform and guide our field of study. It is not surprising, therefore, that the major draws students who want to combine a variety of interests they bring to their studies. Many of our majors are also double majors, most frequently with languages, but also with economics, political science, environmental studies and so on. We sometimes have students whose second/other majors are a bit off the beaten path. We love that! In this issue, we wanted to showcase some of them to drive home the point that other intersections also exist that allow Bucknell

students to develop all aspects of their intellect. We appreciate how they enrich our classes with their backgrounds and exposure to different ways of seeing and understanding the world. In the following, you will meet three of our students (two of whom just graduated). Avery Blasko '21 is an IR and Music (piano performance) double major. Nicole O'Connor '21 is an IR and Civil Engineering double major. Isaiah Mays '23 is an IR and Theater double major. Avery and Isaiah, with their connection to the performing arts, additionally had challenges related to the pandemic this year. We asked them how they weaved their various interests together and how their particular intersections have informed and enriched their time at Bucknell.

Avery Blasko '21: Performing IR

When people ask what I study in school, they are often surprised to hear that I've double majored in international relations and piano performance. "How did you choose that interesting combination" or "What are you planning on doing with that?" are questions I am frequently asked, and the answer has become much more complicated throughout my time at Bucknell. Coming into school as an Arts Merit Scholar, I already knew I would major in piano performance and during my first year, I took a diverse set of classes so that I could find a second major, not taking into consideration how it would relate to my music major. I took a very diverse, seemingly random set of classes that included classes like Classical Myth and Environmental Studies before finding one that sparked my interest in a major, International Politics. After taking another class in the department the next semester, it was clear to me that international relations was the major I wanted to pursue. Although at first I admittedly took the major thinking I would keep it completely separate from my musical studies, after taking more courses I began to realize how perfect the combination was for me.

What drew me to the international relations major was the diversity in classes that were available. With the range of thematic tracks and regional concentrations we can choose from, there are so many courses we can take, both in the department itself and cross-listed with others. The different perspectives on so many different subjects are what I love about these classes, as one could take classes with relatively similar names but learn something completely different based on the professor, the material, and the students in the class itself. This aspect of my courses was my favorite, as it easily allowed me to use the skills I've acquired in my music major with my international relations major. Especially in discussing historical

events and people, the intersection between the majors is clear. I have been able to observe how events like war, poverty, and societal changes can affect individuals and the choices they make, those individuals being world leaders or musical composers.



Avery Blasko '21
Senior Recital, May 2021
Photo courtesy of Professor Uçarer

It has been increasingly interesting, and very fun, to make connections between my majors, as when I declared them I was not expecting them to intersect. I have found that music and international relations go particularly well together because music acts as a universal language of its own. I have always felt as if music was a special way for me to connect with those

"I would encourage any newly declared, or aspiring, international relations major to find their own unique combination of courses and majors so that they can apply the skills they have acquired to each major."

Avery Blasko '21

Intersections, Cont'd

around me, but it became especially clear during my time abroad. I studied in Spain for a semester, where I lived with a host mother who did not speak English. She had a piano in her house, so I would often play for her and her grandchildren, and even taught them a few short songs. In the beginning of the semester, when my Spanish was far from fluent, it was a way for me to connect with her when we didn't have much to say to one another. There were also a few times that pianos were placed around Granada, the city I was in, for strangers to play in the streets. I would sit and play a few bars of a piece every time I passed one, and even though I was from a very different place than those who were listening to me or playing with me, I felt as though I was able to communicate with them through my music. Had it not been for my international relations major, I don't think I would have been so inspired to study abroad or appreciate the connections I made with local Spaniards through my music.

“Through the range of courses for my degree, I have engaged in different frameworks to understand the makeup of our society and the impacts of international organization. My engineering degree has offered an interesting perspective on these issues.”

Nicole
O'Connor
'21

As a graduating senior, I cannot express how much I have enjoyed my time at Bucknell as an international relations and music double major. It is an “interesting combination” of studies, as so many people like to point out, but it has given me the perfect experience and allowed me to unite my passions in ways I would not have been able to otherwise. Given the opportunity to start over, the only thing I would do differently is declaring my international relations major sooner, as it would have allowed me to make these connections earlier on in my educational career. I would encourage any newly declared, or aspiring, international relations major to find their own unique combination of courses and majors so that they can apply the skills they have acquired to each major and experience the diversity and versatility of international relations.

Nicole O'Connor '21: Building IR

As a student majoring in Civil Engineering and International Relations, I have gained a lot by engaging in the different perspectives presented by each discipline. Both majors have helped to evolve my critical thinking and communication styles in complementary ways. Engineering has led me to engage in problem solving and design work, while in international relations, I have engaged in research, discussion, and analytical communication. The focus on writing and discussion in my international relations courses have helped me become a skilled communicator in both of my fields, and I have been

able to apply a design and problem-solving oriented framework of engineering to thinking of global issues.



Nicole in Washington, DC
Photo Courtesy of Nicole O'Connor '21

The intersection of concepts within these two fields has also been beneficial to my growth and learning at Bucknell. In international relations, I am most interested in areas of human rights, and how our larger social systems contribute to global inequality. Through the range of courses for my degree, I have engaged in different frameworks to understand the makeup of our society and the impacts of international organization. My engineering degree has offered an interesting perspective on these issues. Through my engineering coursework, I have been trained into an industry that directly contributes to building and maintaining our societal structures. Civil engineering particularly is a field that is focused on building infrastructure, but it also is deeply rooted in our capitalist framework with 'low-bid' design systems. Furthermore, the culture of engineering gives me direct perspective in how our societal structures impact inequality and social relations within fields, with engineering still being a majority white male discipline.

Both civil engineering and international relations are demanding disciplines, requiring a significant time commitment and willingness to engage with the material. Despite this, I am glad that I completed both degrees because they have given me a much more holistic view of our society and my education.

Isaiah Mays '23: Art and Performance in the Time of Corona

My name is Isaiah Mays, I'm a Theatre and International Relations Major, the Class President of 2023, and an Arts Merit Scholar. Although my majors differ in a variety of places, I found them to be a good blend of my favorite topics: creativity and world affairs. This past spring, I was lucky enough to be cast in the Theatre and Dance departments production of 'As You Like It'. This Shakespeare play was adapted to focus on a more modern, gender-inclusive, and feminist production of the play. The most exciting part about doing the play was doing it outside because, personally, I have never done a performance outside. It was exciting to see how the theater department was able to transform the beautiful landscape that Bucknell has to offer into our stage. We chose to perform outside because it would make social-distancing much easier, and also "Shakespeare in the park" is a well-known and repeated method of putting on his pieces of work. Doing the play outside was thrilling but also terrifying because there were so many adversities that you expect but are not traditionally trained to overcome, like talking over loud cars, performing in the rain or the snow, or even having the wind blow up your skirt. Everyone in the cast pushed through and made it work, while trying our best to be mindful of our health. We did have some hurdles where people had to miss rehearsal or the performance because of COVID related reasons. Seeing the show through despite the

obstacles presented to us, and our passion for theatre allowed us to perform a hilarious and beautiful adaptation to this Shakespeare play. Being an IR major can be very time consuming and overwhelming like any other major but it has also welcomed us into exploring different opportunities available on Bucknell's campus.



Isaiah Mays performing in *As you Like It!*
Photo courtesy of Professor Cymone Fourshey

Doing the play outside was thrilling but also terrifying...

Being an IR major ... has also welcomed us into exploring different opportunities available on Bucknell's campus."

Keeping Company during a Pandemic

Ironically, the spring semester consists mostly of winter. During this pandemic, this meant that we spent a good deal of the semester indoors and socially distanced, with limited social opportunities. This meant that we were unable to execute our traditional IR week, a weeklong series of events to engage the campus with various aspects of global affairs. Undeterred, we looked into various opportunities to keep in touch. We did a Zoom event in March for our majors where we were also able to welcome our new majors. They got to compete in friendly rounds of IR Kahoot! Four students went home with prizes. Congratulations to **Giuliana Ferrara '22, Claire O'Brien '23, Lielt Endashaw '22, and Grace Chung '21**. With the weather improving, we were able to hold bonf-IR-e! events outdoors at the Bucknell fire pit in April and May, always fun outings where we get to check in with each other and get to know each other better as not just IR people, but as human beings doing good things under difficult circumstances. We are very much

looking forward to resuming IR week next year and are counting on more opportunities to get together in whatever way our circumstances will allow.



From left: Avery Blasko '21, Grace Chung '21, Nabeel Jan '23, and Maya Wadhwa '23 at the fire pit.
Photo Courtesy of Prof. Uçarer



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submissions on
projects or
perspectives*

*The **IR Matters!**
newsletter highlights
events and people in
the Bucknell IR
community. The
publication appears
once a semester and
welcomes feedback
and submissions
from students,
alumni, and faculty.*

Presenting International Relations: Class of 2021

This class of 2021 had an unusual graduation, in three installments. Although we could not send them off with the usual departmental, we took comfort in the fact that we were at least able to hold an in-person graduation. We had two inspiring speakers at graduation. [Audra Wilson '94](#), an IR alumna, delivered the commencement remarks (three times! Thank you!!), and reminded us that the so-called "Bucknell bubble" is situated in a broader world full of wonder, but also inequality and great challenges. She reminded us, through her own experience at Bucknell, that many of the challenges we faced this year, be it the pandemic, racial injustice, natural disasters, and even attacks on our own soil, have echoes in the past. The bubble does not protect us from outside events, she said. The commencement remarks of [Ruby Lee '21](#) were likewise inspiring. Ruby drew attention to the hate crimes directed at our AAPI population, and called upon us to "be informed and present, to show up to remind others and ourselves of our humanity" and to show courage and empathy.

Well, here is the Class of 2021. Special congratulations go to **Avery Blasko '21 and Connor McMenamain '21** who are the recipients of this year's Bucknell Prize in International Relations. We are very proud of all of our majors them and wish them every possible success. This short video on the highlights of commencement is stirring.



IR Majors, Class of '21

JJ Alicea
Nichoals Argentieri
Chell Bevacqua
Avery Blasko
Alexis Catsoulis
Grace Chung
Anderson Escobar Avalos
Rylan Forester
Kali Hyham
Yuki Komura
Simon Krizak

Bri Kropinack
Keith Langkan
Nina Limongelli
Jacob Lubinski
MacKenzie May
Connor McMenamain
Jack Mulay
Callum Murray
Nicole O'Connor
Sydney Pelletier-Martinelli
Tatym Racz.
Lewis Rizzoli
Elizabeth Stack
Madeline Wales.
Jon Wang
Dajour Young

Of Note: Campus News and Events



[Bucknell's 171st Commencement Sends Class of 2021 Off With Empathy, Courage and Lessons Learned.](#) Go forward with empathy. Go forward with courage. Go forward with the lessons learned from adversity, conflict and missteps, and use that knowledge to make the world a better place..



[Lawyer and Policy Shaper Audra Wilson '94 Is Bucknell's 2021 Commencement Speaker.](#) Career-long public policy shaper Audra Wilson '94, president and chief executive officer of the Shriver Center on Poverty Law, was Bucknell University's 2021 Commencement speaker. We are particularly proud that our commencement speaker and new member of the Bucknell Board of Trustees is an International Relations alumna.



[Bucknell Among Top Producers of Fulbright U.S. Student Awards.](#) Bucknell University is among the top U.S. colleges and universities where students received Fulbright Awards for 2019-20. Congratulations to Marie Catanese IR '20 (second from left) who earned an English teaching grant for Malaysia.