Ford Scholars Symposium

Vassar College

14 September 2020
Ford Scholar Laila Bárcenas Meade researched Hispanic authors’ self-representation remotely from her hometown of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. There she researched different authors and their work, collecting them for her Ford Project, “Written selfies: self-fashioning and representation by Hispanic writers.” The information was eventually collected together to use as class material by the Hispanic Studies Department.

See Page 3
The Ford Scholars Program at Vassar College supports faculty and student collaborations in summer research projects in the humanities and social sciences. Established in 1988 with a grant from the Ford Foundation, the program encourages students to explore life in the professoriate through an intensive academic mentoring relationship between faculty and undergraduate students, with significant student participation, feedback, and initiative. Students join faculty in rigorous scholarship, course preparation, and teaching-related research. The collaborative nature of the Ford Scholars program allows for a rich educational experience and strengthened relationships between faculty and students. The success of the Ford program is reflected in the many student participants who have earned advanced degrees in the humanities and social sciences. Over many years, their work has positively impacted and strengthened our curriculum.

While the original Ford Foundation grant has long been expended, the program continues thanks to the generosity of private donors. This summer, we supported 18 projects in Economics, Education, Environmental Studies, Greek and Roman Studies, Hispanic Studies, History, International Studies, Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Political Science, and Psychological Science.

We are pleased to celebrate the valuable work of our Ford Scholars and mentors and to thank the friends of Vassar whose gifts have sustained the program this year. I especially wish to thank Alexandra Hoffman, Administrative Assistant to the Ford Scholars Program, and Baynard Bailey, Academic Computing Consultant.

Christine Howlett  
Ford Scholars Program, Director  
Associate Professor of Music  
Director of Choral Activities
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2020 Ford Scholars Symposium
14 September 2020

5:00 pm Greeting & Session I

Kendal Simmons ’23 ~ The Oviedo Project
Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, Hispanic Studies

Ilia Mahns ’23 and Huda Rahman ’23 ~ Displacement, Ethnography and Education in Malaysia, Christopher Bjork, Education, and Maria Höhn, History

Alice Aldoukhov ’22 and Daria Lochoshvili ’22 ~ Media Psychology Textbook Research
Dara Greenwood, Psychology

Robin Bleicher ’23 and Martin Burstein ’23 ~ Climate Crisis: How to Reach Out to the Community? Pinar Batur, Sociology and Environmental Studies

5:30-6:15 pm Session II

Adam Abadi ’22 ~ Women’s Empowerment in Bangladesh
Gisella Kagy, Economics

Ha Bui ’22 ~ Women and Coding – Economic and Pop-Culture Context Impacts
Sarah Pearlman, Economics

Yixiao (Carl) Cao ’22 ~ Redistribution or Illusion? –A Closer Look at Ecuador’s Economic Policies During Correa’s Citizen Revolution
Esteban Argudo, Economics

Ryan Duchemin ’21 ~ Evaluating Mechanisms of Long Run Differences Across American Indian Reservations, Dustin Frye, Economics

Alex Eisert ’22 ~ Vertical Integration and Competitive Balance in Professional Sports: Evidence from Minor League Baseball, Qi Ge, Economics
Mihajlo Ivanovic ’22 ~ Economic Mobility and Prosocial Behavior
Benjamin Ho, Economics
6:15 pm  Keynote Address: “Is There Security in Struggle?
Quincy Mills, Associate Professor of History,
University of Maryland

6:45 pm  Session III

Kaiqing Su ’21 and Yinguang Zhao ’23 ~ State, Society, and Individual in China’s Coronavirus Pandemic, Fubing Su, Political Science

John Mahoney ’22 ~ Medieval Science and Technology: Research and Pedagogy
Nancy Bisaha, History & Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Chris Smart, Chemistry

Yvonne Hunter ’21 ~ Multiliteracy Development Through Youth Education Programs
Ah-Young Song, Education

Jonan Kiang ’21 “Even This One Has a Role in Deciding the Outcome”: Reimagining Children’s Agency and Human Rights in Armed Conflict
Tracey Holland, Latin American & Latino/a Studies with Sofia Rao ’22, research assistant

Laila Barcenas Meade ’22 ~ Written Selfies: Self-fashioning and Representation by Hispanic Writers, Augusto Hacthoun, Hispanic Studies

Tao Beloney ’23 ~ Supplementary Materials for Teaching About Slavery in Ancient Rome
Curtis Dozier, Greek and Roman Studies

Yiqing (Alice) Fan ’22 ~ The Psychologist’s Toolkit for Success and Wellbeing in College
Debra Zeifman, Psychological Science
Quincy Mills is Associate Professor of History at the University of Maryland, College Park. Before joining Maryland in 2019, he served on the faculty in the History Department and Africana Studies Program at Vassar. He also served as the director of the Ford Scholars Program from 2014-2019. He specializes in twentieth-century African American business and social movement history. He is the author of *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America*. With Benjamin Talton, he edited the anthology, *Black Subjects in African and Its Diasporas: Race and Gender in Research and Writing*. Recently he edited Williams Still's 1872 book *The Underground Railroad Records: Narrating the Hardships, Hairbreadth Escapes, and Death Struggles of Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom* as a companion to Ta-Nehisi Coates debut novel *The Water Dancer*. Quincy was awarded a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies for early research on his current book-in-progress, which is entitled “The Wages of Resistance: Financing the Black Freedom Movement.”
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Ford Scholar: Adam Abadi ’22
Mentor: Gisella Kagy, Economics
Project: Women’s Empowerment in Bangladesh

This summer, I worked with Professor Kagy to examine the impact of the Bangladeshi garment industry on women’s empowerment. The goal was to determine whether proximity to job opportunities at garment factories can empower married Bangladeshi women. To measure empowerment, we used survey responses about household decision-making power, presence of domestic violence, and investments in children’s education.

My work primarily focused on constructing a geographic dataset of Bangladeshi garment factories and synthesizing factory locations with survey data. Throughout the project, I used a combination of Python, Stata, and QGIS for webscraping, data analysis, and geolocating.

After doing a brief literature review, I wrote a Python script that webscraped data from an online directory of over 4,000 Bangladeshi garment factories. I then used Stata to clean the data and visualize its key characteristics.

Next, I used the Google Maps Geocoding API to identify a likely pair of latitude/longitude coordinates for each factory, using factory addresses as inputs, and cleaned the resulting dataset in Stata. I repeated this process with the Google Maps Places API, which instead takes the factory names as inputs. To evaluate the precision and probable accuracy of coordinates derived from these two geolocation methods, I analyzed metadata from each set of coordinates. After that, I synthesized the coordinates from each method that were most likely to be accurate.

Finally, I used QGIS to create another dataset that counted the number of employees and factories over time within a certain radius of each cluster of survey respondents. This will allow us to explore whether proximity to employment opportunities at garment factories affected respondents’ empowerment-related outcomes.
Ford Scholar: Alice Aldoukhov ’22 and Daria Lochoshvili ’22
Mentor: Dara Greenwood, Psychology
Project: Media Psychology Textbook Research

This summer I worked under Professor Greenwood’s guidance to start compiling materials for a Media Psychology textbook that she will be writing. I worked alongside another student, Dasha Lochoshvili, and we decided that each of us will review a topic every two weeks so that at the end of the month we would have four topic areas covered between the two of us. I chose to focus on media violence and parasocial relationships with media characters.

I began by doing some background reading on the theories in media psychology to have a better understanding of the foundations before delving into the current literature. Using databases like PsychInfo and Communication and Mass Media Complete, I searched for all the articles published over the past 5 years on my chosen topics. I then compiled a few dozen of the most relevant. I considered the patterns that emerged in the literature, and organized what I found into categories such as “video games” and “real world vs fictional violence” for media violence, and “emotional wellbeing” and “gender” for parasocial relationships. Then I wrote a literature review, outlining what I had learned through my research – from relevant theories, to summaries of the studies, to an overview of the popular methodologies. I also listed some suggestions for studies that could have “spotlight” features in the textbook. I repeated this process in the second half of the program with the literature on parasocial relationships with media characters. These literature reviews are meant to serve Professor Greenwood as she writes the textbook, and I hope to keep assisting her research in the future.

I used the PsychInfo database for the majority of my research.

As part of my work, I got to follow my interests and read the most fascinating articles.
In a project that combined research and production, Professor Hacthoun and I worked over the summer on preparing class material focusing on literary self-portraits. Literary self-portraits are a tradition going back hundreds of years in Hispanic literature; authors introduce themselves to the readers, describing their physical, mental, or emotional qualities, often times a combination of the three. Perhaps the most iconic literary self-portrait is Miguel de Cervantes, who in his collection *Novelas ejemplares* described in words a portrait of himself.

It doesn’t start or stop with Cervantes. Following the same tradition, many authors throughout the ages and throughout the world wrote self-portraits of themselves. In the first part of the project, I collected as many self-portraits as I could, anything from poems about facial features to essays meditating on personality. After collecting a large number of them, Professor Hacthoun and I came together to discuss and select those that students could take advantage of the most.

We then wrote small commentaries for each, pointing out different author’s methods of self-representation and other such notes. I collected the self-portraits and commentaries into a document with information about the author, the context of the self-portraits, and a glossary to be published online for students to access.
Throughout the project I learned about a lot about human’s need to explain themselves to each other and to themselves, as well as various research skills. Literary self-portraits are a way of exploring one’s own identity and even, in a way, fashioning it. The research we conducted opened an avenue for teaching that not only includes tools like vocabulary, history, and syntax, but also a way for students to explore and fashion their own identities.

At my work desk.
This summer I worked with Professor Dozier to study the representations of Ancient Roman slavery in popular high school Latin textbooks and ultimately to create the beginnings of some supplementary materials for teachers covering the subject. This, along with the broader racism in Classics departments and education, is the subject of longstanding activism, and this project exists within that activism.

I began by studying the best practices for teaching American slavery as laid out in the Southern Poverty Law Center’s oft-cited Teaching Hard History report, and proceeded to study the presentation of slavery in three of the most popular high school Latin textbooks, keeping in mind the shortcomings that the SPLC identified in US history textbooks. Considering all this, I studied the up-to-date treatments of ancient Roman slavery, using Peter Hunt’s Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery and volume 1 of the Cambridge World History of Slavery. I then proceeded to sketch the beginnings of some supplementary materials that teachers might use when discussing slavery in Ancient Rome, modelled off of pedagogical priorities outlined in the SPLC’s Hard History framework.

We chose to create supplementary materials because most high school teachers, particularly in public schools, do not choose their textbooks and do not have budgets or time for more materials. Though some reformers support the wholesale rejection of the current textbooks, and some books are perhaps incurably awful, better textbooks will take time and investment from publishers while supplementary materials that can be added to existing materials allow teachers to make changes to their treatments of the subject now. Thus, free materials that can be added on top of mandatory subject matter are ideal.

The materials are organized roughly by topic, for example manumission (the practice of freeing slaves) or the slave trade, and are designed to be inserted into lessons or lectures whenever teachers arrive at them. For example, teachers could add to textbook’s treatment of manumission by pointing out how the practice served the interests of enslavers: the possibility of...
manumission was a method of social control designed to pit enslaved people against each other by encouraging them to compete for their freedom, thus preventing the development of group identity. These resources are a proof of concept that might be expanded upon by others in the future, perhaps to cover Roman slavery more comprehensively or to address other topics like imperialism or gender politics.
Our Ford Scholars Project consisted of three facets: designing a curriculum to teach high school students about the climate crisis, teaching our curriculum in a two-week intensive course, and conducting individual research projects to be incorporated into Dr. Batur’s syllabus for fall classes.

We spent the month of June designing a curriculum for high school students that integrated social science into a comprehensive understanding of the climate crisis. Our lecture-based classes laid the groundwork for theoretical concepts such as earth systems, ecosystem resilience, and environmental racism. These complex concepts were further developed by our six distinguished guest speakers, all of whom were Vassar professors or alumnae/i, who generously joined our class to add their valuable insights.

After taking part in our morning classes, the students engaged in corresponding afternoon activities led either by Vassar’s Exploring College program or the Environmental Cooperative. Each day concluded in a homework session during which we met with individual students to answer questions, give supplementary materials, or proof-read assignments. We also mentored three students each and made ourselves constantly available to them throughout the two-week intensive. The course culminated in two final projects for the students: a reflective narrative about their personal experience with the climate crisis, and a letter written to their city council members focused on climate mitigation and adaptation.

Meanwhile, throughout June and July, we have each researched individual projects for Dr. Batur’s materials for her fall class. Robin’s research focuses on First Nations Peoples and their response to the climate crisis, COVID-19, and the Black Lives Matter Movement that is sweeping the globe. Martin’s research focuses on the Navajo Nation and their fight against environmental racism and COVID-19. We are excited to share our research in Dr. Batur’s fall classes.
A photo taken during our curriculum planning sessions in June.

A student’s journal entry after using iNaturalist to identify a plant in their area.

A student’s Padlet entry, used as the slide for her digital narrative. She compiled resources that explain the problems with the retail industry and climate change.
Ford Scholar: Ha Bui ’22  
Mentor: Sarah Pearlman, Economics  
Project: Women and Coding – Economic and Pop-Culture Context Impacts

This summer, under Professor Sarah Pearlman’s guidance, I had the opportunity to investigate the relationship between exposure to media content and women’s decision (not) to pursue Computer Science in higher education and a career in the U.S. Women in STEM is a topic that has intrigued numerous gender and labor economics projects. While the percentage of women entering stem fields such as bio, physics, and engineering has steadily risen since the 1980’s, women’s participation in Computer Science has been waning, wherein the percentage of women majoring in Computer Science has halved between 1983 and 2010.

Simultaneously, the second half of the 20th century also saw the expansion of cable networks in the U.S., offering households unprecedented access to affordable information and entertainment services. This socio-economic transition created a new cultural context that harbored the 80s college-and-job-market-entering generation of women and men.

Our project was inspired by an NPR article titled “When Women Stopped Coding” that highlighted gender dichotomies in pop-culture as a potential catalyst and was informed by previous studies of cable television’s impacts on women’s household autonomy and girls’ access to education. We examined the following questions:

- Does access to cable television and the content in pop-culture on screened movies influence the declining women’s participation rate in Computer Science?
- If yes, how much, and what are the possible confounding factors?
In the first week, I conducted literature reviews to examine the following:

1. The impacts of cable television access and media exposure on gender empowerment and decision making.
2. The discrepancy in gender cultural representation.
3. Possible determinants of the observed female’s diversion from Computer Science in the 80s.

Subsequently, I tracked the expansion of cable television in the U.S. through the years 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, and 1988 using data previously acquired from the Television & Cable Factbook. To locate the arrival of cable services, I incorporated the cable television data with the Federal Information Processing Standards – a geographical code – listed in the Bureau Census data. Most of the data-cleaning tasks were conducted using reclink (a merging command that allowed for minor expression differences in string variables) in Stata. Specifically, we used the number of observations as the identifier and the names of states and localities as matching pillars. In the figures below, we can see the direction of cable network growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>3633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>6860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>11005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>18612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>39677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because the data was collected using a programming language that we were not familiar with, I focused primarily on understanding the progression of cable access and checking for possible errors in the custom dataset, including typos in string variables like locality names and FIPS codes as well as duplications due to technical reasons. One particular issue I regularly encountered occurred when we tried to merge data using reclip: Stata would duplicate
observations from either dataset to match with an observation from the other. This is because, in
the original cable dataset, one locality could have numerous identifying FIPS codes, creating a
long string variable. To work around this problem, we decided to horizontally separate the codes
into several string variables. After that, we generated another binary variable to examine if the
FIPS codes in the census file matched any of the FIPS codes listed in our custom cable file.

The process entailed constant trials and errors. Professor Pearlman was immensely patient and
informative throughout our meetings. Although the project remains inchoate, the work thus far
has provided a firm basis for continued research.
his summer, I worked with Professor Argudo and Anish Kumthekar ’22 to assess the impact of the redistributive policies implemented in Ecuador under Rafael Correa’s Citizen Revolution (2009-2013). The main focus in the past two months is to collect and examine the data to get a comprehensive and quantitative understanding of the socio-economic progress in Ecuador during the period of interest.

As the graph demonstrates, the sampling of each period varies. We've identified three major changes:

1. March and September surveys pre-2014 only cover urban areas, while post-2014 all the surveys include both urban and rural areas
2. The Galapagos Islands are included since 2014
3. There's a major sampling expansion in 2014.

The first two could be dealt with easily through some cleaning, however, the third one is of major concern.

We used diff-in-diffs regressions to check if the sampling change (i.e. the "treatment") has caused any variations in the demographic representation of the survey. We found the parallel control assumption to be held in pre-treatment periods for both income (ingrl) and age (p03).
Then we ran the regression and found a significant coefficient (p-value = 0.033) on the interaction term. This suggests that the sampling expansion in 2014 is causing variations in the representation of the survey and has to be controlled for in our future analysis.

Besides the data analysis work, we also read papers about the HANK model and the Ecuadorian economy. This project helped me learn how to think about and approach research questions independently and critically, as well as gain valuable skills in R and Python programming. For the rest of the summer and next semester, we will continue to do formal analysis on the data, build the model, calibrate it with the data, and finally evaluate the impact of the economic policies.
The policies aimed at Native Americans in the late 19th and early 20th century promoted cultural assimilation. Land privatization and education formed the central tenants of federal policy towards Native Americans. These policies worked to erode traditional tribal governments. The Assimilation Era was halted in 1934 when Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). The IRA stopped the privatization of tribal lands on every reservation, offered assistance in drafting constitutions and business charters, and implemented a revolving credit fund. Tribes electing to organize under the IRA received these benefits, but were also subject to oversight from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribes worried about the powers they would still hold if they chose to adopt the IRA. Once adopted, tribal governments were not able to modify their choice and remain organized under the IRA today. Non-IRA tribes were ineligible for some government programs but faced less federal oversight. This project explores the short-term and long-term differences that resulted from IRA adoption.

Concerns over IRA constraints proved accurate as IRA reservations consistently had a lower income per capita over time. Tribal governments organized under the IRA were limited in several ways including over all transactions for land and natural resources, which had to be approved by the Secretary of Interior and any use of the revolving credit fund was under close supervision from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The income inequality is illustrated in the graph below. Note that the gap is largest in 1945 and 2010.

![Graph showing income disparity between IRA and non-IRA tribes from 1915 to 2010.]

This project specifically explores the mechanisms that explain these early and persistent differences. I specifically examined four mechanisms that could be applied to parts of the IRA. They were:

1. **Land Holdings:** The IRA halted the allotment of tribal lands on the reservations and made funding available to return some of the private land back to the tribes themselves.
To examine this data, I used BIA land reports from 1934-1996 and collected information for each land tenure type present on over 100 reservations.

The key points to highlight from this graph are the bottom left, for tribal land relative to 1934, the top left, for fee-simple land (which is essentially the type of land we live on), and the bottom right, which looks at individual trust land. The bottom left shows there was not a significant increase in the amount of tribal land returned to IRA reservations until many decades later. Similarly, the inverse of this occurred with fee-simple land, where IRA reservations saw an increase in the amount of fee simple land relative to 1934 until the 1970s. The IRA did seem to work for individual trust land, as IRA reservations saw a decrease in the amount of land shortly after implementation that persisted over time.

2. **Natural Resources**: As an extension to the land holding changes, we examined the development of Oil and Gas wells on reservations. The critical period in this graph is the late 1930s to 1945, as that’s when the IRA was implemented and the big income difference between IRA and Non-IRA places was not present. As the data shows, there is a fairly even number of wells per capita between both IRA and Non-IRA places in that period, so natural resources likely cannot explain the early differences between IRA and Non-IRA reservations.
3. **Credit Markets:** The IRA made available the revolving credit fund to reservations, so I looked to evaluate if IRA reservations were in fact given more funds to use. For this mechanism I constructed credit data from two sources: BIA Statistical Supplements from 1939-45 and BIA Annual Credit Reports from 1948-54.

![Graph showing Government Loan Advances](image)

This graph shows the amount of real per capita loans that were made available from 1939-54. While the IRA promised the revolving credit fund to give reservations access to funds, they failed to adequately maintain this benefit as the difference between IRA and Non-IRA locations diminished by the mid 1950s. After checking for any accounting differences, Professor Frye and I realized this may have been due to a shift in the head of the BIA in 1945.

4. **Business Charters/Constitutions:** The IRA promised to help ratify charters and constitutions. I looked to see if that mattered with respect to per capita income. I’m still investigating this data, but I’ve collected the constitution and charter years for many reservations and plan to evaluate if the presence of these documents influenced per capita income in a negative way.
Ford Scholar: Alex Eisert ’22  
Mentor: Qi Ge, Economics  

This summer, I was privileged to work on a project examining competitive balance and vertical integration in sports with Professor Ge. Specifically, we looked into the relationship between major (MLB) and minor (MiLB) league baseball. Hailing from New York, I am a lifelong Yankees (MLB) fan, and growing up, I also frequented Hudson Valley Renegades’ (MiLB) games during my summers in Dutchess County.

A feeder or minor league is a lower-level, but still professional-grade entity that athletes usually participate in before moving to the highest level (or major league). The more that a sport’s minor leagues are tied to its major league, the more that major league can be said to have engaged in vertical integration; the minor leagues operate as a part of the supply chain for the majors. No such system is as expansive and complex, and perhaps as tightly integrated, like that of Organized Baseball.

My first task was to explore the relationship between MLB and MiLB throughout the years with a comprehensive literature review. 1921 marked the first year that MLB teams could have ownership stakes in minor league teams, and they immediately began buying up minor league teams as a place to put young ballplayers, signed for cheap, stashing them until they were ready for the major leagues.
My main task was to gather data on which MiLB teams have been MLB-owned, and on the performance of minor league teams throughout the years. We will ultimately use these datasets to look into the effects that MLB ownership has on league-wide competitive balance for the two highest levels of the minor leagues, AA and AAA.

We learned that, as of today, every AA and AAA team has at least some ties to a major league team, hence the one-to-one ratio.
This June, I worked with Professor Zeifman on designing a new course called The Psychologist’s Toolkit for Success and Wellbeing in College. This course aims to use scientifically tested strategies to assist students in succeeding academically, socially, physically, and mentally in college.

At the beginning of the project, recalling the problems that students encountered after entering college, we came up with a list of potential topics. The topics are divided into four categories:

1. Physical health and wellbeing (e.g. sleep hygiene and habits)
2. Studying habits (e.g. avoiding procrastination)
3. Social interactions (e.g. conflict resolution)
4. Others (e.g. academic integrity & mental health education).

For each topic, Professor Zeifman helped me come up with questions and search terms. Then, I used PsycINFO and Google Scholar to look for research papers that addressed these ideas. We tended to search for more recent studies that examined college students. After putting together titles, abstracts, and citations of the most relevant studies, I started reading them. I highlighted the articles that are suitable to be used as readings assignments for our course and wrote a short general impression and important takeaways for each paper. In the end, I compiled valuable information that was proven by surveys or experiments and produced a summary for each topic that could serve as the literature foundation for our course.

We did not finish all topics in a month and will continue working on this project this summer and next term. Our next steps include producing a working syllabus with potential reading assignments, carrying out a survey study that examines Vassar students’ academic integrity, and serving as a teaching/research assistant for the future course.
This summer, Professor Song and I built two courses for an American school in Kuwait, focusing on spatial justice, community engagement, and developing critical literacy skills to be used for a future research project with international youth. These courses were designed to support the academic and personal development of the students to prepare them for college or post-secondary life in the USA.

For our first curriculum, I researched five topics: public and private space, gendered space, architecture, digital space, and community care. Each topic became the guiding theme for each day of the program, tying together class activities ranging from reimagining the social rules of local sites to pinpointing possible accessibility improvements, and examining how the digital world leaks into reality. The spatial justice course culminates in a multimodal project, in which students report on a current issue in their community through a critical spatial lens.

Our second curriculum is designed to build upon the understandings constructed in the first year, and is centered around the practice of world-building. Each day focuses on a particular field—medicine, advertising, urban planning, journalism, and technology—and analyzes it from the creator and consumer perspective. Students are challenged to reimagine this field in their own fictitious world, which becomes progressively more developed throughout the program. The concluding project presents their world and the political and social forces at play within it.

I also reviewed articles from Professor Song’s dissertation on a Brooklyn out-of-school literacy program, providing comments to prepare future manuscripts for journal submissions. I compiled supplementary articles relevant to each chapter from prominent education journals such as *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* and *Review of Research in Education*.
A slide from our Gendered Spaces lesson

First half of the Spatial Justice curriculum
Over the summer I was working with Professor Benjamin Ho in the economics department regarding the effects of economic mobility on the prosocial behavior. The goal of the project was to determine if the individual’s ability to move up or down through the social classes changes one’s chance to engage in prosocial behavior such as donating or volunteering.

I was working with four data sets, three of them including cross-national data with more than 30 countries and one representative data from the U.S. In the beginning of the project I was doing OLS regressions without restrictions in order to determine the coefficients on mobility and to observe the changes in coefficients as we added more independent variables such as GDP growth, education, index on corruption, etc. We used a dependent variable that showed if a person volunteered in the past month/year, depending on the dataset. Since economic mobility is actually lower as the coefficient increases (1 represents the lowest mobility, whereas 0 represents the highest mobility), our case negative coefficients actually show a positive relationship between economic mobility and prosocial behavior. In the picture below, we can see that the coefficients on mobility are large and significant.

![Table Image]

Restrictions that resulted in consistent results were the place of birth restriction (those born outside of the country they reside in have larger coefficient), age restriction (as you get older the coefficient on mobility increases), and trust restriction (those that trust more have larger coefficients). Furthermore, since our measurements of the mobility are on country-level rather than individual-level, a mixed effects model was used to observe the behavior of the coefficients. After running the melogit and metobit models, we found that economic mobility is still a significant variable and that the restrictions mentioned above, still hold.
Since past researchers have focused mostly on income and inequality as the main independent variables, the effect of economic mobility on prosocial behavior is the undiscovered effect with the potential of large implications on debates regarding social impacts of resource distribution.
Ford Scholar: Jonan Kiang ’21  
Mentor: Tracey Holland, Latin American & Latino/a Studies with Sofia Rao ’22, research assistant  
Project: “Even This One Has a Role in Deciding the Outcome”: Reimagining Children’s Agency and Human Rights in Armed Conflict

The basis of this Ford project was the four films from Professor Tracey Holland’s class, Hello Dear Enemy, specifically For Sama, Of Fathers and Sons, The Distant Barking of Dogs, and Colors of the Mountains. The first two of these are located in Aleppo and Northwest Syria respectively during the Syrian Civil War (2011-present), while the third is located in Hnutove near the frontline of the War in Donbass (2014-present), and the fourth in Montes de Maria region of Colombia during the Colombian Conflict (1964-present). Considering the emerging scholarship on children’s rights and agencies, our goal was to evaluate the topic of children’s agency beyond the current discourse of childhood by bringing in hermeneutical methods of analysis.

We began by researching the backgrounds of the films and drafting brief summaries of them. For a good while, we did not fully close in on our topic yet, but after researching dozens of readings and journal articles, we were able to narrow down and transform the vastness of information we were facing to a solid approach and argument. We knew that children were not simply incomplete adults and rather individuals who were agentic, but we needed to demonstrate that somehow. By the end of Week Five, we each probably watched each of the films between three to four times, and we marked more than 130 timestamps within these films that demonstrated children and their lived experiences in a way that contradicted the dominant childhood identity, i.e. innocent victims, and connected it to relevant literature.

Due to the complexity of the topic of children’s rights, our sources came to include a myriad of different fields: political theory, psychology, sociology, gender studies, geography, and international politics. All these would fit into the jigsaw puzzle of what childhood meant on top of and beyond constructed innocence and victimhood.
Ford Scholar: Daria Lochoshvili '22  
Mentor: Dara Greenwood, Psychology  
Project: Media Psychology Textbook Research

Professor Dara Greenwood is planning to write the textbook Social Psychology of Mass Media that will draw upon the disciplines of both psychology and media studies in order to explore the widespread psychological impact of mass media. This summer, Alice Aldoukhov and I researched the most recent literature about some of the topics that will be covered in the textbook.

The first area I researched was advertising and persuasion. I explored the power of personalized advertising that targets consumers by using their personal information from their online profiles and browsing histories. Some studies showed that personalized ads are more effective than general ads because they enhance the personal relevance of the message for consumers, while other studies demonstrated that personalized ads may increase privacy concerns, thus leading to less persuasion. I also explored the importance of the source in persuasion and how different characteristics, such as expertise, trustworthiness, etc., affect the persuasiveness of the message. I researched social media influencers who are frequently hired by different brands to promote their products.
Another topic that I delved into was the influence of celebrities on people’s body image. I found that Instagram is one of the most relevant platforms to this literature because many celebrities actively use Instagram to depict their private and professional lives. Moreover, Instagram is based solely on photo-sharing, so appearance plays a primary role on this platform. I also investigated the impact of fashion shows, specifically Victoria’s Secret, on women’s mental health and body image. At last, I found some factors, such as prosocial relationships with celebrities and parodies of thin-ideal images, that may alleviate the immense negative influence of the slender body ideal on people.
Ford Scholar: Ilia Mahns ’23 and Huda Rahman ’23  
Mentor: Christopher Bjork, Education and Maria Höhn, History  
Project: Displacement, Ethnography and Education in Malaysia

The purpose of our project was to introduce methods of research and modes of collaboration in preparation for our trip to Malaysia through the Consortium on Forced Migration, Displacement, and Education. Given the pandemic, we were unable to do the groundwork we had hoped to accomplish. Instead, with the guidance of Professor Maria Höhn and post-baccalaureate fellow Matthew Brill-Carlat, we explored refugee models of education alongside various community-engaged partnerships. Our research seeks to advance the Consortium’s development.

Aside from the Ford Scholar framework, our project is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which also funds Vassar’s New Americans summer program, designed to support refugee high school students in pursuing higher-ed. During the summer, we researched how this might be expanded to include winter and spring break programming focused on the college application process.

We researched mutual enrollment programs between different higher education institutions. Oftentimes immigrant and refugee students pursue an education at community colleges due to interlocking hardships including, financial and linguistic challenges. We are working towards developing community-engaged learning opportunities that foster cross-campus relations between Vassar and DCC.

Throughout our research, we attended several Zoom workshops concerning refugee education, hosted by both government and local organizations. There was a lot to learn from grassroots organizations, especially concerning forms of creative expression related to mental health. We have seen the importance of incorporating art and therapeutic practices in ensuring feelings of well-being and belonging within vulnerable communities.

Our research allowed us to observe patterns in online platforms and digital scholarship while gathering resources for education models and mental health intervention in Malaysia. This has informed us in further developing community-outreach and summer initiatives that hopefully can become applicable to our college.

New Americans Program- Summer of 2019 | Taken by Professor Höhn
Valley Scholars Initiative by Julián Aguilar, Vassar ‘23

World Refugee Day 2020 slide shared over zoom | Taken by ilia Mahns

Common Threads Art Exhibit of Story Cloths
Ford Scholar: John Mahoney ’22  
Mentor: Nancy Bisaha, History & Medieval and Renaissance Studies  
Chris Smart, Chemistry  
Project: Medieval Science and Technology: Research and Pedagogy

This summer I worked with Professor Bisaha and Professor Smart to collect and review sources for their course Medieval Science and Technology. The interdisciplinary course explores how technologies and the intellectual antecedents of modern science developed in the period from 500 to 1500 CE, with a concentration on how those technologies and epistemologies influenced, and were influenced by, their socio-historical contexts. While the course focuses on Europe, my mentors asked me to expand the geographic scope of the course material to illuminate the cross-cultural origins of certain technologies and provide comparative examples of technological development in non-European societies. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the course, these sources had to be both accessible to students of disparate academic backgrounds and representative of various intellectual disciplines.

My primary task was researching and compiling an annotated bibliography. I expanded the source material on subjects, including gunpowder technology and medicine, which were already represented in the course, and collected sources on new subjects, like metallurgy. I also proposed combinations of readings for class modules as well as a lab module on the usage of astrolabes.

While I thoroughly enjoyed the research, I struggled with two problems: an unfamiliarity with digital research and difficulty focusing my research. Both were eventually solved through consultations with my mentors and Vassar College librarians, who introduced me to new online resources and helped me concentrate my research. By the end of the program, I emerged with a new appreciation for the powers of online research, as well as a newfound excitement for interdisciplinary research. As a final cap to my Ford Scholarship, I am preparing a subject and readings for a class module that I will lead when the course is taught this spring.
I placed the sources that seemed most appropriate as class readings on a shared Moodle page.

Other, more arcane sources were put into annotated bibliographies organized by subject.
This summer I had the pleasure of working with Professor Paravisini-Gebert on the Oviedo Project. The goal of this project is to translate Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias* or *General and Natural History of the Indies*. During the previous four semesters, students (including me) translated chapters that now need to be checked, edited, and then uploaded to the project's website. My job this summer mainly focused on organizing those chapters, updating the website, and preparing for more chapters to be translated in the upcoming school year. I also got to try my hand at editing and I had the opportunity to take part in the overall decision-making process.

One of the most rewarding parts of my job was looking for antique images and prints that accompanied each of the chapters I uploaded. By doing this, I learned about the flora, fauna, and political climate of colonial Latin America, right from primary sources. These images also give the Oviedo project a sense of both authenticity and creativity that I think perfectly reflects the personalities of the students who completed these translations.

With guidance and insight from Professor Paravisini-Gebert, I also learned about the translation process as a whole. For example, with so many chapters and so many students translating Oviedo's work, certain steps need to be taken to maintain a sense of consistency. It raises questions like: How do we translate certain words? Do we leave them in Spanish to maintain authenticity and cultural significance? Or do we find an English equivalent that is more recognizable and easier for readers to digest? To answer these questions, we met several times with other members of the Oviedo team over Zoom, which allowed me to better understand the importance of everyone's individual role in a project in such a large and complex project.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed working on the Oviedo Project under Professor Paravisini-Gebert. It is so exciting to see how much we were able to complete this summer and, even though there remains much to do this coming year, I cannot wait to see how it all unfolds!
Ford Scholar: Kaiqing Su ’21 and Yinguang Zhao ’23  
Mentor: Fubing Su, Political Science  
Project: State, Society, and Individual in China’s Coronavirus Pandemic

Since its outbreak in China at the end of 2019, the COVID-19 Pandemic has been more than a public health issue, but rather, a highly political one. For us, who witnessed the situation escalate and were involved in the pandemic, however remotely, this Ford Scholar project, led by Professor Fubing Su, is significant at both the academic and personal levels. Living with and through COVID-19, we aimed to analyze the pandemic as a case study to gain a deeper understanding of politics in today’s China.

The project is composed of three parts. In the first week, we read through and collected a wide range of primary sources and commentary articles on the coronavirus outbreak, prevention, and control in China. We organized them into different themes—such as media, propaganda, civil society, nationalism, memory, central-local government relations, etc. Based on the categorization, we then picked out key events and representational materials to demonstrate the diverse layers of Chinese politics. For example, Professor Su explored the realm of civil society in China through the actions taken by state-controlled GONGOs, partially autonomous NGOs, and individual volunteers; Yinguang studied the comments under Fang Fang and Dr. Li Wenliang’s Weibo—social media accounts of two of the most significant figures during the epidemic—to understand how Chinese people think about freedom of speech, government accountability, and patriotism; Kaiqing analyzed the differences between the official and grassroots timelines, contrasting the two kinds of “memories” constructed. Together, we hope to provide a more nuanced picture of the state, the government, and the people in contemporary China.
Our individual research projects are ongoing ones, and this summer was a good starting point for us to recollect and reflect on the coronavirus outbreak in China. The virus might be gone someday, but the lessons from this “case study” will remain as open doors.