

G-21 BRIEFING

KAHANE OXY-AT-THE-UN PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

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CLASS HIGHLIGHTS

The Return of the Cohort

Each fall, a small group of Oxy seniors comes to New York to participate in the Kahane Oxy-at-the-UN program. They work in full-time internships within United Nations agencies, government missions, and, this year, even non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while also taking courses on human rights and conflict prevention. Fall 2021 means the welcoming of a new group, and in person at that! The 17-person (G '21!) cohort has been in New York for a while and is working hard on their two classes and their UN internships. Within that time, the G '21 experienced the frenzy of "High-Level Week" of the General Assembly, on top of the regular chaos of New York! Not all of the students follow the GA in detail, but all are affected by the contexts of discussions in one way or another. Some students are lucky enough to engage in calmer research and data collection, while others are racing to cover meetings with or for their host organizations. For the first time, students are seeing the city through the School for International Training, with the support of Lucas Shapiro, SIT's Engage New York Coordinator. Even in the in-person setting, the world has yet to return to "normal," but the group is excited and ready to face any challenges and enjoy their next few months at the UN!



A few words from the Program Director, Prof. Cynthia Rothschild

Welcome back to a regular program in NYC! It's great to have the students back live and in person! We've had an intense few weeks of "onboarding" and getting adjusted to all the things a 2021 fall semester in NYC brings, including the never-ending complexity of a new General Assembly season, this year shaped by a global focus on the Covid pandemic, climate emergencies and the Taliban coup in Afghanistan. Students have "hit their stride" here and are deep inside their coursework and internships. Our Group of '21 (a nod to UN language) is busily researching, writing, monitoring government meetings, and contributing to policy development. And, in their limited free time, G'21 is exploring all New York City has to offer, from museums to walking tours in various neighborhoods. This year, in a new development, we're partnering with the School for International Training for student "health and wellness" to ensure students stay safe, healthy, and entertained!

Much of the Program is as it has been, with a few shifts. We have added internships at three non-governmental organizations, each of which does deep work within and "on" the UN system (these NGOs focus on peacebuilding, the rights of LGBTI people, and multi-religion responses to build

peaceful, just and inclusive societies). We've done this to create opportunities for students to learn about the UN from a "civil society" entry point. Also, we implemented an intensive August multi-day orientation (Assistant Director Jacques Fomerand calls it "boot camp"!) to ensure students had a baseline of knowledge for courses and understanding the UN system. Our courses remain focused on human rights and conflict, peace, and security. (See below for more information on the classes.)

Students have already been given a lot of responsibility in their work; they're also learning really sophisticated things! Projects include: research on killings of women for UNFPA; supporting work in the GA, including on "reprisals" against human rights defenders and the University for Peace for the UK and Costa Rican missions; monitoring and evaluation in areas related to "communication for development" for UNICEF; climate justice research and work on marginalized groups ("key populations") in relation to HIV and other health crises for UNDP. These are just a few examples. We look forward to sharing more with you as the semester unfolds!

Meet some of the Oxy-UN Cohort!

(with more to follow in the next issue!)

Madeleine Henry, UN Women



Hi! My name is Madeleine and I'm interning in the Civil Society Division of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. I am mainly supporting the mapping, analysis, and database development of Women Human Rights Defender (WHRD) organizations/networks. I'm also conducting research on how to support and expand civil society space at the country, regional, and global levels. Overall, I'm really excited to get the chance to explore my interest in women's human rights further, and use what I've learned at Oxy in a real-world professional setting.

Julia Eubanks, UK Mission



Hello, I'm Julia, one of the UK Mission interns! I am working on the Third Committee focusing on human rights and the General Assembly. I also provide some assistance to the communications team. I am so excited about the amazing people I have gotten to meet and the human rights-based projects I have been a part of. Thus far, I have gotten to meet the Prime Minister of the UK in the UK Mission Office. I also got to assist at an event about climate change where the speakers included the Prime Minister of Norway, along with the Presidents of Columbia and Costa Rica. Being in New York City as a whole is also riveting and I am looking forward to exploring the local music and art scene!

Stephanie Oyolu, UNICEF



Hi, my name is Stephanie Oyolu and I'm a Diplomacy & World Affairs and Economics double-major. My internship with UNICEF has enabled me to develop a stronger understanding of Communication for Development (C4D) theory. Much of the work I have done so far has dealt with disaggregating data as part of the Children and Young People (CYP) Initiative U-Report. I have been tasked with analyzing data from eleven countries concerning the impact of mental health challenges on young people, particularly in the context of the pandemic. The C4D sector endeavors to empower young people to be agents of change, and synthesizing this data will allow us to identify what issues young people care about most. I look forward to observing how this data will be used to inform future initiatives and what role I can serve in that endeavor.

Ava Davis, UNFPA



Hello! My name is Ava and I work in the Gender and Human Rights Branch at UNFPA where I record, summarize and analyze statements made in GA side events, webinars and meetings. Mainly, I participate in research projects, where I have dealt with Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA). Currently, I am engaged in UNFPA efforts to bring more attention to femicide, a matter on which there is little data despite its increasing prevalence due to COVID-19. I love working at UNFPA because the majority of leaders are women of color, and I am one of only a few Americans in my department. The majority of my co-workers are from West Africa, South America, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. I am excited to continue to learn from my co-workers' research and projects and to translate and create important linkages in my classes.

Zhuoheng Li, Religions for Peace



Hi, I'm Li and I am working for Religions for Peace/ World Conference on Religions and Peace. I am a Program Officer Intern that works closely with different branches of the UN (such as UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNFCCC) to facilitate peacebuilding through interreligious conversation. My primary duties include meeting monitoring, events planning, and corresponding with partner UN organizations and NGOs. Through working with a civil society actor within the UN, and through courses in this program that focus on human rights and the UN system, I believe I have a more comprehensive understanding of the UN from an uncommon angle.

Talia White, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict



This semester, I am interning at an NGO called the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) where I am focused on financing for peacebuilding. So far I have worked on a grant proposal for a local climate assessment and two papers dealing with financing female peacebuilders and strengthening infrastructures for peace during COVID-19. Currently, I am conducting research for a project focused on financing women, youth, and peace and security agendas. Working at an NGO has enabled me to get involved in a range of projects and connect with many actors spanning from local peacebuilders to UN policy makers to Member States. Beyond my work, I'm also very excited about experiencing different seasons and going apple picking for the first time in three years!

Stella Hong, UNICEF



Hello! My name is Stella Hong, and I'm an intern at UNICEF doing work in the Communications for Development (C4D) team. I am currently supporting two initiatives. The first initiative creates opportunities for children and young people to be involved with research and decision-making about mental health in their communities. The second initiative entails collaboration with religious leaders and organizations to identify how faith actors can use their platforms to improve the quality of life for the children, families, and the communities they engage with. I'm so excited to be part of these two initiatives because they focus on supporting local actors, especially children and young people, who know their community best. I can't wait to dive deeper into this work!

Cheng Wang, UNDP



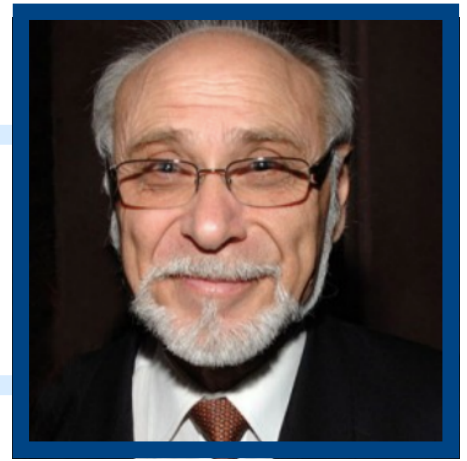
Hi everyone, my name is Cheng, an international student from Suzhou, China. Given the context of the ongoing pandemic, my internship work specifically includes topics of vaccine equity, medical waste management, and emergency preparedness. We connect countries to international partners to create and strengthen their digital systems to overcome organizational, operational, and technical challenges in vaccine delivery. I also work with colleagues on air pollution, climate change, gender, and road safety. UNDP provides tons of learning opportunities within the organization. Personally, I'm passionate about the UN's entire concept of sustainable development and re-embracing global solidarity for the common good. Therefore, even with the setbacks of COVID, I am always energized with the faith that there is room to improve and that more could be done to push for progress.

Petra Jasper, UNHCR



Hello! My name is Petra and I am currently interning at UNHCR, which is the United Nations refugee agency. The work I do is primarily focused on the Third Committee of the General Assembly, where I monitor interactive dialogues, check on resolutions, and look out for refugee-specific language. Additionally, I drafted a report for UNHCR Geneva Headquarters that summarized the High-Level Week and the General Debate. So far, I have greatly enjoyed being able to see how and why UNHCR determines its policy and how the views expressed in the Third Committee can influence action. Overall, I am grateful for the experience I have had, and I am excited to see what I will do next. Beyond work, I have been greatly enjoying exploring New York and having classes in person!

A note from Assistant Director, Prof. Jacques Fomerand



This year, most of the deities of the creation were on our side. By 25 August, the new cohort had reached New York and checked in at the 92Y. They were hardly able to catch their breath as the very next day, they were thrown into what we euphemistically labeled a “boot camp,” in effect, and more accurately, intensive meetings laying down the foundations of their academic and experiential learning in the semester to come in New York. By August 31 and after a day visit to Ellis Island where some went on a personal journey in their past, everyone (including the instructor!!) was ready to embark, not exactly for Cythera, but for a voyage of conflict prevention discovery. Students are already sharpening their analytical readings summary skills and pondering over the subject of the first policy brief they will send to a UN or governmental official on a burning issue requiring their immediate attention. In class, three of them orchestrated our first (and first rate!!) simulation.... This is where we all are at this still early stage of the semester. But all indicators augur well, notwithstanding the constraints of the pandemic.

I look forward to coaching my new victims and, more importantly, to continue my own learning journey with them. All masked but in person....!



UN General Assembly High-Level Week (21-27 September 2021) : A Recap

Will it take place in person? In remote mode? The behind-the-scenes buzzing and whispering lasted for months and almost until the formal opening of the 76th session of the General Assembly. The global pandemic eventually imposed a hybrid format and the size of delegations (especially those of developing nations) was severely limited as governments had also been encouraged to make pre-recorded statements. From the beginning, and then throughout the Assembly High-Level Week, the G-21 were not exactly in the front row! Still, the experience was thrilling. Some of our group were able to immerse ourselves in the deliberations of some 100 Heads of State or Governments who were articulating their priorities in the hope of being “heard” by others both at home and in the Assembly hemicycle.

Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General, opened the debate with rather somber and grave remarks, saying that the time is now to take swift action to combat climate change and “leave no one behind.” In response, and addressing the theme of “building resilience through hope” urged by the secretariat (the “head office”), leaders mapped out their priority concerns, aspirations and demands, with COVID-19, climate change and sustainable development ranking high on their agendas. Parallel high-level events on biodiversity, food security, energy, poverty elimination through job creation and social protection kept us scrambling for time in our overcrowded daily schedule. By the end of the week, we were exhausted but happy to have witnessed the UN operating, as our academic mentors on campus had led us to expect, as a “mirror” and “amplifier” of nations’ aspirations.



The G-21 and guest speaker Miriam Jalabi in Prof. Fomerand's class. Miriam is a political activist for the Syrian Women's Political Movement.

Themes to watch out for in the General Assembly

Each year, the GA kicks off with the “High-Level Week”, during which top officials from governments make high profile statements that speak to their countries’ most pressing global concerns. After this period, the work of the GA continues through December, with ongoing negotiations on resolutions (usually about 100!) and various events that feature experts on a range of geopolitical issues.

A few key themes from High-Level Week called for multilateral cooperation on three essential topics: climate change, COVID-19, and conflict. These will carry through the next months in GA 76.

The priority of the COVID discussion was the need for increased production and more equitable distribution of vaccines. “Vaccine nationalism” and discrimination were hot topics, and many states made it clear that solidarity and support were the only ways to break free of the pandemic.

Climate change, especially with the then-forthcoming high profile climate forum in Glasgow (COP26), was a priority for most states. States underscored the need for greater adherence to climate initiatives because the climate crisis is one of collective responsibility, and no state or group can be left to fend for itself.

Conflict, especially terrorism and intra-state war in places such as Afghanistan or Sudan, was the third priority of the Assembly members. They felt that a threat to the security of one state and its people is a threat to international peace and security.

Student highlights during that period included some being able to tour the UN Secretariat building, and contributing to key documentation and organization for the General Assembly and bilateral meetings between governments. Some helped by drafting talking points, and others through engaging in media / communications efforts.

While some students’ internships didn’t focus on the GA (see next issue for more detail!), those that did provided steep learning curve experiences. Oxy students provided great support for their respective organizations. They found the meetings hectic, but extremely rewarding, and are excited to continue on in their internships as they continue to focus on next stages of the GA!



The Classes of Oxy-at-the-UN

DWA 401

Special Topics at the UN:
Human Rights,
Prof. Rothschild



“Human rights” is one of the core pillars of the UN system, along with development and peace and security. As such, Prof. Rothschild's class covers topics as diverse as denial of women's rights in Afghanistan and in the enactment of abortion bans and “bounties” in Texas, to the inner workings of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The course explores so-called “controversial topics” in human rights, giving particular focus to the intersections between broad geo-political issues (such as relationships with China and Russia) and how these sometimes play out in relation to gender and sexuality. The global human rights regime is under immense pressure, whether from the economic fallout and related rights abuses from the COVID-19 pandemic, migration crises triggered by climate change, or the weakening of democratic norms and institutions. This class not only covers these topics, but also allows students to critically engage with current events by using “tools” of human rights (including UN rights treaties, for instance). Through this lens, students can consider the ways non-state actors such as NGOs can impact the UN system and project the voices of those too often left out of the realization of human rights for all.

DWA 402

The UN and Conflict Prevention: Architecture, Actors, Tools, Praxis, Prof. Fomerand

Peace and security were the founding objectives of the UN when it was established in the aftermath of WWII and, from the outset, the prevention of conflict was the prime responsibility of the new organization. Yet, 76 years later, conflict prevention continues to pose conceptual and operational challenges. Prof. Fomerand's course focuses on the promises and limitations of the idea through a detailed examination of case studies, the experiential knowledge of practitioners and class simulation exercises. The course also invites students to think about conflict prevention within the context of sustainable development and human rights norms and practices and to connect these academic insights to their internship experience.



Lucas Shapiro, SIT Engage New York Coordinator. Lucas is the "health and wellness" point person for the Oxy G'21 group.

Thanks for reading! Don't forget to follow us on Instagram  @OxyattheUN

Coming soon:

In the next issue, we'll hear from more students on their experiences and learn more about what working for the UN really looks like. We will also get to hear more from SIT program coordinator, Lucas!