



URBAN STUDIES 2020 GRADS AND



2021 SENIORS FEATURES



This spotlight series features interviews with seniors and recent graduates of the urban studies program at Trinity College. CUGS and URST are proud of the success of our students and alumni and we are happy to bring you these stories.



"The deep history and rich, diverse culture of Hartford is always present in every class and discussion I have had in my major, so my experience is truly that of the city itself."

-Lillia Schmidt '21

"What is unique about being an urban studies major is that my learning in the classroom can be immediately translated and observed the moment I leave class either on campus or within our urban neighborhood."

-Caroline Munn '21

"Research can take many different forms - be bold, creative, and think about the research you'd like to conduct - not limited to what has been done in the past."

-Hannah Ward '20

HAMNA TARIQ '20



HOMETOWN: Lahore, Pakistan

MAJOR(S): International Studies; Urban Studies

CURRENT OCCUPATION/JOB TITLE:

Junior Fellow, South Asia Program Stimson Center

FAVORITE URST COURSE: Global Cities

FAVORITE PROFESSOR: Professor Garth Myers

WHAT INITIALLY DREW YOU TO PURSUE URBAN STUDIES IN YOUR UNDERGRADUATE CAREER?

I was selected to the Cities Program before I started at Trinity which piqued my interest in the study of urban cities. Taking several courses in the discipline and traveling across Thailand and Cambodia to research the impact of the Mekong River on urbanization dynamics my first-year concretized my interest in the field. Notably, the unyielding support from the urban studies department throughout my four years at Trinity only drew me further towards the major.

HOW DID HAVING A DEGREE IN URBAN STUDIES SET YOU UP FOR SUCCESS OR SET YOU APART IN THE FIELDS AND JOBS YOU'VE PURSUED?

The study of urban environments, local governments, and border politics has helped me immensely in my career. At work, I've analyzed the geography of Kashmir and how it impacts conflict dynamics, Pak-Afghanistan cross-border skirmishes, and civil-military relations—all topics that I've either briefly or extensively studied in my urban studies classes.

WHAT TYPE OF RESEARCH PROJECTS WERE YOU INVOLVED IN WITH CUGS?

My first research project was researching the history and politics of urbanization in Thailand and Cambodia in the summer of 2017. Immediately after, I was awarded the Luce Foundation grant to research the socio-political and economic impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. I researched the Economic Corridor until my junior year and was funded to travel across Pakistan and interview stakeholders and politicians involved with the Corridor. My senior year, CUGS funded research for my thesis and helped me travel to New York and connect with the Gilgit-Baltistani diaspora community there. I am fortunate to have been able to develop my research interests, get published in the top economic magazine (European Financial Review), and interact with urban communities across the world – all because CUGS was willing to invest in my ideas.

HANNAH WARD '20



HOMETOWN: Surrey, England

MAJOR(S): International Studies: African Studies; Urban Studies

CURRENT OCCUPATION/JOB TITLE:

Course Manager, Sales Impact Academy

FAVORITE URST COURSE: Global Cities; Developmental Cities in Asia

FAVORITE PROFESSORS: Professor Garth Myers; Professor David Lukens

WHAT INITIALLY DREW YOU TO PURSUE URBAN STUDIES IN YOUR UNDERGRADUATE CAREER?

I wanted to learn about cities. Having grown up just outside a city that is interconnected to so much of the world, I wanted to learn about the importance of these connections.

HOW DID HAVING A DEGREE IN URBAN STUDIES SET YOU UP FOR SUCCESS OR SET YOU APART IN THE FIELDS AND JOBS YOU'VE PURSUED?

As one of my majors, urban studies paired well with international studies and complemented so much of the content I learned throughout my four years of college. In particular, when studying abroad, Professor Myers was very supportive of the classes I took counting towards the urban studies major - the field encompasses many disciplines. I feel equipped to tackle many different opportunities as a result of the knowledge I have gained and the skills that I learned.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT URST MAJORS?

Apply for research projects and connect with recent graduates who undertook research opportunities. Looking back, this is something I wish I had considered during my time with CUGS. Research can take many different forms - be bold, creative, and think about the research you'd like to conduct - not limited to what has been done in the past.

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY OR HOW PURSUING URST AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?

Being involved with CUGS and the urban studies major afforded me so many opportunities. I got to learn from incredible professors and the way that I approached much of what I wrote was also influenced by the field. I think that many of the perspectives I took with me from my undergraduate career were positively informed by the discipline of urban studies and will continue to shape my experiences in the future.

CHARLOTTE ROBBINS '20



HOMETOWN: Newton, MA

MAJOR(S): Urban Studies; Environmental Science

CURRENT OCCUPATION/JOB TITLE:

Research Assistant, Boston Medical Center

WHAT INITIALLY DREW YOU TO PURSUE URBAN STUDIES IN YOUR UNDERGRADUATE CAREER?

As someone who wants to work in public health, my background in urban studies helps me think about health inequities as place-based and the product of both the built environment and policies that have influenced peoples' health risks. This framework helped shape my senior thesis on dengue in Ecuador and is currently informing the way I think about breast cancer in Boston.

WHAT TYPE OF RESEARCH PROJECTS WERE YOU INVOLVED IN WITH CUGS?

After my first year at Trinity, I was fortunate to go on the River Cities trip to China, Thailand, and Cambodia. This trip challenged me to think about cities as the products of complex interactions among historical, environmental, and social processes in a way that I hadn't before. My experiences on this trip were foundational for the way I think about the built environment now.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR CURRENT URST MAJORS?

My advice to current URST majors is to go to office hours and to attend Common Hour presentations. Looking back, I wish I had gone to more of these!

“My background in urban studies helps me think about health inequities as place-based and the product of both the built environment and policies that have influenced peoples' health risks.”

GAVIN XU '21

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TIME AS AN URBAN STUDIES MAJOR AT TRINITY?

My time as an urban studies Major at Trinity is unbounded. The program offers an array of courses that range from exploring the history of urban development in Hartford and in the U.S. to global cities around the world. It is fully supportive of its students as well. The Center for Urban and Global Studies (CUGS) has precious resources and offers funds for students to take advantage of and explore their academic interests.

WHAT RESEARCH PROJECTS HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN WITH CUGS?

I have been involved in research with Professor Xiangming Chen on the Special Economic Zones in China and capital and labor mobility along the borders between China, Laos, and Myanmar.

Also, it was my honor to receive a grant from the Tanaka Research Fund from CUGS. I couldn't have undertaken my self-designed research in Taiwan in the summer of 2019 without the generous offer from the Center. The entire experience was extremely thorough, and the program director, Gabby Nelson, was really helpful in terms of issuing me the funds, the instruction for using them and regularly checking in on me during the summer for updates.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FUTURE URBAN STUDIES MAJORS, BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE DEPARTMENT?

The urban studies program has lots of resources and opportunities that students can take advantage of. However, most of the time students are not aware of them. Whenever you have an idea in mind in terms of wanting to explore an academic topic that interests you, you should always reach out to your professors in the program. They will not only offer you great help but also, they will point to all the resources that you can take advantage of in the program.



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AMANDA LAFFERTY '21



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TIME AS AN URBAN STUDIES MAJOR AT TRINITY?

I've thoroughly enjoyed my time as a URST major, starting with my participation in the Cities Program as a first-year student. Each course I've taken has helped me gain a better sense of the world around me and question why urban processes happen, who they benefit, and how meaningful change can occur. There's also an important emphasis on connecting with Hartford, from working with community organizations to exploring the city with a research focus. It is important for me that our courses often feel very "hands-on" in the ways we are encouraged to physically go out and walk the city.

WHICH CLASSES, INSTRUCTORS, OR EXPERIENCES PARTICULARLY STAND OUT FOR YOU AND WHY?

As someone who finds herself geeking out about sustainable transportation use, I really enjoyed "Geographies of Transport" with Professor Gamble. "Urban Nightlife since 1964" engaged my passion for music and my desire to understand the history of my interests, especially as an amateur DJ. I'm currently taking "Community Development Strategies" with Professor Delgado and have enjoyed how the class explores the systemic problems communities face while also looking at how people and organizations aim to solve such issues.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FUTURE URBAN STUDIES MAJORS, BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE DEPARTMENT?

Challenge yourself and the knowledge you hold by asking questions, exploring these questions and the possible answers, and looking at how your assumptions have changed and why.

WHAT ARE YOUR POST-GRAD PLANS?

I'm planning on going to graduate school for a master's in city planning!

LILLIA SCHMIDT '21



WHICH CLASSES, INSTRUCTORS, OR EXPERIENCES PARTICULARLY STAND OUT FOR YOU AND WHY?

Garth Myers makes me question everything I thought I knew about research- in a good way! His approach is getting your hands dirty and diving in, experiencing things first hand and then analyzing and taking the academic, scholarly view later. An assignment for my first Urban Studies class with Professor Myers was to go and walk ten blocks in Hartford, and the best part is that this is normal for an urban studies class here! You are constantly experiencing the city from new view points.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TIME AS AN URBAN STUDIES MAJOR AT TRINITY?

My time as an urban studies major has been an adventure- literally! All of the professors encouraged me to go out of my comfort zone and experience Hartford on a personal level, through projects, assignments, and extracurriculars. The deep history and rich, diverse culture of Hartford is always present in every class and discussion I have had in my major, so my experience is truly that of the city itself.

WHAT TYPE OF RESEARCH PROJECTS WERE YOU INVOLVED IN WITH CUGS?

I took a couple of courses that involved projects in Hartford. One was a partnership with SINA (Southside Institution Neighborhood Alliance), which is a neighborhood revitalization non-profit that aids in community organizing in Frog Hollow. Another was a project that involved monitoring the effectiveness and social implications of crosswalks in downtown Hartford.

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CAROLINE MUNN '21

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TIME AS AN URBAN STUDIES MAJOR AT TRINITY?

My time as a URST major at Trinity has opened my eyes to so many immersive educational opportunities and adventures. In 2019, I was fortunate to study during J-Term in Zanzibar, Tanzania under the supervision of Professor Myers, where we analyzed the impact tourism has on the environment.

Additionally, I studied in Copenhagen, Denmark during the Spring of 2020 where I took classes centering around sustainability and why cities matter. The unique program used the city as my classroom which enabled me to practically learn in the world. What is extremely about being an urban studies major is that my learning in the classroom can be immediately translated and observed the moment I leave class either on campus or within our urban neighborhood.



POST-GRAD PLANS:

I am excited to be teaching Special Education in Boston with Teach for America!

WHICH CLASSES, INSTRUCTORS, OR EXPERIENCES PARTICULARLY STAND OUT FOR YOU AND WHY?

Professors that have had a profound impact on my time at Trinity are Professor Baldwin, Professor Gamble, and Professor Myers. I have had the pleasure of learning from Professor Baldwin in several classes. In particular, his Race and Urban Space class has been very thought-provoking and highly interactive. In this class, we are currently examining cities through spatial analysis which allows us to map and measure different areas. One of the largest takeaways is that decisions have been made, but the intentions matter just as much as the consequences when looking at cities and generational policies.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FUTURE URBAN STUDIES MAJORS, BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE DEPARTMENT?

Take every opportunity that comes your way. Explore Hartford and use the city as your classroom. If you have the opportunity to study abroad, you can learn from different perspectives and from classmates from other schools. Most importantly, I would make it a priority get to know your Professors and students majoring in Urban Studies as we have a wealth of knowledge to share!

ALI ODERMANN '21

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TIME AS AN URBAN STUDIES MAJOR AT TRINITY?

My time as an urban studies major has really given me the opportunity to explore multiple avenues of learning and education. One of the reasons I chose urban studies was because it was such a multidisciplinary area of study. I have taken classes in the women, gender and sexuality department, the hispanic studies department, and the international studies department; the list goes on; however, I always found it interesting that in all of these classes I could find parallels to urban studies.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FUTURE URBAN STUDIES MAJORS, BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE DEPARTMENT?

The biggest piece of advice I could give any urban studies major is to talk to your professors, talk to your peers, talk to anyone that is involved in the department. One thing I have noticed about urban studies is how diverse a place CUGS actually is. Whether that be talking to Professor Gamble about cycling in Quito or discussing African urban development with Professor Myers, there is so much knowledge to be gained that they are so eager to talk with students about.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS POST-GRADUATION?

My eventual goal is to attend law school or graduate school, but my more immediate goal is to find a job in the social justice field. I'm hoping (fingers crossed) that I get to stay in Hartford. I have really fallen in love with the city and the surrounding community, and I can't see myself leaving anytime soon.

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