Understanding Our World: Data-Based Approaches
Session Moderator: Walter Andrews, Near Eastern Languages and Civilization
MGH 251
12:30 PM to 2:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

**How Community Based Programs Are Aiding the Peace Process in Myanmar**
Claire Branley, Junior, Public Health-Global Health  
Mary Gates Scholar  
Mentor: Mollie Pepper, Comparative History of Ideas  
Mentor: Kimberly Roberts

Myanmar has been enveloped in seemingly endless civil strife since their independence from British colonization in 1949. The country is comprised of a wide array of ethnic minorities, each with their respective language and culture. Myanmar’s government may publicly announce its pride at the country’s diversity, but within, human rights violations committed by the military abound. The peace process towards a federalist state is long and hard, and has seen many cycles of ceasefires and armed conflict. My time in Thailand during CHID’s Gender, Peacekeeping and Human Rights program addressed this conflict from a myriad of perspectives. As a result, I have learned about the silent heroes of Myanmar’s peacekeeping process: the community based organizations that are actively changing the power landscape of rural areas within the ethnic minority states. There are several community-based organizations operating from the Thailand-Myanmar border that are addressing and spreading awareness of the human rights violations committed by the military. Through meetings and interviews with various community-based organizations, I am exploring the relationship between family planning and maternal health programs on the ground and women’s participation in the peace process in the country overall. I am also using content analysis of reports done by the organizations, who have obtained valuable, on the ground data from remote areas within Myanmar. I am interested in whether investing in these programs and supporting this community-based approach could be one possible solution to creating multilateral agreements that last in Myanmar because of the additional involvement of women in politics and leadership.

**Human Smuggling, an Element of Migration and Organized Crime**
Jessica Phung, Senior, Political Science (Political Economy)  
Mentor: James Long, Political Science

With more than a million arrivals in Europe in 2015, the mass migration has impacted the continent politically, economically, and socially. According to Europol, a law enforcement agency, in 2016 more than 90% of migrants going to the European Union have experienced some kind of smuggling during their journey. Many articles aggregate human smuggling with human trafficking. However, there is a lack of empirical examination and of different types of smuggling. In this study, I focus on migrant smuggling. Nevertheless, human smuggling is often seen as a crime that is organized, where a new “service” gets added to their principle activity (drug smuggling, money laundering...), as stated by Finckenauer, and performed by people who have never been involved in transnational criminal organizations. I assess this puzzle: How does human smuggling differ from human trafficking and organized crime, by examining primary and secondary sources such as scholarly literature and local newspapers? I argue that human smuggling has some traits of organized crime; however, considering entirely as it, limits the study of smuggling, as a business activity, and limits the prevention of illegal immigration. Human smuggling has traits of organized crime: the structure, the persistence, and violence have shown that these elements are not voluntarily present in the activity of smuggling. Nonetheless, the main purpose of this activity is treated as a business: where demand and supply meet and where price fluctuates depending on these factors. Migrant smuggling needs to be seen as a mutually consenting act between a migrant and a smuggler: the migrant is looking to flee because of instability in his/her country for the hope of a better life while the smuggler is considering smuggling as a business. This project aims to give a nuanced understanding of human smuggling to better intervene at the source of this mass migration.
Implementing Article 32: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Inclusive International Development Mandate
Shannon Pierson, Junior, International Studies
Jessica Niewohner, Senior, Law, Societies, & Justice
Mentor: Stephen Meyers, Law, Societies & Justice; and International Studies

Article 32 of the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) represents a major innovation in international law by recognizing the human rights of persons with disabilities (PWD) to participate in international development on an equal basis with others. Implementation of Article 32 in policy and practice, however, lag far behind, despite widespread adoption of the CRPD. This report evaluates the dissemination of the inclusive development norm across international development organizations and nonprofits by assessing knowledge of Article 32, understanding of its obligations, and integration of inclusive development practices into organizational policy, priorities, and program implementation. We argue that the obligations of Article 32 have not disseminated, thus excluding millions of PWD from development aid and programs. This failure makes the field of international development exclusive and ultimately discriminatory towards PWD. To test our hypothesis, our research team surveyed international development nonprofits in a major West Coast city to identify the baseline of inclusive development knowledge that most agencies operate with. Our findings are gleaned from a case study of 22+ members organizations of a local membership association of international development organizations headquartered in a major city on the West Coast. We compile our report’s data from a variety of sources: (1) review of international development aid agencies’ published policies, (2) review of organizations’ published education materials and grant proposals, (3) a survey circulated to the 200+ member organizations of a local membership association of international development organizations and (4) in-person interviews with CEOs of several of the member organizations.

Torn In Transition: the Decolonization of New Caledonia
Ethan Thomas Walkley, Senior, French, Human Centered Design & Engineering
Mentor: Maya Smith, French and Italian Studies

New Caledonia is a French collectivity in the South Pacific that transitioned from colony to territory in the 1940’s, like many other former French colonial holdings. However, unlike other overseas territories of France, New Caledonia has been on an unofficial transition towards decolonization that began in 1998 with the Nouméa accords, stipulating a vote to take place in twenty years that would decide whether or not the islands would remain French. Despite a slim loss for independence when this long-awaited vote took place last year in November 2018, future referendums to challenge this decision are on the horizon. The objective of this research is thus to understand why the situation in New Caledonia is so different from that of other French territories. In particular, how do contemporary issues in the archipelago and the question of race complicate the decolonization process? To effectively answer this question, this study will analyze academic literature comprising subjects on foundational postcolonial theory, New Caledonian history, and race in the French–controlled South Pacific. Peculiarities of New Caledonia include its relatively late colonization compared to other French territories and the fact that the native society residing on the island continues to hold a strong presence. These factors along with a turbulent past may explain in part why New Caledonia finds itself in a slow process of decolonization. However, rich mineral reserves and the rise of neocolonialism may also complicate this event. Ultimately, this research hopes to bring a better understanding of New Caledonia to a wider public while serving as a foundation for continuing conversations around neocolonialism and efforts to combat it in the French territories and elsewhere.

Impact of Perceived Government Legitimacy on the Use of Taliban Court Systems
Jacoy Lynne Willis, Junior, Political Science
Mary Gates Scholar
Mentor: James Long, Political Science

After the establishment of a new democratic government following the US invasion in 2001, the Taliban has provided a parallel court system across Afghanistan. Rebel forms of justice may appear highly coercive, but prove particularly appealing to civilians if they are quicker, more straightforward, easier to access, or more in line with their preferences than formal state courts. Under what conditions are citizens more likely to support the legal authority of the formal government’s judicial systems compared to rebel groups’ alternative forms of law? In this research, I expand the framework of competitive governance by focusing on the decision of individuals to support various legal institutions based on views of government legitimacy founded in the evaluation of public service provision. I hypothesize that as individuals view the government as more legitimate, they demonstrate support for the formal courts, and as they view the government as illegitimate, they are less likely to support the formal judicial system. I address this question by analyzing two data sources. First, I have identified active Taliban courts by district from 2011-13. Second, I have access to the ANQAR survey data, an extensive nationwide survey addressing perceptions of government legitimacy and rule of law. Preliminary findings suggest a zero-sum dynamic between the institutions - that successful rebel governance may not only increase compliance with the rebels, but may actually decrease civilian compliance with state institutions. The policy impli-
Mapping Cholera Data in Nineteenth-Century Baghdad
Corina Caitlin Geier, Senior, Mathematics
Hannah Jollihois, Senior, Public Health-Global Health, International Studies
Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program
Erika Arias, Senior, International Studies, Law, Societies, & Justice
McNair Scholar, Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Awardee, UW Honors Program
Mentor: Walter Andrews, Near Eastern Languages and Civilization

Mapping is a powerful tool to visualize space and data. However, working with historical data and maps is problematic as spaces change across time. Given this, the scope of this research is to create visual maps using GIS software that accurately represents the Baghdad-Basrah region of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. Our key research question is: how can cholera data from primary sources in the nineteenth century be visualized through mapping? We gathered the data for this research from the diaries of Joseph Svo-boda, a resident of the region who traveled frequently up and down the river system and recorded information about numbers of deaths and quarantines from cholera in the cities he passed. The method we used for mapping the data includes a comprehensive reading of the diaries currently being transcribed to assess which information is important for mapping purposes, including the location and time period of the event in question. We mapped the data using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a software that is used to analyze and represent data through maps, to geocode locations and include cities and other features as they appeared in the nineteenth century. Anticipated results include an interactive choropleth and dot maps that are accurate to the specific time period and show deaths from cholera in specific locations over time. One key implication for further work would be a standardized way to map disease data from primary sources and to increase the number of individuals who use data visualization with historical data. Additionally, our mapped data can be used for other types of GIS analysis that may be of interest to those studying the history of cholera or historic epidemics.

Computational Propaganda in Action: How the Russian-Backed Internet Research Agency Interacted with the Black Lives Matter Community on Twitter
Elizabeth (Betz) Mayer, Senior, International Studies, Russian Language, Literature, & Culture
UW Honors Program
Mentor: Jessica Beyer, Jackson School of International Studies

Following the events of the 2016 United States Presidential election, evidence emerged of a Russian-led effort to influence the American people via social media. Through a Kremlin-backed organization known as the Internet Research Agency (IRA), computational propaganda was conducted against the American people on a variety of social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. As part of the ongoing Mueller Investigation and in the name of political transparency, Twitter released a data archive of Tweets and user information for bot and troll accounts linked to the IRA. Prior research completed by data scientists at the University of Washington has revealed that IRA accounts infiltrated the Black Lives Matter discourse community on Twitter. Building off of this work and using the publicly available Twitter dataset, I have analyzed the messaging tactics used by the IRA over time in relation to the Black Lives Matter discourse community on Twitter. I will randomly sample Tweets relating to Black Lives Matter, police brutality, and other related topics beginning in 2009 and ending in 2018, which is when the dataset ends. I use RStudio, Tableau, and other data analytic systems to identify trends, patterns, and messaging themes used by the IRA while they were infiltrating this online discourse community. As an area studies scholar, I provide a more comprehensive understanding of Russian tactics in addition to the data analysis. By examining the methods used by foreign agents when impersonating Americans on social media, I expand the knowledge base about this online effort and highlight themes or trends that could be used by similar groups in the future.

It Could Be Worse! Political Meme Responding to Brexit and the 2018-2019 US Government Shutdown
Binh Truong, Senior, International Studies
Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program
Mentor: Jessica Beyer, Jackson School of International Studies

Memes have emerged in the last decade as tools for political commentary, and in some cases, a force for political mobilization. The purpose of this research is to add empirical and methodological data to the emerging field of memetic study by comparing and contrasting two case studies: (1) Britain leaving the European Union (i.e., Brexit) and, (2) the recent 2018-2019 US government shutdown. I collected memes from the social media blogging platform Tumblr from Jan-
January to early April 2019. I then analyzed the stance and tone conveyed through the template, text, and visuals of the memes to yield insight into how memes impact internet communities that spread them. More importantly, I examine how the internet environment surrounding memes influence them. I expect the analysis of the data to show that memes have responded similarly in both case studies but their dissemination networks and spreading patterns are different. The implications of this study concern how people use online forums to react to perceived threats towards democratic institutions and the democratic process. The research also provides insight to how we consume and produce objects on the internet and how we might act as citizens as the borders separating the online-offline world erodes.

Bitnation and Jurisdiction as a Service: Motive and Technology Behind Stateless Virtual Citizenship

Jion Yi, Senior, International Studies, Informatics
UW Honors Program, Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Awardee
Mentor: Jessica Beyer, Jackson School of International Studies

Bitnation is a non-governmental organization which uses blockchain smart contract—an algorithm-based digital contract through a decentralized database—to provide Jurisdiction as a Service (JaaS) to its participants, or Citizens. This means that Bitnation Citizens enter contracts such as birth certificates, marriages, wills, company registrations, and passport through Bitnation’s own virtual scope of jurisdiction. Bitnation’s implementation of decentralized self-governance through blockchain and its promise to “outcompete” the nation-state model has attracted over 10,000 Citizens. In this research, I ask why such a big wave of people collectively decides to relegate nation-state citizenship—an institution which has been established and legitimized for centuries—and incline towards a stateless identity system. What could be the roles of the modern citizen perception of their rights and their access to emerging technologies, for example blockchain smart contract, in this deviation? My hypothesis is that one’s choice to opt in for Bitnation’s virtual jurisdiction, despite the standing establishment of the nation-states, is a product of modern identity politics and technological development. The increasing political and social interconnectedness worldwide have intensified importance and manifestation of identities. In addition, new technologies, particularly blockchain and smart contract, ensure anonymity in communications and contracting practices among Citizens worldwide, and attract those whose identities placed them in socio-economic and political disadvantages in their societies. To test this hypothesis, I conduct literature review on topics of the nation-state model, stateless virtual citizenship, and emerging technologies. Further, I conduct ethnography, surveys, and interviews on Bitnation’s online platform to find the correlation between the Citizen identities and interests in Bitnation and how the platform satisfies them. Through his study I hope to shine a light on the changing expectations in the state-citizen relationship as a contract and the role of technology in the evolution of governance model from centralized to decentralized.