

Reflections from Our Graduating Philosophers

Spring, 2020



Photo credit: Holly Kisler

Lanie (Helena) Carvajal

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- Discovering the DogTown garbage plate.
- Going to the MAG.
- Dressing up for formals with my sorority sisters.
- Walks in GVP.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Involved in UR Women's Club Soccer for two years.
- As a member of Phi Sigma Sigma, I have served as the philanthropy chair, and I have served as the health and wellness chair.
- Double majored in Public Health and Philosophy with a minor in Spanish.

- Worked as a research assistant for the Children's Institute for the past 3 years.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I will be pursuing a career in public health.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- According to a text from my mom, I am "super smart, incredibly insightful, organized, talented in the visual arts, focused, healthy, athletic, well-spoken, a "saved a life" lifeguard, friendly, kind, animal rights activist, philanthropist." Thanks, Mom!

Benjamin Emmerich

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- Taking logic and political philosophy freshman year and developing a real love of philosophical inquiry and thinking.
- Getting into and subsequently performing, competing, touring with, and directing the Midnight Ramblers.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Brought the Ramblers to ICCA semifinals as director twice, my second time I won the award for best arrangement.
- Like to ski, bike, and cook.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- After school, I am planning to move back to NYC to begin a career in composing for film and television.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- To my professors: I was more interested than I perhaps let on.

Divyanshu (Divy) Gandhi

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- Being a part of college radio and having my own college radio show.
- Being a part of the student's association of vegan and vegetarian youth (SAVVY).
- Studying philosophy.
- Moving from South Florida to upstate New York and living in cold weather for the first time.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- I earned a BS in Computer Science, a BA in Philosophy, and a minor in Mathematics.
- I graduated a semester early.
- I did research over summer 2019 with Professor Segev BenZvi in the physics department where I developed and optimized machine-learning-based classification tools for physicists and astronomers to classify supernovae, which helps in developing cosmological models.
- I attended the Carnegie Mellon Summer School for Logic and Formal Epistemology 2019.
- I had an internship in a county-level government office to help develop a metric tracking application to help with the management of anti-poverty grants in the community. This was a return offer to an internship I had a few years earlier where I developed a site for a federally based but locally implemented initiative to help outcomes for young men of color.
- I attended *Effective Altruism Global 2018* in San Francisco.
- I did an independent study on semantic externalism.
- I was a head TA for the intro to AI course in the computer science department under Professor George Ferguson.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I took a job offer at a consulting firm in DC that works with the federal government. I'll be working as a software engineering analyst, and I hope to work on human services projects for the public.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- I enjoy technical interdisciplinary work.

Justin Hoak

Please list the highlights of your UR experience.

- Joining alpha delta phi, being able to explore everything Rochester has to offer.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Skiing, Hiking, cycling. I love being a ski instructor as well.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- Looking forward to spending time with my family.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- I just would like to say how truly thankful I am to have parents that have supported me no matter what the situation. I love you dearly Mom and Dad.

Christian Jensen

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- Working in Mr. Hodges' bilingual 5th grade classroom at School No. 33 every Friday.
- Getting to meet Sen. Chuck Schumer and the late Louise Slaughter respectively.
- Having interesting philosophical classroom discussions.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Since my first year in college, I have had an abiding interest in meta-ethics as well as topics such as moral responsibility and children's rights. In 2018, I was admitted into Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society and have submitted multiple philosophy papers to undergraduate research journals during my college career. I've also contributed to various musical groups including the U of R Chamber Singers. And I served as the business manager for Partners in Reading, a U of R club designed to promote literacy and educational involvement for students in the Rochester City School District.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I will be working in elementary classrooms in the Seattle City School District through City Year, a year-long AmeriCorps service program geared at helping disadvantaged children achieve their personal and academic potential. (My service might be virtual depending on how the trajectory of COVID-19)

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- I was a transfer student from Monroe Community College, so I feel incredibly privileged to now be graduating in philosophy at the University of Rochester.

Tang Li

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- The independent study with Professor Tresan in my junior year. I researched the role of gender in Chinese history, especially attitudes that were influential in rationalizing unjust, patriarchal social practices, and those which might provide the basis for a feminist critique of Chinese Feminism. I interviewed Chinese people from different provinces and conducted a survey on discrimination against women.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- I like playing tennis, and I joined the Tennis varsity team in UR. I am working for the Borgen Project now, which is an incredible nonprofit organization that is addressing poverty and hunger and working towards ending them.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I want to gain more legal knowledge related to women's rights and fight for the women who are suffering unfair treatment, so I will go to a law school after graduating from UR.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- In China, baby girls are seen as worthless burdens. In a patriarchal society, people always think women are to be neglected, uneducated, and discarded. Their value has been determined when they were born. As a girl, I have to pay more to be myself, showing deference while silently enduring the neglect of my parents. No matter how hard I try, I am not viewed as being as valuable and important as sons in China. However, I will not let this traditional view hold me back. As I start to discern the problems, mistreatment, and prejudices toward women in China, I believe it is wrong to have an abortion if the test result is a girl, it is wrong for a husband to use violent means to punish his wife for not listening to his orders, and it is wrong that women have to follow an arbitrary code of conduct for what to say, how to act, and what to wear. It is wrong to pretend everything is fine by taking the wrong thing as the right thing! I am committed to doing something for myself and also for the millions of Chinese women.

Maximiliana Rifkin

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- I came to the UR primarily to learn and grow as a scholar and to explore particular questions of interest to me. Because of this, my favorite experiences at the UR more often than not arose through discussions with my professors and peers inside and outside of lecture.

Anthropology classes

Theories and debates with Tom Gibson

Let me start off by saying that Thomas Gibson is scarily erudite, super amiable and kind, and would be an excellent point of contact between the philosophy and anthropology departments. And I encourage you (yes, I'm talking to you, philosophy department) to reach out to him about creating interdisciplinary courses on topics in history and philosophy of science. Theories and Debates was simultaneously fascinating and deeply bewildering in provocative ways, and I took it to learn whether I wanted to be an anthropologist (but quickly realized from my participation in seminar that I was too much a philosopher to be an anthropologist by discipline). Surveying the history of the philosophy of anthropology (and often of social theory more broadly) provided a unique perspective on the science wars from the critical theorist and post-modernist perspectives, which provided me valuable lessons about the intertwined role of culture and practice in the production of knowledge. Learning about the work of philosophers of science such as Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, and Donna Haraway has profoundly shaped my orientation towards what it is to do both philosophy and science. It was from Latour and Stengers' that I learned about the concept of 'assemblages', the combinations of scientific schemas and scripts that, through enaction in the practices of scientists, come to constitute science. Stenger's concept of 'cosmopolitics' – a construct describing how our concepts of 'cosmos', as they change, come in turn to change our sense of our political practices and the practices themselves, which in turn further alter our conception of cosmos in an endless cycle – helped me to begin thinking about reflective equilibrium on an interdisciplinary level. And it was from Donna Haraway that I learned about the pernicious ways in which the culture of modernity informs and incentivizes the production of knowledge in the sciences (see Merchants of Doubt by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway for examples of how anarcho-capitalism can be harmful, though I doubt you'll have much trouble thinking of your own). Perhaps the most provocative aspect of this course was its impetus to get me to think carefully about what concepts are by exposing me to different ontological orientations such as animism and naturalism (i.e., where ontology is understood in the sense of one's set of assemblages). This led me to ask whether concepts are, as a class, best thought of as cognitively constructed tools, perceptually derived representations, or a combination of both – a question I am still eagerly exploring. Overall, the course made me think hard about what it means to participate in the global cultural milieu as a philosopher and as a scientist – and it gave me the tools to begin thinking concretely about what a more pluralistically informed perspective of global justice might mean.

Brain & Cognitive Science and Psychology classes:

Neural foundations of behavior with Dr. Kevin Davis, Perception and action with Dr. Dujie Tadin, and the Psychology of Subjective Well-being with Dr. Bonnie Le

Kevin, Duje, and Bonnie are all supremely virtuous people and would be excellent points of contact for interdisciplinary collaboration between the philosophy and brain and behavioral science departments (wink, wink, nudge, nudge). Learning about the properties of the human nervous system and what they give rise to at different levels of scale was fascinating, and served to provide a concrete template for me to think through more abstract conceptions of mind and moral psychology in philosophy (on top of inspiring a passion for mereology that led me to metaphysics and philosophy of mind). For example, learning about the neurological and psychological underpinnings of moral reasoning and self-control has helped to inform my thinking on the topics of free will and moral responsibility, and I am now eager and better equipped to explore the neurological, psychological, and philosophical foundations of civic friendship, a topic of personal significance given my intrinsic and instrumental interests in social justice. And learning about the neurological underpinnings of perception helped inform my research on scientific attempts to address the hard problem of consciousness. Indeed, I relied on it heavily while writing the paper I used as my writing sample for graduate school, in which I argued pro Uriah Kriegel that there is a plausible empirical basis for his conceptual claim that access-conscious states depend on phenomenal-consciousness to become conscious (and so that studying access-consciousness scientifically implies studying phenomenal-consciousness scientifically). I am eager to continue working at the intersection of these scientific disciplines as a philosopher of science.

Philosophy classes:

Philosophy of mind, language, and artificial intelligence with Jens Kipper

Jens is one of the most articulate people I have ever had the pleasure of learning from. His ability to distill complex material into digestible chunks is a really impressive skill, and that made class discussions more inclusive and depthful – a hallmark of a great professor. Learning about the hard problem and the problem of intentional inexistence in philosophy of mind were deeply satisfying and inspiring experiences that served to instill a lasting interest in the cognitive qualia debate, the thick or thin perception debate, and the metaphysics and epistemology of thought experiments (I am excitedly waiting for some free time to read Tamar Gendler's work on the latter). And I was able to learn more about thought experiments in particular through work on the causal and definitional aspects of meaning in the philosophy of language, where I explored the metaphysics of modality in the context of theories of meaning pioneered by Gottlieb Frege, Saul Kripke, and David Chalmers. Chalmers' two dimensional semantics proved especially fascinating and I am eager to continue exploring the intersection between psycholinguistic accounts of language production (where concept activation has been experimentally shown to precede phonological and orthographic construal) and his conception of primary intensions as being pre-linguistic. I also hope to continue learning about the metaphysics of modality in graduate school. Besides mind and language, I also learned about the ethics of technology – in particular, the ethics of work relative to the rise of cognitive automation. As Nick Srnicek writes in *A World Without Work*, by 2015 47 to 80 percent of jobs were capable of being automated – but while some lament the automation of cognitive labor as a disaster for the work force, Srnicek sees it as a panacea for inequality. Srnicek argues that full automation, coupled with several other steps – including a universal basic income and reconceptualization of the *value* of work and place of leisure in our lives – can help usher in what Rutger Bregman affectionately calls a 'realist utopia' by inspiring new imaginings of the good

life and instantiating a structurally more egalitarian society. These arguments continue to inspire me to think carefully about what it would mean to live in a post-class society, a profoundly exciting prospect for me.

Global Justice with Rosa Terlazzo

Working with Rosa in this course was a delight. She is such a down to earth and friendly person while being extraordinarily brilliant and erudite, and she helped me develop my philosophical skills as well as my philosophical confidence by treating me like a fellow philosopher. Learning about the problems of globalization and the ethical and metaethical debates about how to address them was a fascinating and empowering experience, primarily because it gave me an introduction to a debate about ethical constructs such as obligation, fairness, and rights that is sensitive to cultural pluralism and the emergent phenomena of our globally interconnected world. These insights will prove invaluable in exploring tough questions about the ethics of belief in my graduate coursework, and were personally very valuable to me because of my humanistic (in the sense of valuing sentient and rational agents as a class, not just humans) values, and high regard for tolerance of difference and international cooperation to support social justice. Because of these special interests, I found Martha Nussbaum's work on capabilities and Amartya Sen's work on using them as measures for standard of living especially insightful and inspiring – and I enjoyed arguing for a conception of human rights as grounded in our capability to do, rather than what we do in practice, as a way to satisfy tolerance of difference while maintaining a broader set of rights. I hope to stay in touch with Rosa to continue our conversations on global human rights, partiality in ethics, structural injustice, and the metaphysics of gender.

Metaphysics with Paul Audi

It is pretty amusing to me that I discovered just how passionate I am about philosophy of science while taking a course on metaphysics. Don't get me wrong – I think metaphysics is fascinating, and that the rigorous interrogation of our common sense concepts is important (Laurie Paul's paper *metaphysics as modeling* made that clear enough). That said, I had the privilege of meeting with Matt Maxwell (a philosopher of science grad student and a friend of mine) to read and discuss debates about the relation between metaphysics and science while taking the course, and while I'm not convinced of any answer yet, it is pretty tempting to ask – as Paul Humphreys does in his paper *Scientific and Speculative Ontology* – just “*who granted the doctorate of intuition on the metaphysicians mental wall?*” (Humphreys, 2013, emphasis added). Humphreys argues that much of analytic metaphysics is employing speculative methods that are inappropriate to its goals given the need to constrain our hypothesis space with data, the fact that intuitions are not domain invariant, and that the world is not scale invariant. Nevertheless, he says that philosophers are still necessary given the need for philosophical argument to deal with problems of underdetermination of theories in science, and concludes that scientific ontology – rather than speculative – is the best way to go about solving that problem because science accommodately gives us data to constrain our theorizing, helps us develop domain sensitive intuitions, and is sensitive to scale in virtue of being domain sensitive in the first place. So in taking a class on metaphysics, I taught myself some

metametaphysics to better understand and grapple with what I was learning in the course proper. An enduring question for me is whether, if Humphreys is right, analytic metaphysics as we know it will soon die out, to be replaced with aspiring philosophers of science such as myself. That's because I'm not sure that what he calls a shift towards "scientific ontology" could mean anything but that. This debate about whether metaphysics is continuous or discontinuous with science (and what that means in either case) is one that also reflects my interests in general philosophy of science, because I am curious about whether variants of scientific realism are really carving nature at the joints or also count as the kind of speculative ontology Humphreys rails against. Needless to say, none of this would have been possible without the excellent introduction to first order metaphysics that Paul Audi provided. The man is hilarious *and* articulate, besides being one of the nicest, most easygoing people I've ever met. I particularly enjoyed our discussion of objects and properties (substance-attribute trope theory is best theory), spacetime (supersubstantivalism, just, *wow*), causation (singularism please), and free will (*that consequence argument though*). And showing the fruitfulness of my labor in and out of the classroom, I actually ended up writing my final paper arguing, pro Dennis Lehmkuhl, for the usefulness of scientific ontology for settling debates in both metaphysics and physics about the right interpretation of field theory (i.e., relationism, substantivalism, or supersubstantivalism).

Seminar for Majors on Moral Psychology with Randall Curren

Wow, where to begin. This whole course has been amazing, and no one part of it has captured my imagination much more than any other – not surprising, given that my first stint with moral psychology was an independent study. I guess my favorite parts were on the concept of meaning in life, the possibility of genuine moral motivation (I feel a vehement dislike for psychological egoism and give special thanks to Bill FitzPatrick for giving me resources on it), the causal dimensions of moral motivation given that, the definitional debate about what moral judgments *are*, different definitions of free will, and the is-ought divide. Not surprisingly given my research foci, I am writing my term paper critiquing a scientific theory of free will that argues it evolved with culture and should be understood as including the capability for self-reflection and self-regulation and that, rather than being freedom *guaranteeing*, our free will is freedom *enhancing*. We have degrees of freedom, then, in the sense that through reflection upon and regulation of our prospective action we can become freer than we would be if we habitually reacted to what happens rather than planning strategies to generate particular outcomes before circumstances determine us – something borne out in the psychological literature on self-control. Culture, I say in my paper, may have helped us evolve the capability for free will, but it doesn't always help us exercise it, so it's important to understand just what type of culture does. Now about my instructor for this course. Randall Curren is another one of the nicest and most easygoing people I have ever had the pleasure of working with (and is scarily erudite in ways akin to Tom Gibson), and I feel as though I have learned a tremendous amount in his seminar about ethics and metaethics – and I have fallen in love with virtue ethics in particular, about which he has a darling paper inspired by self-determination theory. Between the personal anecdotes he uses to punctuate his philosophical points, and the philosophical points themselves, his pedagogy is incisive – one of his favorite words – and fun. And his seminar has been an excellent case study for me in doing philosophy of science – I have been taking a course on the psychology of subjective well-being concurrent to the seminar, which has provided me many more opportunities to ask those hard questions about the plausibility of certain philosophical

accounts given scientific data. In the future, I hope to continue exploring moral realism in relation to virtue ethics.

And this survey would be incomplete without mentioning Drs. Alison Peterman, Zeynep Soyzal, Bill FitzPatrick, and Tyron Goldschmidt. Taking theory of perception with Alison was a trip, not least of which because it was the *second philosophy course I had ever taken*, and she has helped to challenge me to grow as a philosopher and supported me in my philosophical pursuits tirelessly ever since. That course served as an introduction to the philosophy of cognitive science, which I took concurrent to the core brain and cognitive science coursework, and in hindsight probably set the stage for me to pursue philosophy of science – something for which I am profoundly grateful to both Alison and, soon to be I believe, Dr. Richard Lange. Dr. Soyzal is so friendly and thoughtful (she has always been prompt to answer my questions in informative ways, whether about course topics or graduate school, and has encouraged me in my studies from the moment we met!) on top of being *brilliant* and erudite, and I am excited that we will be staying in touch to discuss philosophy of math. Dr. FitzPatrick is another person that I am glad to have had the privilege of meeting (another of the most amiable and erudite people I've ever met), and I hope to stay in touch with him to discuss his work on psychological egoism and debunking evolutionary debunking arguments about moral realism. Dr. Goldschmidt has been, in addition to one of the most hilarious professors I have ever had, one of the most ardent of my supporters (which is also true of Paul Audi). He helped me apply to graduate school and has written countless letters on my behalf (which is also true of Paul Audi and Alison Peterman, and I am enormously grateful to all three of them). I'm not too interested in Ty's active research area, philosophy of religion, but we recently discussed free will and, as it turns out, he's very interested in that topic too – so I hope we can stay in touch to discuss it.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- My philosophical interests lie at the intersection of philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and social and political philosophy. In the philosophy of mind, I am particularly interested in comparative approaches to the mind/body problem, mental causation and representation in general, and as applied to the self, free will, and moral motivation and responsibility in particular. In general philosophy of science, I am interested in what science is, how it works, and how it changes for better or worse in both an ideal and practicable sense. I am fascinated by the intersections between the natural and social sciences, especially in terms of how to bridge their different levels of explanation, and the ways in which both can be subtly value laden by the cultural context in which they are practiced. In philosophy of the special sciences, I am interested in the definitional, causal, and ethical dimensions of the special sciences and of mind as informed by them. In social and political philosophy, I am interested in the foundations of human rights, especially in light of cultural pluralism, and in global distributive and restorative justice in light of human rights discourses and the history of cultural and economic imperialism. And my theoretical interests in each of these subfields translates into applied interests at their intersection, as insights about free will and the self, moral motivation and responsibility, the ways in which science can and cannot bear objective answers about them, and the nature of and imperative for distributive and restorative justice can be combined to inform initiatives to advance social justice.

- My academic achievements are as follows: During my tenure at the University of Rochester, I have pursued a rigorous curriculum in philosophy and cognitive science for which I will receive the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Philosophy with a minor in Cognitive Science. My studies have focused primarily on theoretical and empirical questions in the philosophy of mind, although I have developed a profound curiosity for and explored similar questions within the philosophy of science and social and political philosophy. Unsatisfied with theoretical and empirical answers to questions about what our minds consist of, I strive to develop competence in exploring questions about the implications of how we derive such answers and what our mental nature implies about how we should live. For example, is it a sufficient explanation of mind to show how the brain generates our perception of the world, or must we say something more about the way it is for us to experience that world as such? And is it a sufficient explanation of value to show how our bodily flourishing depends on the way we satisfy our physical and psychological needs, or must we say something about the more than human world in which we live?

Pursuant to exploring these and other questions, I have completed the whole major in philosophy during my two years at the University in addition to a minor in cognitive science. Additionally, I applied for and was accepted to two summer institutes in philosophy in 2019, the Feminist Summer Reading School at Cornell, and the PIKSI Diversity Institute in Philosophy at the Rock Ethics Institute at Penn State, of which I could unfortunately only attend the latter due to time conflicts. And between February and April of 2020, I was nominated and selected as a recipient of the Rochester Area Colleges Continuing Education Award and elected to the Iota Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Rochester.

And during my tenure at Monroe Community College, I pursued a rigorous curriculum in psychology and anthropology for which I received the degrees of Psychology with Distinction and Advanced Studies with Distinction, the latter awarded for completing coursework beyond the level of a two year college in participation with the honors institute. Additionally, I received the exemplary student award for service to faculty and the college, the academic achievement award for graduating in the top 1% of my class year, and the writing intensive designation for completing a set amount of courses designated writing intensive. My studies focused primarily on theoretical and empirical questions in psychology and anthropology concerning the nature of human agency and its role in the development of culture (i.e., the study of cognitive anthropology), which culminated in an independent study on embodied cognition. In that independent study I wrote a research paper that elaborated the cognitive and evolutionary psychological foundations of **intentionality** (i.e., mental representation), **empathy** (i.e., the capacity for shared intentionality, affect, and behavior), **cooperation** (i.e., the combination and use of shared intentionality, affect, and behavior to construe and pursue shared goals), **language** (i.e., the capacity for and use of mentally transcribed symbols corresponding to concepts to cultivate shared intentionality, affect, and goals, and cooperatively plan and execute goal congruent behaviors), and **culture** (i.e., the aggregation of shared affect-infused intentionality to subserve social structure and cultivate collective goals and goal congruent behaviors to maintain and promote it pursuant to enhancing group flourishing). In my paper, I sketched the ways in which these evolved capabilities can go awry of their avowed purpose given competing drives (i.e., narcissism versus altruism), tribalism (i.e., an us vs. them mentality), and classical and operant conditioning (i.e., when we find justifiable difference disgusting), and argued for

strategies to address what I referred to as cognitive errors in the appraisal of pursuits, persons, and objects as apparently versus actually threatening to ameliorate intergroup conflict (e.g., illegitimate versus legitimate perception of difference as threat). These strategies included instruction in metacognitive practices to appropriately monitor perceptions and control actions, instruction in empirically informed epistemology to derive metacognitive knowledge (e.g., of cognitive biases) to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate perceptions, and the administration of psilocybin in clinical settings to increase the incidence of affective empathy to deemphasize narcissism and tribalism. I presented this paper at the SUNY Undergraduate Research Conference and Scholars Day, each held at the college in Tedx style format.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- My plans for next year are to start philosophy grad school at Georgia State University to pursue coursework in philosophy of science, public service – ideally teaching minority youth, writing and publishing (i.e., philosophy, poetry, humor), continuing to hone my singing, and getting much needed surgery. My plans for the future are to help save the world. I'm only slightly kidding, given how dire present circumstances are. More seriously, I am planning to pursue a career in philosophy and will be applying to doctoral programs in philosophy of science after my masters. I hope to help promote scientific literacy among the lay public, besides advancing my own theoretical interests.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- That what I want most, besides burritos (constantly, it's a great problem to have) is to playfully explore the world and challenge myself to grow with other lovely people for all the days of my life.

(Carrie) Daniela Shapiro

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- Studying Philosophy for sure.
- Doing Improv- I love my improv group, that has been the best part of college probably.

- But also meeting my friends. Being challenged by my professors. Being able to take classes from multiple departments and fields. I've just loved college in its entirety honestly. I love learning and playing and socializing and creating and exploring, and I have gotten to do all of that in so many different ways every day for the past 4 years.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- As I said, I was in *In Between The Lines*, Rochester's premier improvisational comedy troupe. I was social chair of philosophy council (we did not party very much haha). I was on the Pan African dance team - MaFrisah. I won intramural soccer championship my freshman year!-

*greatest accomplishment of college for sure haha. I have performed in two of the Todd Theatre shows on campus, and won a performance award my freshman year which felt great. I was in vegan club, graphic design club, partners in reading, and intramural volleyball for a semester or two each. I am also a member of Phi Sigma Sigma and was photography chair, as well as sustainability chair.

- I studied abroad in Amsterdam which was where I took my first studio art course in college. That was the catalyst for making me actually take pursuing art as a career seriously because before that, it was just a hobby.

- I received the Continuing Students Scholarship last year and this year I made Phi Beta Kappa.

- I have a graphic novel about the holocaust called *The Stories of Survivors* which is published, and the school wrote an article about me, as well as the LA Times. I did a book talk at the Holocaust Museum of LA last summer, and received a call from Mike Bloomberg sharing his appreciation for my book (that was sick).

- But when I think about “achievements” in college I think about just how much more I know- about myself, about systems, and ways of thinking, about people who are different from me, and about relationships (relationships with peers, with professors, with my family, etc.). I now know how uncertain I am about everything lol. Honestly, I truly couldn’t have asked for a better experience.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I am planning to stay in Rochester for a year while two of my best friends finish up their masters degrees. I am a freelance illustrator and artist so I hope to continue that and get more gigs and legitimize myself more. I also plan to make more graphic novels.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- How grateful I am. I don’t think I’ve taken this experience for granted a single day and I am proud of that and devastated I cannot savor it till the very end due to the pandemic. But luckily I have had the most amazing time here and I’m lucky to have had even just that.

Rebecca (Bex) Staneslow

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- One of the biggest highlights of my experience at UR has been Ethics Bowl. It has been an opportunity to get to know faculty better, create friendships with other students, and actively put my love of philosophy to use.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Within UR, I fostered my love of theater, philosophy, and tutoring. I was Artistic Director of The Opposite of People theater troupe for a year and a half, and acted in several shows. I participated in Ethics Bowl competitions, making it to Nationals two years in a row- this year our team placed 12th! I became a Writing Fellow my junior year, which was a wonderful opportunity to enhance my skills as a tutor. This year I completed an honors thesis, which taught me a great deal about myself and the field of philosophy.

- Outside UR, I spent summers teaching English abroad, first in Madagascar, then Czechia, then Nepal. I earned a TEFL certificate, and I've been volunteering at a local library in Rochester to continue teaching English language classes.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I plan to spend a year working before joining the Peace Corps.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- I would like them to know how grateful I am for the opportunities I've been given and the many people who have helped me along the way. I don't take them for granted. I know I wouldn't be here without the encouragement, critique, and support I've been given.

Alicia Thome

Please list the highlights of your UR experience.

- Philosophy of Education was probably my favorite class that I ever took, for both my psych and my philosophy degrees.

- Participating on the Eboards of Partners in Reading (secretary & fundraising chair), Students for Chronic Illness Visibility (secretary & VP), and Kappa Alpha Theta (Chief Learning Officer)

- Playing with No Jackets Required.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Partners in Reading, SCIV, Kappa Alpha Theta

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I will be attending the Warner School of Education and pursuing a Master's degree in School Counseling!

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- I really don't know! I hope to make the world a better place with the education I have gained and continue to pursue.

Joshua Wolkoff

Please list the highlights of your UR experience:

- Meeting incredible people who helped shape how I look at the world, wandering around the stacks just looking at all of the kinds of things I could learn about, enjoying the good weather that finally shows itself a week before the end of the semester with everyone.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- I have been the president of the Undergraduate Philosophy Council this year, an RA in Southside during my sophomore year, and took the fall semester of my junior year to backpack throughout the countries of Georgia, Nepal and India for five months (one of the best experiences of my life), and am also double majoring in computer science.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I am planning (assuming the entire world doesn't fall apart before) to move to NYC in October to work as an engineering resident at Google. For the months between graduation and my start date I was planning to travel abroad but given the current situation, I am not sure what I will be doing until then.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

I don't know what to do with my life and I was hoping a philosophy major would help with that but I'm only leaving with more questions.

Madison Zaelit

Please list the highlights of your UR experience.

- Humanities for Life Grant 2019: I worked for the Fringe Festival for the summer of 2019 and it was incredible. I worked on press releases, editing guidebooks, setting up shows, and hanging out with the performers all in one job. I was invited to work for them full time after graduation!

- I played with Rock Repertory Ensemble which is an audition-based ensemble that plays classic rock. The music department invited me to play at Kilbourn Hall twice: once for a Led Zeppelin show and the other time for an MTV show. It was incredible to play bass for that big of an audience in such a nice theater.

Please list your special interests and activities or achievements:

- Psychology and Philosophy majors: I've combined these majors to examine education policy and the justice system. My psychological studies were focused on substance use and trauma.
- President of Drama House (a special interest house on the frat quad) for two years.
- President of No Jackets Required (a music performance group) for one year; Publicity Chair for one year as well. I raised the most money that we have ever raised by directing the "Let's Talk about Sex" show
- I received the Humanities for Life Grant 2019 working for both the Fringe Festival and the Institute for the Performing Arts. I helped run the Fringe Festival during classes (Prof FitzPatrick remembers) and went on to work for them after finishing the internship.
- Honors Thesis: I am very happy to have done an honors thesis in the field of education philosophy. It was amazing to work with Professor Curren who knows so much about the field. I did my thesis on patriotism in schools. This was going to be the topic of my high school thesis but I was told it wasn't allowed so I am happy to have finally done it.
- I worked as a Supervisor for ECM for 4 years unlocking all the classrooms on campus and helping professors learn how to use classroom technology. I also serviced all of the printers on campus, including being on call on weekends to fix paper jams. I got a Student Employee of the Year nomination twice.
- WISH Intern (Women's Initiative Supporting Health-Transitions Clinic): I started my internship with WISH my sophomore year. I started with learning data entry and analysis and worked my way up to being able to do study visits and helping with grant applications. I'm also co-writing a paper on sheriff opinions of healthcare in jails which will lead to a project to assess where barriers to healthcare are in jails/prisons across the United States. I will help present these findings in June at the conference with the College on Problems of Drug Dependence.

Tell us about your plans for next year and the future:

- I will be taking a gap year working at Strong Hospital in the psychiatry center as a research assistant for the WISH program, which helps justice-involved adults with healthcare and re-entry. Then I will be going on to get a PhD in psychology to work in trauma and substance use treatment (when classes will hopefully not be online anymore). If the Fringe Festival is able to happen this year in September, I will be working for them all summer as well.

What would you most like for people to know about you?

- I'm a first-generation college student.