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# 2019 CLASS OF 1960 RECIPIENTS

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**SEPTEMBER 3, 2019**  
**BRANFORD COLLEGE**

**BRANFORD COLLEGE RECIPIENTS**

**STUDENT**

**CLASS YR**

Drew Gupta.....20'

Vanessa Gutierrez-Maya.....20'

Christina Pao.....20'

Benjamin Waldman.....20'

James Wedgewood.....20'

## Drew Gupta

### **Bio:**

Dhruva (Drew) Gupta is a Neuroscience major from Charleston, West Virginia who aspires to become an academic physician. With a particular interest in neurodegenerative disorders, Drew has studied Alzheimer's disease at Yale, Harvard, and MIT. Aside from research, he serves as Editor-in-Chief for the Yale Journal of Medicine and Law, Co-Founder of the Yale Journal of Human Rights, and is a social scientist of the Yale Human Subject Research Protection Committee. Drew also runs Dose of Justice, a non-profit he started in 2017, dedicated to fighting stigma in the opioid epidemic. In the future, Drew endeavor to explore innovative therapies for prominent neurological diseases.

### **Summary:**

With the generous support of the Class of 1960 Fellowship, Drew conducted basic science research under the guidance of Dr. Rudolph Tanzi at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School. Collaborating with the MIT Center for Biological Engineering, Drew had the goal of bioengineering a 3D model of the blood brain barrier (BBB). Once completed, this model will not only reveal new insights into Alzheimer's disease (AD), but also provide scientists a novel paradigm to study schizophrenia, epilepsy, and other related disorders.

In 2014, the Tanzi lab developed a mini brain organoid to simulate AD pathogenesis. Aptly known as "Alzheimer's-in-a-[Petri]Dish", this 3D neural culture was the most accurate representation of the human brain experiencing the hostile conditions of dementia. However, this model still falls short in recreating *in vivo* conditions as it lacks the BBB. Breakdown of the BBB is associated with AD as harmful toxins in the blood can penetrate the barrier and induce neuronal death. Additionally, therapeutic drugs fail to permeate the BBB and reverse the damage caused by AD. Therefore, the PI assigned Drew an independent project to design and add a BBB to a 3D culture to ultimately result in a 3D-BBB model.

His role involved maintaining a pre-existing line of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs). Once grown, the iPSC culture was then exposed to differentiation factors to generate astrocytes, pericytes and endothelial cells. These cells were co-cultivated in a specialized insert and interacted with one another to form the BBB. Inserts were then placed in the 3D neural culture to finally create the 3D-BBB platform. Once completed, he proceeded with the next step of the project: angiogenesis. The production of new blood vessels, also known as angiogenesis, is shown to trigger BBB dysfunction and consequently lead to AD. Future studies based on his work will continue exploring this relationship between AD and BBB dysfunction. Drew is immensely grateful for the opportunity and sincerely thanks the Class of 1960 Fellowship for this incredible experience.

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## Vanessa Gutierrez-Maya

### **Bio:**

Vanessa Gutierrez-Maya is a senior in Branford College in the Global Affairs major and the Global Health Studies Program. She is passionate about advocating for the rights of migrants and refugees, and is particularly interested in issues concerning access to legal services and migrant and refugee mental health. Through her summer experiences, she is fortunate to have worked with incredible nonprofit organizations in Los Angeles and Mexico City that provide services to refugees and migrants. At Yale, she works as a Student Coordinator for the Dwight Hall Urban Fellows Program and co-manages a group of 36 students engaged in internships with community organizations all around New Haven. As an Urban Fellow herself, she interns with the Legal Department at Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS). In her free time, she loves to go for runs and spend quality time with family and friends. Vanessa plans to pursue a career in human rights or immigration law that will allow her to use legal tools to fight for migrants' and refugees' access to legal, health and educational resources.

### **Summary:**

This summer, I had the chance to continue developing my experience in two fields I am deeply passionate about: international migration and mental health. The interrelatedness of these two subjects is an overlap I had noticed in a previous summer internship experience, and through preparations I undertook over the last year, I was able to apply to an internship focusing on these two subjects in Mexico, a country that is no stranger to the ongoing migration crisis in the Americas. I undertook a 10-week, non-paid internship with Sin Fronteras, a nonprofit organization that advocates and defends the rights of migrants and refugees in Mexico. By working with the Psychosocial Services team at Sin Fronteras, I was able to examine migration and mental health through a different, non-U.S. perspective and learn so much about the complexities of migration in Mexico. To this end, I worked on tasks and projects that allowed me to learn about migrant mental health, resources to support migrant mental and physical health, and migration in a Mexico-specific context.

My primary goals for this experience were to 1) learn more about the overlap between migration and mental health both in general and in this particular context, 2) become familiar with mental health interventions and resources available to migrants and refugees in this specific context, and 3) learn more about the differences and similarities between the context of migration in Mexico and the context of migration in the United States. During my time with Sin Fronteras, I believe I was able to meet all of my goals through the variety of tasks and projects I was assigned. One of my primary recurring tasks was to sit-in on individual client appointments and write notes that I would later use to produce a synthesized preliminary psychological evaluation report. This report would specifically include observations regarding the client's emotional, cognitive, and physical states and possible mental health flags that my supervisor should be aware of. Another of my primary tasks was assisting my supervisor as she led an art therapy group for Sin Fronteras volunteers. In this role, I met with her before group sessions to go over the material and objectives for that session, developed the post-activity group discussion questions, and helped prepare supplies. In addition, one of my other projects consisted of revising and updating workshops on contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted infections for Sin Fronteras beneficiaries. I later helped facilitate workshops on mental health and sexually transmitted infections at a migrant shelter

in Mexico City. In another project I worked on, I collaborated with my supervisors to develop a proposal for a mural-making art therapy group. For this proposal, I specifically worked on the justification and literature review. Aside from these main projects and tasks, my other assignments included creating a directory for accessible free and low-cost mental health services in Mexico City, assembling presentations on migration and mental health for my supervisors, researching the ever-evolving context of migration and migrant and refugee women in Mexico, translating documents, and analyzing and compiling statistics from data on the mental health of migrants detained in Mexican migrant detention centers.

Overall, I definitely learned more about migrant mental health in this particular context from almost all of these assignments, as well as direct conversations with my supervisors and my own observations during appointments with migrants and refugees who visited Sin Fronteras. My familiarity with mental health interventions and resources available to migrants and refugees in Mexico City also increased. I deeply appreciated learning about art therapy as an intervention to support migrant mental health, especially because mental health is still not discussed very widely in most of this community and art therapy serves as an alternative that can be more accessible and comfortable. Through the process of writing the literature review for the mural-making art therapy group proposal, I also had the chance to learn more about the function of murals in communities and how this art has positively benefited the mental health of marginalized communities in the past. I also appreciated gaining a new perspective on dedicating a space entirely to sustaining the emotional well-being of volunteers in this field of work. From my own growing experience, I know it is a tough field to work in every day and I am glad I had the chance to learn more about how volunteer work can be made sustainable. And while I thought I was mostly going to notice similarities and differences between the different migration contexts of the United States and Mexico, I unexpectedly ended up also learning a lot about how these contexts interact and are influenced by each other.

There were two challenges in particular that I think highlight important ways in which I grew professionally and personally during this internship. First, I did have to become comfortable with flexibility in my assignments that I had not expected before starting this experience. Although my supervisors had outlined the primary tasks I would be focusing on prior to the start of the summer, there were modifications and delays to these assignments that required flexibility on my end. I believe that learning how to adapt to this flexibility so that my work best served Sin Fronteras' needs was really important, as it is a skill that is necessary in this ever-changing field and in nonprofit work. Second, living and working in a new foreign country was a little more challenging than I had expected. Living on my own for the first time definitely allowed me to engage in personal growth as I learned how to better manage my time and how to take better care of myself.

Along with these challenges, there were also many observations that I will treasure about this experience. First and foremost, I genuinely appreciate how warmly I was received by Sin Fronteras and many other folks I met in Mexico. Prior to arriving, I had been nervous; that quickly went away after I was welcomed by the Sin Fronteras staff and told to be completely honest about any questions or hesitations I had during my internship. It was evident from the start that the staff is truly passionate about their work and the people they help. Secondly, it was very interesting in itself to hear about how issues concerning migration are talked about in Mexico, and how this compares to how they are discussed in the U.S. Third, I was completely inspired by how well the Sin Fronteras team worked together to serve their clients' different needs as best as they could. As I became familiar with the interdisciplinary model that they use to attend all migrants and refugees who seek their services, I was impressed by how well it worked because it

allowed different areas, such as psychology and legal services, to have a better understanding of what clients needed and how these different needs impacted their own area's support.

Overall, I believe this internship allowed me to grow and expand my experience in working with migrant and refugee populations by introducing me to an entirely new context. Through this new perspective, I saw familiar challenges but also new ones that are particular to Mexico. I learned about the benefits of working with integrated teams to meet clients' multiple needs, and I believe this will be useful as I go on to pursue a career in legal advocacy for migrants and refugees. This experience has given me a broader and more informed perspective that I hope will be useful in helping me understand clients and help them access health, education, and legal resources. I am thankful to the Class of 1960 committee that sponsored my internship for giving me this opportunity to gain direct experience in a field I want to pursue a professional career in. With this experience in hand, I plan to continue working towards a career in law that will allow me to continue providing assistance and continue advocating for migrants and refugees.

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## Christina Pao

### **Bio:**

Christina Pao, hailing from Portland, OR, is a senior pursuing an Intensive BA in Classics (Ancient Greek and Latin) and a BA/MA in Political Science. She primarily focuses on issues at the intersection of migration and gender, having worked with organizations like Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and the Sex Workers and Allies Network (SWAN). After graduation, she hopes to use her funding from the Truman Scholarship to pursue a PhD in Demography and Social Policy.

### **Summary:**

Thanks to the generosity of the Class of 1960 Traveling Fellowship, I was able to intern with the United Nations in its regional headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand. I worked for almost 11 weeks in the Social Development Division, which specializes in population, aging, migration, gender, disability, social protection, and sustainable economic development. Because of the upcoming High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting in November, the Beijing +25 Ministerial Conference, (<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>), I was primarily working on issues pertaining to gender and social protection.

I spent most of my time on three tasks: 1) writing, editing, and finalizing a report on Women's Transformative Leadership (a flagship report that has been in the making for the past 3 years), 2) authoring two policy briefs on women's political leadership and women's media participation, and 3) doing political mapping and research for a background paper for the upcoming Beijing +25 Ministerial Conference. As my research pertains primarily to gender's intersection with displacement and refugee issues, my supervisors had allowed me to attend networking events and do separate research specifically on demography, which was beneficial to my personal research and graduate school dissertation proposals.

This summer provided me a really unique opportunity to better understand the UN, government action in Asia and the Pacific, and issues specific to population and gender in the region. On the first point, I was particularly hesitant doing work in the regional headquarters as I had initially planned on working at a smaller country office in Australia for the UNHCR. I was concerned that I would not be able to work specifically with the communities I wanted to, or that my work would be stuck behind greater levels of bureaucracy given the size of the office. However, these fears were not actualized: though my primary work was with the gender section, I was able to conduct research still on migration in the Pacific and was able to create connections with migration specialists in the UN, which I had initially hoped to do this summer. Additionally, I was able to work on more tangible projects that would be presented to the region's high-level officials in November which gave me fast-paced and substantive work. I was grateful to be able both utilize skills I had learned in the classroom and learn about new research being produced in the region. I have a better cultural understanding of the difficulties in each sub-region and the ways that development and aid manifests itself differently in each place.

I want to thank the committee and funders for all of their support and belief in my project. This summer has truly been a dream come true and has been an extremely educational and exciting experience. I have

learned more about my field, have been able to contribute to international governmental programming, and have learned more about myself and potential career options. My internship at the UN has been able to open new doors for me in the future, and I am tremendously grateful to have had this opportunity – which would not at all have been possible without this funding. Thank you for making this all possible!

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## Benjamin Waldman

### **Bio:**

Benjamin Waldman is from Bloomfield, Connecticut and is a double-major in Political Science and Mathematics. His research concerns the historical development of American institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and he has been supported by the Dahl Research Scholars Fellowship, the Center for the Study of American Politics, and the Institution for Social and Policy Studies. Outside the classroom, his activities include organizing international relations conferences, researching for a student-run think tank that deals with issues of equal justice, and tutoring peers in mathematics. Benjamin hopes to pursue a Ph.D. at the intersection of political science and history, leading ultimately to a career in academia.

### **Summary:**

As a Political Science major, my core interests lie in the historical development of American government. But while I have conducted extensive archival research on the ideas and theories undergirding the modern state, I have had less experience exploring their public-policy implications, their offshoots in the realm of political practice. That deficit motivated my plans for the summer between my junior and senior years. With support from the Class of 1960 Fellowship, I gained the opportunity to immerse myself in public-policy work that traces historical development to the contemporary patterns of political conflict.

I worked with Jacob Hacker, a Yale professor of Political Science, as well as Paul Pierson, a professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, to conduct research on the electoral strategies of the Republican Party in an era of inequality. Their project is an upcoming book due for publication this fall. Alongside a cohort of two graduate students, my tasks included assembling literature reviews, synthesizing other scholars' treatments, proposing analytic frameworks, providing political context for their work, and editing chapter drafts. Because their book has a looming deadline, work was fast-paced; the group met at least once per week, with frequent check-ins by email. At the same time, though, I found working practices to be very flexible. While I lived in New Haven for two months, there was no lab to demand my daily attendance, so I alternated between working in the library and in the Institution for Social Policy Studies, the latter of which hosted weekly lunches to showcase graduate research.

With that flexibility came a significant degree of freedom in defining the scope of my project. Professor Hacker encouraged exploration beyond the fixed parameters of his weekly instructions, and I enjoyed reading widely on topics such as populist movements and tax policy. The project also allowed me to expand my academic focus beyond the horizon of American government, such as in my research on the comparative literature on “ethnic outbidding,” a term that describes how political elites come to engage in a race of escalating racist rhetoric and policies and, in many ways, encapsulates Trump’s rise. The most meaningful work I conducted over the course of the summer involved cataloguing the Republican Party’s turn toward plutocracy during the 1990s and 2000s. I found evidence that the GOP abandoned a series of ideological and policy alternatives that could have attracted a wider, more durable coalition of supporters.

My experience this summer clarified my desire to conduct further study in public policy. It showed me the power of historically-grounded political analyses and prepared me for writing my senior thesis at the intersection of history, political theory, and public policy. Thank you to the Class of 1960 for helping me realize this opportunity.

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## James Wedgewood

### **Bio:**

James Wedgewood is a double major in math and literature, with side-interests in linguistics and quantum mechanics. Outside of school, he runs Yale Student Academic Competitions and Yale's quiz bowl team. In his free time, he likes to think about how far away the stars are.

### **Summary:**

For about seven weeks this summer, from the end of May through mid-July, I rented a room in the beautiful Weststadt neighborhood of Heidelberg, a town in the southwest of Germany. There, funded by a small amount of money from the Lewis P. Curtis Fellowship and a significantly larger sum from the Branford College Class of 1960 Fellowship, I spent several hours each day in the library of the Institut für Papyrologie, studying a particular ancient document from the Beinecke's collection.

The document in question, endowed with the rather unromantic moniker of "P.CtYBR inv. 708(A) and (B)," is written in Ancient Greek and consists of two sides: on the front is a petition from a man named Thoönis, written on behalf of his wife Dionysia and concerning a lawsuit between her and another man, Chairemon; on the back is a letter from the prefect of Egypt, Pompeius Planta, concerning the receipt of grain. My primary task during the six weeks in which I was there was to figure out what the papyrus actually says and comment on its contents—a task that is much easier said than done, given the large number of lacunae, illegible characters, and other confusing aspects of the text. The result of my lucubration is a slim paper, scheduled to be published in the upcoming edition of the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, one of the world's premier journals for the study of papyri. While this was my primary research project, I also attended regular classes at the Institute: one, taught by Prof. Rodney Ast, who was also my main supervisor during my time in Heidelberg, involved the presentation by various students (including myself) of the unpublished documents that formed the basis of our research; the other, taught by Prof. James Comey, involved adding documents to [papyri.info](http://papyri.info), an online database that is an absolutely essential tool for the aspiring papyrologist.

I would like to thank the donors to the Class of 1960 Fellowship for providing me with this opportunity. Although for the rest of my life I anticipate having little to no engagement with the field of papyrology, I know that I will always look back on my seven weeks in Heidelberg with nostalgia and a fond smile.

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