American Rhodes Scholars-Elect for 2019

(Subject to ratification by the Rhodes Trustees after acceptance by one of the colleges of Oxford University)

District 1
EREN ORBEY
Massachusetts—Yale University
SARAH TRESS
Massachusetts—Massachusetts Institute of Technology

District 2
NICOLETTE C. D’ANGelo
New Jersey—Princeton University
MARGARET H. DODS
New Jersey—United States Naval Academy

District 3
ALALEH AZHIR
New York—Johns Hopkins University
JIN KYU PARK
New York—Harvard University

District 4
BRITTANY N. ELLIS
Pennsylvania—Harvard University
ANEA B. MOORE
Pennsylvania—University of Pennsylvania

District 5
LIA PETROSE
Maryland/DC—University of Pittsburgh
KATHARINE H. REED
Maryland/DC—Princeton University

District 6
ARIEL KANTOR
North Carolina—Duke University
JOHN HOFFMEYER
South Carolina—Princeton University

District 7
JAMES W. BRAHM
Alabama—United States Air Force Academy
MIKAELA J. BRISACK
Mississippi—University of Mississippi

District 8
KRISTINA M. CORREA
Texas—Stanford University
KUSHAL T. KADAKIA
Texas—Duke University

District 9
JENNIFER HUANG
Indiana—Indiana University, Bloomington
HADEEL ABDALLAH
Kentucky—University of Kentucky

District 10
KRISTIANA L. YAO
Illinois—University of Miami
LAILA UJAYLI
Ohio—Ohio State University

District 11
RILEY S. TILLITT
Minnesota—Yale University
RHEA C. STARK
Wisconsin—Brown University

District 12
AUSTIN T. HUGHES
Iowa—University of Iowa
GRANT H. RIGNEY
Tennessee—University of Tennessee

District 13
SERENE K. SINGH
Colorado—University of Colorado Boulder
CLAIRE R. WANG
Utah—Duke University

District 14
RACHEL ELENA GALLINA
Idaho—Boise State University
KATHERINE M. KOWAL
Oregon—Lewis and Clark College

District 15
RAYAN SEMERY-PALUMBO
Arizona—Yale University
LEAH CROWDER
Arizona—University of Arizona

District 16
VIDAL M. ARROYO
California-South—Chapman University
MADISON L. TUNG
California-South—United States Air Force Academy
From the AARS President:

The Association of American Rhodes Scholars (AARS) is pleased to present our traditional newsletter, *The American Rhodes Scholar*, introducing the newly elected Rhodes Scholars to the Rhodes community, to Oxford, and to well-wishers and educational institutions nationwide. It is indeed a joy to learn about these fine young people who will follow in our footsteps to Oxford next September.

In addition to introducing our 2018 Scholars, this newsletter reports on the 24th annual “Bon Voyage” Weekend, sponsored by AARS for the Class of 2018 Rhodes Scholars, which took place in New York City last September 22 and 23. This BVW gave the new Rhodes Scholars an opportunity to meet each other before traveling to Oxford and dispersing among its colleges. In addition, by interacting with a wide variety of alumni Scholars of all ages who took part in the Weekend, these young Scholars gained a new understanding of how Rhodes Scholars value scholarship, pursue public service, and participate in “the world’s fight.” The keynote speaker at the 2018 dinner was Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Nicholas Kristof (Oregon and Magdalen ’81), a distinguished member of the AARS Board since 2006.

This newsletter, as well as the *American Oxonian* and the Bon Voyage Weekend, are sponsored by AARS and are paid for by dues and generous annual contributions from its membership. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank you for continuing your vital support.

Ralph H. Smith, President
(Alabama and Corpus Christi ’73)

About the Association of American Rhodes Scholars:

AARS was founded in 1907 and today has a membership of more than 2,200 Rhodes Scholars elected from or currently living in the USA. The mission of AARS is to bring Rhodes Scholars in America together in support of the Rhodes Scholarships, Oxford University, and the qualities of scholarship, leadership, and service that underlie the awards. The AARS publishes a highly acclaimed journal, *The American Oxonian*, promotes reunions and events, and administers charitable trusts supporting Oxford University and the distinguished Eastman Professorship at Oxford.
Hadeel Younes Abdallah
Kentucky

University of Kentucky: BA, Political Science; Arabic & Islamic Studies, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: DPhil, Criminology

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Career Aspirations
Develop an international consultancy agency

Hadeel Abdallah is a senior at the University of Kentucky, where she majors in Political Science as well as Arabic and Islamic Studies. Hadeel is the first Rhodes Scholar from the University of Kentucky since 1955. A Truman Scholar, Hadeel is a committed activist who has advanced educational opportunities for underrepresented women in communities across the globe. Hadeel founded and directs the Bilal Scholarship Endowment, which provides scholarships to underrepresented students across Kentucky. At Oxford, she will read for a DPhil in Criminology and Criminal Justice.
District XVI

Vidal Marcel Arroyo California (South)

Chapman University: BS, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology; minor in Computational Science, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Statistical Science

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Career Aspirations
After my time at Oxford, I will pursue an MD/PhD in the United States. As a future physician-scientist, I intend to design robust statistical methodologies that will power future machine-learning algorithms used to personalize cancer treatment.

Vidal M. Arroyo is Chapman University’s first Rhodes Scholar. A first-generation college student and train commuter to college, Vidal has maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA. At the Baylor College of Medicine, he has researched the link between cancer and obesity, as well as outcome disparities among survivors of childhood cancer. Now, he hopes to focus his research on optimizing the mathematical architecture of machine-learning tools that physicians will one day use to personalize cancer treatment. As the founder and president of Chapman STEMtors, he has exposed over a thousand at-risk youth to careers in science. The grandson of a Mexican blues musician, he sings, plays guitar, and beat-boxes. He is also a competitive drug-free powerlifter and bodybuilder.
Alaleh Azhir

John Hopkins University: BS, Biomedical Engineering; Computer Science; Applied Mathematics and Statistics

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc in Global Health Science and Epidemiology

Career Aspirations
Physician-scientist

Alaleh Azhir is a senior at Johns Hopkins University with a triple major. She has a perfect GPA (including an A+ in 25 courses). A Goldwater Scholar, she has many publications in genomics and various biomedical subjects in major national and international journals, and has done research at Harvard, MIT, the NIH, and laboratories in Switzerland as well as at Johns Hopkins. She mentors middle-school students, edits a philosophy journal, runs arts programs for children in under-resourced neighborhoods, and provides cooked meals for a shelter for survivors of domestic abuse. Alaleh immigrated from Mashhad, Iran, when she was 14.
District VII

James Walter Brahm

United States Air Force Academy: BS, Computer Science; minoring in Computer Science and in Chinese, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Computer Science

Preferred Contact Information
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USAF Academy, CO 80841

Career Aspirations
United States Air Force Officer

James Brahm is a Rhodes Scholar, a Truman Scholar, and a cadet at the United States Air Force Academy. While in high school, James worked as a malware analyst at Dynetics, a defense contractor and engineering firm. Since coming to USAFA, he has interned at QC Ware—a Silicon Valley startup—and at the NSA. He has a patent pending in quantum annealing, has commanded USAFA’s cyber training program, and competes for Air Force as part of the Cyber Competition Team. His primary interests include cyberwarfare, nuclear engineering, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, deterrence theory, and how these can be applied to promote a peaceful and free world.
District VII

Mikaela Jazlyn Brisack

Mississippi

University of Mississippi: BA, General Studies: Journalism, English, and Public Policy Leadership, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil in US History

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Career Aspirations
Labor organizer

Jaz Brisack is a senior at the University of Mississippi studying journalism, public policy leadership, English, and hell-raising. Jaz is a Truman Scholar, a member of the Ole Miss Debate Team, and an opinion columnist for the Daily Mississippian. Very active politically, she has managed a statehouse campaign, been an organizer with the United Auto Workers union, joined Water Protectors at Standing Rock in North Dakota, taught sessions on Southern labor history, and served as president of the UM College Democrats. She is also a volunteer clinic defender at Mississippi’s last abortion clinic.
Kristina M. Correa
District VIII
Texas

Stanford University: BS, Biology, 2019; minor in Creative Writing

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc in Integrated Immunology; MSc by Research in Oncology

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Career Aspirations
Professor of Immunology

Kristina M. Correa is a senior at Stanford, where she majors in biology and minors in creative writing. She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants and was raised by a single mother. She has never received a grade below an A across her demanding undergraduate and graduate courses. She has done extensive research in three different laboratories, and her senior thesis relates to cellular glycans and cancer. Kristina has been an active volunteer working with children whose parents have cancer and as a tutor for low-income and/or minority students. She plans a career in computational immunology and is committed to Latino empowerment in the sciences.
Leah Natalie Crowder

University of Arizona: MA, Middle Eastern & North African Studies, 2019; BA, Middle Eastern & North African Studies, 2018

Proposed Oxford Course: DPhil International Relations (after completing MPhil or MSc)

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Career Aspirations
Conflict resolution researcher and practitioner

Leah Crowder, of Tucson, graduated summa cum laude from the University of Arizona in 2018 with a BA in Middle Eastern and North African Studies. She is currently pursuing an MA in the same program. Leah is researching cyclical violence and peacebuilding in areas divided by deep cultural and political differences. Starting in her teenage years, she has worked on the ground in Turkey to advance a variety of peacebuilding efforts. Most recently, she worked with local NGOs in Mardin, Turkey, to plan child protection activities in villages impacted by regional violence.
Nicolette D’Angelo

Princeton University: BA, Classics, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil in Greek and/or Latin Languages & Literature

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Career Aspirations
Classicist and public humanities scholar

Nicolette C. D’Angelo, of Hewitt, New Jersey, is a senior at Princeton University. Nicolette’s research puts contemporary issues in conversation with ancient works, interrogating society’s potential biases, interests, and assumptions. Nicolette’s translation, and original interpretation, of Euripides’ *Supplicants* elevated the perspective of the maternal community in the tragedy, countering centuries of neglect by scholars. As the editor-in-chief of the *Nassau Literary Review*, Princeton’s undergraduate literary magazine, she has extended its public reach through a series of free conferences and events. Nicolette teaches Latin to third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders at Princeton Young Achievers.
Margaret Helene Dods

New Jersey

United States Naval Academy: BSc, English; Arabic, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Modern Middle Eastern Studies

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Career Aspirations
US Marine Corps Human Intelligence officer

Maggie grew up on the coast of south Jersey as the youngest of five children. She and her twin brother, Matthew, currently attend the United States Naval Academy, where she studies English literature and Arabic language. Maggie and Matthew will graduate in May as Marine Corps and Navy Submarine officers, respectively. After Oxford, Maggie hopes to enter the Human Intelligence field of the Marine Corps, focusing on a deeper anthropological understanding of other cultures around the world. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, weight training in Olympic and powerlifting styles, baking cupcakes, and oil painting. Her lifetime goals include backpacking every continent with her sister Kara, seeing Monet’s *Impression, Sunrise* with her own eyes, and achieving fluency in at least four foreign languages. Her personal philosophy has been heavily shaped by the picture books *The Three Questions* (Jon J. Muth), *Miss Rumphius* (Barbara Cooney), and *The Little Prince* (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry), though, to her, the last one never quite seemed like it was for children.
Brittany Ellis

Harvard University: BA, Anthropology (Combined Social Anthropology and Archaeology), 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Visual, Material, & Museum Anthropology

District IV
Pennsylvania

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Career Aspirations
I want to work in museums, focusing on increasing engagement and collaboration with local and source communities.

Brittany Ellis is a senior at Harvard concentrating in Social Anthropology and Archaeology with a citation in Arabic. Her research focuses on community-oriented methods within archaeological research and in museums. Brittany has worked on digs in Macedonia and Jordan, where she has spent the last two summers studying Arabic and conducting research for her senior thesis. At Harvard, Brittany served as a reporter and news executive of the Harvard Crimson newspaper. Through her reporting, she exposed gender-based harassment and other problems within the Harvard Athletics Department. Her reporting led to a department-wide assessment of varsity athletic culture. Brittany served as president of Harvard’s oldest feminist organization, the Radcliffe Union of Students, and currently manages the intramural crew program for Kirkland House as captain and coxswain. For two years, she has conducted research at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, working on projects related to Arab cartoons and the early women’s rights movement in the US. At Oxford, Brittany intends to continue her studies in anthropology, to become involved at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and to continue coxing.
Rachel Elena Gallina

Boise State University: BS, Multidisciplinary Studies, Economics and Political Science Emphases, 2018

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Economic & Social History, Masters in Business Administration

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Lake Orion Town, MI 48395

Career Aspirations
Founder of a social impact investment firm dedicated to starting and growing women-led social enterprises in conflict zones

Elena Gallina maintained a perfect GPA at Boise State University and is both a Truman and Boren Scholar. Raised as the child of aid workers in Kosovo, Elena is currently working as a photographer and organizational development consultant for NGOs in Albania and Kosovo. Elena’s work and research has focused on combating gender-based violence in refugee camps and conflict zones. She believes in shifting power from institutions to the women directly impacted by the instability created by forced migration to more effectively address gender inequity. Elena is an avid runner, backpacker, and chef.
John Hoffmeyer  

South Carolina

Princeton University: BA, Comparative Literature, 2019  
Proposed Oxford Course: MSt Modern Languages, St. John’s

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Career Aspirations  
I hope to work between research in musicology, philosophy, and literature through writing and lecture-recitals.

John Hoffmeyer is a senior at Princeton University majoring in Comparative Literature, with certificates in Musical Performance and Chinese Language and Culture. His research examines points of intersection between music, philosophy, and literature. Through a grant awarded by the Carpenter Family Fund, John completed research at the Luigi-Nono-Archiv at the Universität-Salzburg. He is a fellow at the Princeton Writing Center, and he cofounded the Princeton Chamber Music Society, an organization dedicated to creating musical performance, education, and outreach opportunities for Princeton musicians of all instruments and levels of experience. John is active as a pianist through solo, chamber, and concerto performances as well as lecture-recitals that aim to welcome musicians and non-musicians alike into conversations about pivotal issues of musical hermeneutics.
Jennifer Huang

Indiana University: BS, Mathematics; BA, Social & Cultural Analysis, 2017
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Political Theory

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Career Aspirations
Public service and writing

Jennifer Huang graduated from Indiana University as a Wells Scholar with Highest Distinction in 2017. She earned both her BS in Mathematics and BA in Social and Cultural Analysis with departmental honors. As an undergraduate, she conducted multidisciplinary research, including an ethnography of Iceland’s renewable energy industry and a computational text analysis of Poetry magazine’s archives. Jennifer coauthored a paper in a leading science journal, PNAS, and wrote stories that received IU’s top undergraduate fiction award. After graduating, she has redirected her focus toward community-based political and policy work. As a Policy Associate for the Office of South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, she worked on social policy to promote stronger community development outcomes for her hometown of South Bend. She currently coordinates the Civic Engagement Program at the University of Chicago Institute of Politics, in which role she builds public service partnerships and oversees leadership development for politically minded undergraduate students.
Austin Hughes

University of Iowa: BA, English; Theatre Arts; Japanese Language & Literature, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil in Japanese Studies

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Career Aspirations
Poet and Scholar

Austin T. Hughes, of San Antonio, Texas, is a senior at the University of Iowa, triple majoring in English (Creative Writing), Theatre Arts, and Japanese Language & Literature. Austin was elected to Phi Beta Kappa as a junior. A Beinecke scholar, he has won numerous awards for his poetry and creative writing at both the university and national level. As copresident of The English Society, Austin maintained a network of educators, writers, and authors to showcase student literature to campus and beyond. He is a cellist, a cross-country runner, and has written *Twilight* fanfiction.
Kushal Tushar Kadakia

Duke University: BA, Public Policy; BS, Biology; minor in Chemistry, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc in Global Health Science & Epidemiology

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Career Aspirations
I aspire to become a physician-leader in health policy, working to make health care more equitable and effective.

Kushal T. Kadakia is an Angier B. Duke Scholar studying biology and public policy at Duke University. A junior-elect to Phi Beta Kappa with a perfect 4.0 GPA, Kushal has conducted and published research in health policy and the basic sciences, and was named a Duke Faculty Scholar, the university’s highest undergraduate honor. A Truman Scholar, he was elected Student Body Vice President, served as Chairman of the Honor Council, and was appointed three times as a voting member of Duke’s Board of Trustees. Kushal also led a successful campaign to make Duke a smoke-free campus; served on the Governor of North Carolina’s policy team, where he focused on Medicaid reform; and worked on payment reform as an intern for the Chief Medical Officer of BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina.
Ariel Kantor
North Carolina

Duke University: BS, Biotechnology, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: DPhil, Clinical Neuroscience

Career Aspirations
Biotechnology

Ariel Kantor, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a senior at Duke University. Ariel is committed to using science to advance basic research and advocate on behalf of patients battling rare diseases. For three years, he has worked under the guidance of Charles Gersbach to develop new applications for CRISPR to facilitate epigenome editing. His cross-disciplinary research focuses on the ethical, social, and legal implications of genome sciences and genomic medicine. Throughout his undergraduate career, he has been heavily involved in Special Olympics, serving as the head coach for intramural basketball.
Katherine McCarthy Kowal

Lewis & Clark College: BA, Physics; BS, Political Science, 2017
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Environmental Change & Management

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Career Aspirations
Science translator who can bridge
the gap between scientists and policymakers

Katherine M. Kowal, Louisville, Colorado, graduated summa cum laude in 2017 from Lewis and Clark College, where she received the Rena J. Ratte Award, the college’s highest academic honor, and the American Association of University Women Senior Woman Award for outstanding community contributions. Outside of her studies, she focused on breaking down barriers to science and math education. In her senior year, she developed and led a new student program for first-generation college students interested in science and mathematics majors. She also ran for Lewis and Clark’s varsity track and field team and was voted captain for the men’s and women’s sprint events. She is now a Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the Institute for Defense Analyses, where she consults on space weather and space nuclear power. Her focus is on strengthening society’s capacity to prepare for and adapt to climate change.
Anea B. Moore, of Philadelphia, is a senior with a double major in Sociology and Urban Studies. After losing both of her parents in 2015, Anea became committed to improving the lives of low-income families. She assists in creating and implementing family and community engagement programming for over 400 families at a local school. She also helps coordinate a music program, assistant-teaching the program’s K-3 choir and stage managing for the school’s musicals. Her two theses focus on the intersection of education and family policy, gentrification, race, and class. On campus, Anea helped to found her university’s first-generation low-income (FGLI) student program, which provides additional resources to more than a thousand students. She has advised universities on FGLI student issues through her roles on University Council and as the Chair of the 2019 IvyG conference, the largest FGLI student conference in the world. A Truman Scholar, Anea strives to elevate the voices of people who are often not heard, and she holds her parents’ strength with her always. At Oxford, Anea intends to pursue first an MSc in Comparative Social Policy, then a doctorate.
Eren Orbey
Massachusetts

Yale University: BS, Computer Science; BA, English 2014
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Modern Middle Eastern Studies

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Career Aspirations
Writer

Eren Orbey has worked as a software engineer and as a product manager at Microsoft. He has also won many collegiate and national literary prizes, for work in both English and French, and is a frequent contributor to the news and culture desks at the New Yorker. As a three-year-old, Eren witnessed his father’s murder in Ankara, Turkey, an experience that ultimately led to his current book project, which melds memoir, history, and reportage to create a portrait of his father and his father’s killer. As a volunteer for 826NYC, he has mentored younger writers and edited anthologies of their work for publication. His aim is to produce art that mines meaning from the trials of trauma.
Jin Park

Harvard University: BS, Molecular & Cellular Biology, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Politics (Political Theory)

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Career Aspirations
Emergency medicine doctor and policymaker

Jin Park is a recent graduate of Harvard College, where he studied molecular and cellular biology with a minor in ethnicity, migration, and rights. Jin was born in South Korea and is the first DACA recipient to be selected as a Rhodes Scholar. He is currently in discussions with legal counsel to find a way to leave the US and take up the Rhodes, and subsequently be able to return.
Lia Gebresellassie Petrose

University of Pittsburgh: BS, Neuroscience; BS, Economics, 2017

Proposed Oxford Course: BA, Computer Science & Philosophy

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Cambridge, MA
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Career Aspirations
As a physician researcher, I hope to use health data to inform clinical decision making, focusing on agency and care for under-represented and under-resourced populations.

Lia Petrose graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2017 with a BS in Neuroscience, a BS in Economics, and a minor in Chemistry. A Truman Scholar, she has a vision of improving the way data are used to facilitate health care delivery. Lia wrote three first-authored papers in leading medical journals and is currently a research assistant for economist Heidi Williams at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As an undergraduate, she was elected to the executive board of the student government and served as the student member of the Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Affairs. She was born and raised (until adolescence) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Katharine Reed

Princeton University: AB, History, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Development Studies

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Career Aspirations
Historian and educator

Kate Reed is majoring in History at Princeton University, with certificates in Latin American Studies and Spanish. Her research, which considers twentieth-century Mexico and alternative imaginings of development, democracy, and capitalism in Latin America, has been accepted for publication in A Contracorriente: Journal of Latin American Studies and NACLA Report on the Americas. She has received several awards for her work, including most recently a grant to conduct archival research in Mexico City for her senior thesis. This thesis addresses the relationships between violence, development, and notions of justice in 1970s Mexico, focusing on the paradoxically simultaneous repression of dissident leftists and promotion of the New International Economic Order during Luis Echeverría’s presidency. In addition to archival work, she has spent summers interning for women’s and immigrant rights organizations in Mexico City and Elizabeth, New Jersey. She has run ESL programs for adult immigrants in Trenton, Elizabeth, and Princeton, New Jersey, and developed and taught an ESL-adapted history class to recent migrant students in Princeton High School. She is cofounder of Princeton’s undergraduate workshop on Latin American history and president of Princeton University Language Project, which provides free translations to nonprofits.
Grant Harding Rigney  
Tennessee

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville: BS, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, 2019

**Proposed Oxford Course:** MSc, Global Health Science & Epidemiology; MSc, Evidence-Based Social Intervention & Policy Evaluation

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**Career Aspirations**
Physician and public health researcher

Grant H. Rigney, of Tullahoma, Tennessee, is the editor-in-chief of *Pursuit*, the University of Tennessee’s journal of undergraduate research, and has conducted research at the UT Medical Center on the toxicity of PET-CT imaging agents and at Harvard Medical School on the use of novel imaging agents as predictive biomarkers for patients receiving immunotherapy. He volunteers at a local homeless clinic and cofounded the Homeless Prevention University and Community Alliance at UT. Grant’s career aspirations involve providing leadership and policy advocacy in support of safety-net hospitals as a practitioner, researcher, and administrative leader. He has spent time working on health policy for Representative Jim Cooper in the US House of Representatives, is a licensed private pilot, a Certified Nurse’s Assistant, a triathlete, and an internationally recognized bluegrass musician on the fiddle and mandolin.
Rayan Semery-Palumbo

Yale University: BA, Global Affairs, 2019; minors in Human Rights and in Economics

Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Comparative Government (followed by DPhil in Public Policy)

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Career Aspirations
I hope to play a major role in pushing forward more honest and critical conversations about poverty in the United States, ultimately towards influencing policy spanning education, welfare, and criminal justice reform. International security and development are also interests of mine.

Rayan Semery-Palumbo* and his family immigrated to Arizona from Saudi Arabia in early 2001, where they subsequently faced violent racial and religious discrimination, years of homelessness, and the perils of community-wide underdevelopment and over-policing. Motivated by these experiences, Rayan has conducted extensive research and work towards better understanding how issues of poverty and social exclusion can be addressed for vulnerable communities. He has worked with the World Bank, the American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights Watch, and the Bronx Defenders, and he currently serves as a policy researcher for former Secretary of State John Kerry. On his college campus, Rayan has sought to reform campus policies toward the greater support of first-generation, low-income college students; his work includes raising $155,000 for a national educational inclusivity campaign, helping to institute a peer mentorship program, and devising a college-wide fellowship for students on financial aid. He enjoys cooking, biking, and hiking.

*Rayan recently changed his last name to Semery-Palumbo from Alsemeiry to fix the Arabic-to-English transliteration of his father’s family name and to add his mother’s family name, Palumbo.
Serene Singh
University of Colorado: BA, Political Science, Journalism, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: Criminology and Criminal Justice

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Career Aspirations
Supreme Court Justice

Serene Singh is a Boettcher and Truman Scholar at the University of Colorado with majors in Political Science and Journalism and a minor in Leadership Studies. She serves as Chief Justice of her Student Government and President of the Political Science Honors Society. As Founder of the National Sikh Youth Program, Colorado Bhangra (Punjabi Indian dancing), and Sikh Student Association, Serene is passionate about challenging stereotypes and spreading love. A former Miss Colorado Teen and America’s Junior Miss, Serene’s pageantry experience inspires her to empower women worldwide, which has led her to create The Serenity Project nonprofit to empower at-risk women, work for Michelle Obama and the Global Girls Alliance to improve girls’ education, and represent the US as a 2019 Rhodes Scholar, Dalai Lama Fellow, and Global Changemaker. In addition to working with low-income students as a speech and debate coach, Serene enjoys painting (one of her works is displayed in the UMC), snowboarding, and videography.
Rhea Stark

Brown University: AB, Archaeology & Middle East Studies, 2018
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Islamic Art & Archaeology

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Career Aspirations
Curator of Islamic art

Rhea C. Stark has worked at the intersection of curation, museum decolonization, and cultural heritage preservation through positions at The Cloisters, the Jewish Museum, and Rhode Island School of Design Museum, as well as on archaeological sites in Barbados and Italy. Rhea’s research aims to put Islamic art in conversation with colonial histories, contemporary events, and popular perceptions of the Middle East in order to foster a more complex understanding of the Islamic world. A firm believer in the possibilities of art to promote intercultural conversation and understanding, she recently curated a show titled Transcultural by Design: Iranian Ceramics from the Minassian Collection. She is an avid bookmaker, illustrator, baker, and hiker.
Riley Tillitt

Yale University: BA, History, 2019

Proposed Oxford Course: Master of Public Policy and MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice

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Career Aspirations
Policymaker, lawyer, or law professor

Riley S. Tillitt, of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, is interested in reforming US criminal justice and drug policies and has engaged in public service in those areas. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Students for Sensible Drug Policy in Washington, DC, and was President of the Yale chapter. He was also the President of Yale Model Congress and a Director-General of Yale Model United Nations China. He served as a policy adviser for Connecticut’s Governor-elect Ned Lamont, focusing on criminal justice and drug policy.
Sarah Tress

Massachusetts Institute of Technology: BS, Mechanical Engineering, 2019
Proposed Oxford Course: MPhil, Development Studies

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347-935-8475
stress@mit.edu

Career Aspirations
Engineer/product designer
working in developing countries

Sarah Tress is a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she majors in Mechanical Engineering. Sarah has maintained a grade point average of 5.0 (out of a possible 5.0). A prolific researcher and an inventor, Sarah works at the intersection of engineering and development, creating affordable, appropriate technologies for the developing world. When she discovered the low life expectancy of wheelchair users in developing countries due to infection from pressure sores, she created Loop, a cost-effective inflatable wheelchair seat cushion made from bike inner tubes. Sarah has spent time field-testing Loop in Indonesia, working in an eye hospital in India, teaching high school students in Germany, designing graphics for MIT’s edX courses, and teaching underclassmen machining skills. Sarah is a co-captain of the MIT Women’s Club Soccer Team and a publicity cochair of the MIT Dance Troupe.
Madison L. Tung

California

United States Air Force Academy: BS, Mathematics & Humanities, 2019; minoring in Chinese

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Computer Science; MSc, Global Governance & Diplomacy

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Career Aspirations
I will be an Information Operations (Warfare) Officer in the United States Air Force, where I hope to promote and practice the ethical use of AI and other computational technologies in the military.

Madison (Maddy) L. Tung, a Truman Scholar at the United States Air Force Academy, researches the use of artificial intelligence and other mathematical and computational techniques to develop tools for decision makers. She has also studied the risks of such computational technologies on human rights and democracy. Ultimately, she believes in the power of artificial intelligence to improve people’s lives. Her other areas of interest include studying various national strategic doctrines, computational sentiment analysis, statistical and graph/network modeling, and nuclear strategy. She is passionate about outdoor survival education, as well as academic education. She is a six-time All-American national champion in Women’s Wrestling, and she holds a Black Belt in Hapkido (a Korean martial art). Her hobbies include ice climbing, mountaineering, and Jiu-Jitsu.
Laila Ujayli

The Ohio State University: BS, International Relations; BA, English, 2018

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Refugee & Forced Migration Studies; MSt in World Literatures

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Career Aspirations
I hope to pursue a career in international law and policy to strengthen asylum and accountability systems. I also hope to improve representations of the Middle East as an author and screenwriter.

Laila Ujayli graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from The Ohio State University. Her childhood experiences in Syria and Saudi Arabia heavily shaped her academic trajectory towards a deeper understanding of international conflict and its intersection with narrative and literature. Laila was previously at Oxford undertaking a prelaw program during the summer of 2016; she composed a tutorial paper on the impact of the refugee crisis on the European Union’s legal framework. Her honors undergraduate thesis analyzed models of social change reflected in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s Turkish modernist novel A Mind at Peace, and addressed the effects of Atatürk’s Westernizing reforms on Turkish identity. Laila’s short film script on the Syrian Civil War, The Last Librarian in Raqqa, was a finalist for several screenwriting awards. She is currently a Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellow at Win Without War in Washington, DC, where she advocates conflict stabilization policies that prioritize development and diplomacy.
Claire Reanna Wang

Duke University: AB, Environmental Science & Policy, 2019; minoring in Economics

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Environmental Change & Management, followed by Master of Public Policy

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Career Aspirations
Climate change policy advocate, focusing on global transition from fossil fuels to clean energy

Claire R. Wang was born and raised in North Salt Lake, Utah. She is a current senior and Angier B. Duke Scholar at Duke University. In 2018, she was named a Truman Scholar and Udall Scholar. As president of the student organization Duke Climate Coalition, Claire has led successful campaigns for Duke University to support renewable energy policy reform and to halt a natural gas plant proposed to be built on Duke’s campus. She aspires to a career as a climate change policy advocate to create a just transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy worldwide. At Oxford, Claire plans to pursue the MSc in Environmental Change and Management, followed by the Master of Public Policy.
Kristiana Yao

District X

Illinois

University of Miami: BS, Public Health; BBA, Health Management & Policy, 2018

Proposed Oxford Course: MSc, Comparative Social Policy

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731 Century Farm Lane
Naperville, IL 60563
kristiana.y@gmail.com

Career Aspirations
Improving public health through health financing and systems policy

Kristiana Yao graduated summa cum laude from the University of Miami in 2018 as a Stamps Scholar. She currently serves as a Dunn Fellow in the Office of the Illinois Governor, where she advances policy in health and human services. She has worked as a health policy staff member for the Senate Finance Committee and held several local and federal policy internships, including at the White House (Domestic Policy Council) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. A Truman Scholar, she has focused her research on devising better systems for health care delivery and payment.
The Sailing “Bon Voyage” Weekend, September 22 – 23, 2018

Every fall, AARS sends the newest class of US Rhodes Scholars off to Oxford with a celebration: the Bon Voyage Weekend (BVW). BVW was named in an earlier era—when the Scholars embarked for England aboard an ocean liner—but it endures today as a weekend of meeting classmates, learning about the experiences of older Scholars, and dining with Rhodes alumni.

The highlight of the weekend, a congratulatory dinner, is open to all Rhodes Scholars. For those who couldn’t make it in September 2018, here is a brief recap.

Saturday, September 22

Opening

BVW began officially at 11:30 a.m., in the new Scholars’ hotel in Manhattan, with a welcome session, orientation, and lunch. All 32 Scholars from the US were present, as well as three Scholars from the Caribbean and one from China. Several AARS Board Members participated: BVW Co-chairs Nicholas W. Allard ’74, James Basker ’76, and Robert S. Harrison ’76; AARS Board Member Nnenna Lynch ’93; and AARS President Ralph Smith ’73. Megan Wheeler ’02, an Assistant American Secretary of The Rhodes Trust, joined the group.

On Broadway

A new feature of BVW this year was a Broadway musical—and not just any Broadway musical: the 2018 cohort took in an afternoon performance of *Hamilton*. Jim Basker made the arrangements for the event, which drew raves from the 2018 Scholars. AARS may repeat it in the future.

Dinner

This year’s reception and dinner took place at the Harvard Club of New York City, with some 150 scholars and spouses attending. Among them were many members of the Class of 1976, who made special use of the event: it was the high point of a reunion celebrating the 40th anniversary of their coming down from Oxford.

American Secretary Elliot Gerson ’74, the first speaker, introduced the new Scholars. He also delivered an update on the Trust, reminding the crowd of the
many new regions now open to the Scholarships, as well as the Global Rhodes Scholarships, whose recipients can be from any nation.

After a highly entertaining introduction by AARS Vice President Janice Ugaki ’93, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof ’81 delivered the keynote speech. The talk is traditionally framed as advice to the new Scholars. Kristof stressed keeping one’s feet on the ground by balancing ambition against humbler activities, like family time or a regular morning run; fighting the world’s fight and giving back, throughout every stage of life; and maintaining a generous level of humility.

Sunday, September 23
Denouement and departure

After breakfast, the new Scholars met briefly with Elliot Gerson and then lunched with the board of AARS. The afternoon was mostly free time, with one important event: a Rhodes Women’s Gathering, organized by AARS Board Member Noorain Khan ’06 as an opportunity for women Scholars of all eras to meet and discuss their experiences at Oxford and after.

At 5:00 pm, the new Scholars boarded the buses for Newark Airport. Their flight to a new chapter in their lives departed at 10:00 pm that night.

The Board of the AARS thanks the Rhodes Scholar volunteers who made the events of BVW 2018 possible: Nicholas W. Allard ’74, James Basker ’76, Robert S. Harrison ’76, Nnenna Lynch ’93, and Emelia Spencer Probasco ’02. They were aided by a number of additional Scholar volunteers and the superb work of Joyce Knight and Thom Yu of the American Secretary’s office.

The Board also extends grateful thanks to all Rhodes alumni and guests who attended the dinner and to all Rhodes alumni who support the work of AARS.

BVW is funded entirely by the contributions of AARS members. Your participation helps to welcome the newest Scholars into our community every year.

We invite all Rhodes Scholars to reconnect with the Scholar community at the next Bon Voyage reception and dinner, in September 2019.
It is always a privilege, and a great pleasure, to introduce a new class of American Rhodes Scholars. And I am delighted to be asked to do so by the AARS considerably earlier in the year than has been the custom. I write this while their late November Rhodes selections are still fresh, while I am still discussing course and college options with many of them, before most have even submitted their Oxford applications, and indeed while their selections are still attracting media attention.

This enormous media interest in the Scholars-elect is extraordinary given the many other scholarships and fellowships that now exist, and the myriad other ways exceptional college seniors and recent graduates are honored. It reflects that the Rhodes Scholarships are still arguably the greatest distinction an American college graduate can achieve—one that prizes not just academic excellence but also other-directed ambition, character, and leadership—the combination and concentration of which in these young people inspires us all to have greater confidence in the future than recent world developments might otherwise allow. And as has been noted in so many headlines about this class, its remarkable diversity—something we don’t seek but delight in—is a testament to the strength of our country. Almost half of the winners are immigrants themselves or first-generation Americans. The class overall is majority minority, as it was last year, and the 21 women are the greatest number ever elected in a US Rhodes class. One is an undocumented American Dreamer whose immigration status is covered under DACA. This is the first year DACA recipients were eligible for the Scholarship; and let us hope that American law will change so he will face no risk that after his studies in Oxford, a US immigration officer will bar him from return to the one country that is his home.

Often in these annual letters I discuss some aspect of our selections, or some news from Oxford or the Rhodes Trust. This year, I would like to bring attention to a category of Scholar-elect that unfortunately does not get the attention in the press that this American class did. Of the worldwide Scholars-elect this year, sixteen (half the number of those elected as US Rhodes Scholars, and well more than those elected in any other Rhodes constituency) are currently studying in US colleges and universities or have degrees from US institutions. Because they are elected over a period of several weeks in many separate jurisdictions, and are never the subject of a single press release, they get little attention outside their own institutions. Their considerable number reflects how important overseas students are to American higher education, how extraordinarily talented many of them are (outcompeting many of the best of the best in their own countries’ universities), how important our universities are to United States global soft power,
how beneficial these students are to American interests longer term—as many will either return here or retain good feelings—and, of course, how threatened this all is by policies that make America less welcoming. The numbers are especially great this year for a couple of reasons: the expansion of the Scholarship to new constituencies, and more uniformity regarding eligibility rules. (In the past, more authority was delegated to my fellow national secretaries to determine eligibility rules, and some of them barred students who left their countries to study abroad.)

So I would like to use this space to introduce these other Rhodes Scholars-elect, albeit very briefly. This is appropriate for an additional reason that I have noted in these pages in recent years. Our Rhodes Scholars now see themselves in Oxford much more as a global class than as multiple national or regional classes, and they will have as much contact with Scholars from other countries as they do with Scholars from their own. For those of us who were at Oxford earlier than about a decade ago, this is one of the biggest changes in the Rhodes/Oxford experience—and is due to the leading role that Rhodes House now plays in the Scholars’ lives while in Oxford.

The other “American” Rhodes Scholars of 2019:

Majd Abdulghani (Saudi Arabia). She is a geneticist at Iowa State University.

Adam Abebe (Ethiopia/GLOBAL Rhodes Scholar). He is majoring in Health and Societies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Yan Chen (China). She graduated from the ART Institute at Harvard with a master’s in Dramaturgy and Theater Studies.

Kofi Gunu (Ghana). He graduated from Augustana University in Government and International Relations.

Claudia Kahindi (Kenya). She graduated from Wesleyan University in African Studies.

Michael Liu (Ontario). He is a Harvard senior in Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology.

Shantel Marekera (Zimbabwe). She graduated from Arizona State University and plans to do Justice Studies.

Mattea Mrkusic (New Zealand). She concentrated in Environmental Studies and Human Rights at Harvard.

Itai Muzhingi (Zimbabwe). He attended Amherst College, where he majored in Biochemistry and Biophysics.

Nikkita Ngalande (Zambia). She is studying Actuarial Science and Economics at Michigan State University.

Franck Nijimbere (Burundi). He graduated from Morehouse College in Computer Science and Mathematics.
Yali Peng (China). She is a JSD candidate at the University of Chicago Law School.

Olga Romanova (Russia/Global Rhodes Scholar). She is concentrating in Bio-engineering at Harvard.

Isabelle Stone (Bermuda). She graduated from Boston College in Economics.

Samvida Sudheesh Venkatesh (India). She is a senior at Princeton studying Molecular Biology and Computer Science.

Linda Worden (British Columbia). She is a senior at Williams College majoring in Political Economy.

In addition, at least four other members of the worldwide 2019 class have studied at US universities as visiting or exchange students or research fellows: Saraswat Bhattacharyya (India/Harvard); Matthew Downer (Newfoundland/American University); Zixuan Fu (China/UCLA); and Nabeela Kajee (South Africa-at-Large/Cornell).

I have traditionally reported in this space any transitions among our Selection Committee Secretaries, who of course play central roles for our Scholarships. David Johnson (Indiana and New College ’74) has served as the District 9 (Indiana, Kentucky, Virginia) Secretary for ten years and served for six years before that as Indiana State Secretary. His career of service to his communities in Indianapolis, Indiana, and beyond—now as CEO of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership—continues at such a pace that he no longer has the additional time to oversee the Rhodes competition. We are very fortunate however to have as his successor someone who served on his committee for six years and other district committees for another six years, and who has also served for a year as one of my Assistant American Secretaries. Megan Wheeler (New Hampshire and Magdalen 2002), now Executive Director of Schmidt Science Fellows, a program of Schmidt Futures delivered in partnership with the Rhodes Trust, will be the new District 9 Secretary. (The venue for the interviews and selection will shift to either northern Virginia or Washington, DC.) I am very pleased to add that Elizabeth (Beth) Pearson (Iowa and Somerville 2005) will replace Megan as an Assistant American Secretary, joining Fagan Harris (Maryland/DC and St. John’s 2011).

To close, let me again welcome and congratulate the Rhodes Scholars of 2019.

Elliot F. Gerson (Connecticut and Magdalen ’74)
American Secretary
The Rhodes Trust
About the Rhodes Scholarships

The Rhodes Scholarships were established in 1902 by the Will of Cecil Rhodes, the British philanthropist and colonial pioneer. Rhodes hoped that the Scholarships might improve “the lot of humankind through the diffusion of leaders motivated to serve their contemporaries, trained in the contemplative life of the mind, and broadened by their acquaintance with one another and by their exposure to cultures different from their own.” Rhodes intended that his plan of bringing able students from throughout the English-speaking world and beyond to study at Oxford University would “aid in the promotion of international understanding and peace.” (See further Oxford and The Rhodes Scholarships.) Each year, 32 Americans are among approximately 80 Rhodes Scholars selected world-wide to take up degree courses at Oxford.

Cecil Rhodes wrote that Rhodes Scholars should “esteem the performance of public duties as their highest aim” and outlined four criteria of selection: 1) literary and scholastic attainments; 2) energy to use one’s talents to the full; 3) truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindliness, unselfishness, and fellowship; and 4) moral force of character and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in one’s fellow beings.

Interested applicants are encouraged to consult the fellowship office of their own college or university, or the American Secretary of the Rhodes Scholarship Trust: Elliot F. Gerson, 8229 Boone Blvd., Suite 240, Vienna, VA 22182. Phone: (703) 821-5960. Fax: (703) 821-2770. E-mail: amsec@rhodesscholar.org. Or visit the web site at: www.rhodesscholar.org.

About the Association of American Rhodes Scholars

The AARS brings US Rhodes Scholars together in support of the Rhodes Scholarship and Oxford University. We hold events at which Scholars can connect, and we publish their news in print and online—creating opportunities for Scholars to reflect together on our shared experiences. We work to promote connection and goodwill among the peoples of all countries from which Rhodes Scholars and other Oxonians are drawn. We strive to foster the qualities of learning, leadership, and service that are the essence of the Scholarship.

AARS plans and supports several activities including national and class reunions, regional events, and the Bon Voyage Weekend/Orientation for new Scholars. The Association publishes an annual newsletter, The American Rhodes Scholar, as well as the quarterly journal, The American Oxonian, which includes articles, book reviews, class letters and the annual Address and Occupations List of American Rhodes Scholars and other Oxonians. It also hosts the website www.americanrhodes.org. It administers the Eastman Professorship Trust and the American Trust for Oxford (ATFO). AARS members pay modest dues annually; many members also make generous additional donations. AARS does not receive funding from the Rhodes Trust nor does it have responsibility for the Rhodes Scholar selection process in the US.

For membership and further information, contact Nicholas W. Allard, AARS Secretary, c/o AARS, 8229 Boone Blvd., Suite 240, Vienna, VA 22182. Or visit the AARS link on the internet from: www.rhodesscholar.org or directly at: www.americanrhodes.org.

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