



Understanding the Dynamics of Art and Culture in the Middle East

James Souza (IAFS '10) always had an interest in the Middle East, but it was his close friends in the Smith Hall International Program (SHIP) that encouraged him to switch from Chinese to Arabic studies. SHIP is the precursor of what is now the [Global Studies Residential Academic Program \(G-RAP\)](#), and the advice of Souza's SHIP peers made its mark. Nearly a decade later, Souza's work aims to protect culture, people, and history in a region of the world he is deeply passionate about.

Today, Souza is the Assistant Director of the [Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations](#) in the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University. He is also the Administrative Director of the [American Institute of Afghanistan Studies \(AIAS\)](#) at Boston University, a non-profit based in Boston and Kabul, Afghanistan. Understanding people's perspectives is the root of his professional research and personal interests, and he frequently approaches his work in unconventional ways. Often, he looks at how political and cultural narratives are reflected in artworks, and how they "serve to provide an alternate perspective to the current issues affecting the country."

In 2017, AIAS directed [The Afghan Medieval Miniatures project](#) which managed to repatriate a critical aspect of Afghan cultural heritage of the 15th through 18th centuries. The art of this time, which was removed from Afghanistan soil, is still culturally relevant to many Afghan people. To understand why it is important to AIAS to restore access and awareness of art and history, Souza explains: "With regard to Afghanistan, as well as other countries in the Middle East affected by catastrophic war and displacement, heritage preservation and restoration can serve as critical pillars of identity construction once a sense of stability and security returns to those places."

Beyond Afghanistan, Souza's work explores cultural policy and the intersection between the state and cultural landscape in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. "I am looking at the Saudi art scene and how the country's new leadership has impacted the sector," says Souza. As a student, Souza focused on political and security issues in the Middle East and he didn't expect to end up working in non-profit management focusing on Afghanistan. However, he now sees how his international affairs background serves as the foundation of his work in the art and cultural sectors in the region.



James Souza (IAFS '10)

Students Discuss World Issues in Model UN



CU Model UN members at the Southern Regional Model United Nations conference, fall 2018

[CU Model United Nations \(Model UN\)](#) club attends national conferences every year to debate topics such as climate change, foreign relations, and economic reform. However, the true grit of the club can be found in meetings on campus. “In our weekly meetings we discuss issues in today’s headlines and I am amazed at the resolutions given by my peers,” says Phoebe Iguchi (IAFS ’19). “We come from a variety of majors, so we have different topic interests and perspectives to share with one another.” Iguchi also credits Model UN for helping her develop and improve on critical skills needed in the professional world, such as public speaking and group collaborations.

Last month, Model UN club members attended the [Southern Regional Model United Nations](#) conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Working together, the team created resolutions to various global issues from the perspective of Brazil. “Attending conferences allows us to meet hundreds of people from all over the U.S. and world--people who are all passionate about making a positive change,” explains club President Vamshi Arugonda (CSCI ’19).

Apart from participating in debates themselves, the team organizes a Model UN conference for high school teams. “In my opinion, hosting the high school conference is the coolest thing we do,” says Arugonda. “Today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders, and this conference gives us the chance to get them involved in solving critical issues affecting the world today.” Next semester, the club looks forward to hosting a high school conference in February and traveling to New York for a national conference in April.

2018 Education Abroad Student of the Year

[CU Education Abroad](#) Student of the Year, Natalie Hagewood (IAFS ’19), spent her Spring 2018 semester in Rabat, Morocco on the [CIEE Language & Culture program](#).

Hagewood was awarded a [Rotary Scholarship](#) for her language study in Morocco and while there, she worked diligently to improve her Arabic not only in her classes, but in her daily interactions with locals. Her time in Morocco left her committed to wanting to address the global refugee crisis that has been centered around migration from the Islamic world into Europe. To this end, she has been studying not just Arabic but also German (in addition to her fluent Spanish). She hopes after graduation to return to that part of the world and contribute to assisting refugee travel and resettlement.

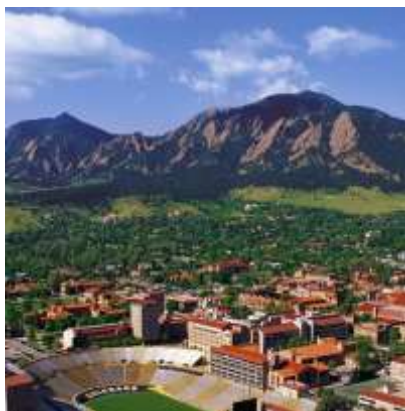
Hagewood has been very involved in the CU Boulder community before and after studying abroad. A few examples of her service include: interning at the [Center for Western Civilization, Thought & Policy](#), serving as Flag Organizer for the [Conference on World Affairs](#), and interning at both the [UN Association of Boulder County](#) and the [Global Studies Residential Academic Program](#).



Natalie Hagewood (IAFS ’19)

Since returning to CU after studying abroad, she has been active in founding a chapter of the [Slow Food Youth](#) movement, which advocates for farmers' rights and environmental initiatives. The organization seeks to connect the pleasures of the table with a commitment to the communities, cultures, knowledge, and environment that make this pleasure possible.

Congratulations to Natalie Hagewood for receiving the 2018 Education Abroad Student of the Year Global Citizen award!



Be Inspired

Save the date for the [IAFS Spring Welcome Reception](#) on Thursday, April 11, 2019 at 5:30 PM in the CU Boulder University Club Ballroom. We welcome all alumni and friends of the program to our special event, held during [Conference on World Affairs](#) week at CU Boulder.

News



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