

take five scholars program

University of Rochester



HONORING THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2022

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Program Abstracts

Samantha Balogh: The Interaction of Language and Culture

My original intention for this program was to learn about the ways language and culture influence one another. The BCS courses I took touched a bit on linguistics, but I wanted to learn more about the field. Linguistics and anthropology were two topics I have been interested in for a few years, but I didn't have the time to take courses in these fields. I wanted to find a way to bring these topics together while also incorporating Korean, a language I had been interested in learning more about.

While I have made changes to the courses I included in my program, I am very happy with the final outcome and knowledge I was able to acquire. I was able to learn more about the structure of language and how languages are studied through LING 225: Intro to Semantic Analysis and LING 220: Intro to Grammatical Systems. It was especially interesting to develop and build a theory of grammar in LING 220 and think critically about the different parts of language. The other linguistics classes I took talked more about identity and culture and the influence of these two topics on language use. I was able to learn more about how various aspects such as race, sexual orientation, and where you live influence the words we use and even the way we speak. I was even able to apply this knowledge to a project for the gender studies course I took, LGBTQ Histories and Culture, and discuss different linguistic aspects that are influenced by sexual orientation. The anthropology course I took taught me to see the way we use language from a different perspective. The courses I most enjoyed taking were KOR 101 and KOR 102, the elementary Korean language courses. Korean is a language I have been wanting to learn for a couple of years, since I became interested in Korean pop music. I am thankful that I was able to study the language with Professor Myounghee Cho, who created a wonderful and fun environment to learn in and was always so helpful and patient as I navigated the Korean language this past year.

Overall, I found my experience with my Take Five program to be very interesting and rewarding. I have learned a lot and expanded my knowledge in the areas of linguistics, anthropology, gender studies, and Korean. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to explore my various interests. I want to end by thanking Professor Abtahian and Professor Gresens for recommending me for the program and allowing me to have this opportunity.

Eileen Bequette: Socially Distant: Understanding the Importance of Our Interactions

As a Mechanical Engineering major, I went into my Take 5 year to explore another realm of study. Through a variety of Psychology, Anthropology, and Dance classes, I found so many connections between them all, and tied my learning to different experiences I've had throughout my life. I've always thought deeply about my interactions with others, and what experiences early on have led me to behave in certain ways. I loved looking back through a new lens, with a broader understanding of old questions and the addition of new questions to think about.

It has been amazing to experience such a different atmosphere and a new way of learning for me. I was used to equations, calculations, group projects, but then expanded my experiences into class discussions, ethnographies, and deeper looks into research papers. I look forward to bringing what I have learned with the extra time being on campus, into my life past graduation. I think having a fifth year was crucial for my development as a college student transitioning into a college graduate.

Jeremy Braiman: Judaism: History and Culture

During the start of my sophomore year of undergraduate study at the university, the worst attack on the American Jewish community occurred at the Pittsburgh-based Tree of Life synagogue. While I had always felt fairly detached from my Jewish heritage, this event made me realize just how important it is to stay connected to one's past. While growing up, there was a notable lack of a Jewish community in my hometown. While my parents did what they could to keep the traditions intact, there wasn't much to be done without the social aspects of the Jewish community, and it became harder and harder to sustain rather than "assimilating". Eventually, this desire to become more in touch with my Jewish roots manifested in applying to the Take 5 program.

During the early stages of planning this program, I was put into contact with Professor Rubel, who would go on to become a very supportive figure in helping me flesh out a program. Hoping to gain insight into how the Jewish diaspora developed, I planned on taking courses with Professor Rubel and Professor Hall. Additionally, I took on the challenge of learning Hebrew from Professor Andreatta; a task which (while difficult) has yielded many rewards. I was amazed to learn among starting my classes that my experience was not unheard of; in fact, it was a rather common one. The subtle (and sometimes not very subtle) pushes to assimilate into the lifestyles of other countries has affected the Jewish people for centuries, and was not just exclusive to the United States but many other historic civilizations as well.

It was in the various courses I took that I learned that while I had always thought myself to be detached from my Jewish heritage, I was far from disconnected from this part of my life. The openness of my Jewish peers in helping me move through this process, as well as family members that began to rekindle their connection upon hearing of my journey has led me to realize just how amazing this opportunity was. I am thankful to all who have helped me throughout this process, and for the Take 5 program for granting me the ability to study such a personal aspect of my identity.

Gal Cherki: Medieval Europe: Religion and Culture After The 12th Century Renaissance

During my Take 5, I intended to learn about the history of medieval Europe and more broadly, trace the history of the Jewish people. My course on Jewish history set off with the creation of the Jewish identity, and then moved from region to region and discussed the condition of the Jewish community under different Eurasian states. We learned how each of the other two Abrahamic religions viewed their relationship to the Jewish people, and the way they governed over them as a result. It was fascinating to learn how often Jewish people received the worst treatment when the central authority was at its weakest, which contrasted with my initial expectations. For instance, it is interesting how the papacy was often the most lenient authority in the Christian world to Jews, while in contrast violence and massacres usually happened at a much more localized, grassroots level. It was also interesting to learn how Jewish people were treated better under Muslim authorities, which allowed for the development of Jewish learning and the thriving communities that often go undiscussed.

From this starting point, my Take 5 let me expand and learn things about the world that I never even knew to ask about. From my classes on medieval Europe as well as those about Dante's Inferno, I got a whirlwind tour of the development of Christianity, its rise through the Church fathers, and the ways in which Christianity developed through its first 1500 years of existence. It was very interesting to see the parts of Christianity that hold true even today and the parts that seem almost unrecognizable. I also got to take a class about the Qur'an, which introduced me to Islam and taught me so much about Islamic religion and culture that I never knew before. The American education system does not put Islam in its proper context which is why I believe so many people in America see it as so alien even though all three Abrahamic religions have so much in common. For example, it was such a joy to learn about Aristotle first in his own context, then how he was adopted by early

Islamic thinkers like Ibn Sina, and then how Aristotelian philosophy made its way to Judaism through figures like Maimonides and to Christianity through thinkers like Thomas Aquinas who were all greatly inspired by Muslims like Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd.

All these classes gave me such a better understanding of why the world today is as it is. I got to see the development of a Christian-colonial mindset which would later go on to shape the world; I got to see how the state of women developed in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim societies, which informs my understanding of the current state of feminism; I even got to learn French and intend to visit my family in France soon, and see the results of 2000 years of historical, social, religious, and gender developments for my own eyes.

I'd like to thank Richard Kaeuper, for helping me plan out my Take 5 and develop my love of medieval European history. I would also like to thank Rabbi Asher and John Thibdeau for answering all my many questions about Jewish and Islamic theology respectively. Thanks to professor Stocchi-Perucchio for bringing the world of Dante to Life. And finally I would also like to thank Professor Naomi Jochowitz for helping me with my Take 5 application, for developing my interest in both mathematics and Judaism, and for generally being my Jewish-grandma-away-from-home.

Lizbeth De la Rosa: Human Behavior and Environment

Five years ago, I arrived on this college campus for the first time with an idea of how things were going to be, but little did I know that my experience was going to be so different from my expectations. I had arrived to such a diverse college environment that allowed me to meet people from many different places. Turns out that my learning experience was not only happening inside the classroom, but in every single interaction I had at the time. My main focus was to learn about science with the ultimate goal of obtaining my medical degree and becoming a doctor. As I studied Biology, I was taught about topics such as DNA, cells, and bacteria. In addition, I had the great opportunity to learn about other complex topics, such as climate change. Learning about the latter really opened my eyes to world issues that were previously unknown to me.

Growing up, I never really had the opportunity to learn about global warming or sustainable practices to fight climate change. My community wasn't focused on these issues and, therefore, I grew up not understanding the impacts of my behavior and how our individual choices contribute to climate change. As I learned about it in my biology class, I found the topic fascinating, yet concerning which served as a great motive for me to pursue a fifth-year of school with the end goal of being more educated on the matter. Although Environmental Science is not directly related to medicine, it is imperative that doctors and future doctors become familiar with the issue. Through hurricanes, wildfires and heatwaves, climate change threatens our health and therefore, the capacity for doctors and clinicians to provide care to those in need. In addition, doctors play a big role in society that makes them great influential figures with the ability to make big changes. It is necessary for them to learn about these worldwide problems and become advocates.

I can say that I am extremely satisfied with all the knowledge I have been able to gain through this program. I have become a more cognizant citizen, aware of how my actions and behavior impact our environment. I, first, want to say thank you to Dr. Karen Berger for being a great mentor and professor in the last two years. I also want to express my gratitude to my peers for always sharing their knowledge and my family for their unconditional support.

Raimundo Diaz: Transmission of Culture Through Language

When I applied to the Take5 program, I wrote my essay about how learning English as a Second Language in grade school was the best thing that ever happened to me. It allowed me to access a culture that was foreigner

to me, join new communities, and express myself in ways I didn't know before. So, I wanted to continue my pursuit of other languages by taking up German and American Sign Language, in hopes that someday I could understand them in enough depth that they would also become an essential part of my life.

Although two semesters felt too short, it was most certainly worth the time. I have been introduced to new films, TV shows, novels, and music; I have attended deaf events, learned about deaf-history, and found a community of ASL learners at the University of Rochester. I have met new people, expanded my horizons, and found new ways to express myself; accomplishing the goals I had set for myself, and even a bit more.

As my program comes to an end, I feel reassured in my conviction that language learning is the best way to open yourself up to new experiences and people. I would not be where I am today, surrounded by people and a culture I truly feel identified with if my parents hadn't encouraged me to learn English all those years ago. I look forward to further immersing myself in German and ASL and continue to be involved in their respective cultures.

Emma Dowd: How Psychology Influences the Study of Religious Extremists

When I was accepted into the Take 5 program, I was excited at the opportunity to pursue a topic I had long been curious about but hadn't had the chance to fully explore. Now, reflecting on my Take 5 experience thus far, I was not prepared for the profound impact my studies would have on me. My interest in the topic of psychology of religious extremism developed through a religion class titled Islam and the Third World as part of my Humanities cluster. I learned how to consider the reasoning behind a religious extremist's actions before forming prejudices about them, using this mindset to understand how people's personal life experiences contributed to their extremist actions. However, I was curious to further understand how religious extremists claimed to be acting morally when committing violent actions, and how religion served as justification for their acts of violence.

It was these unanswered questions that prompted me to apply to the Take 5 program in the hopes of studying the psychology of religious extremism. My goal was to examine how childhood and adolescent experiences influence a person's actions and relationships with others and with society, and how these experiences influence people's religious tendencies and can explain religious extremist actions and behavior. My classes in both psychology and religion provided me with a deeper understanding of religious extremism, psychology's relation to religious extremists, and religion's ambivalent yet essential role in society. In Religion and Violence, I built upon the idea of examining religious extremists in a humanistic way, learning that mainstream stereotypes of religious extremists as mentally disturbed are dangerous. This label categorizes them as the 'other' and allows society to disregard their true motives without ever understanding their reasoning. It is imperative, therefore, that we detach the assumption that psychological issues are the cause of religious extremists' actions and instead identify all possible motives. Examining religion's contributions to violence, I decided to focus my independent study on utilizing religion as a tool for peacebuilding. I've learned that religion is an ambivalent force in society. The way religious extremists negatively represent their religion stands in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly positive impact that religion can have on societies.

The transformative perspective my Take 5 studies have brought me is indescribable. My discoveries have gone above and beyond anything I had imagined I would achieve through this program. I am excited to utilize my newly acquired knowledge on religion, extremism, and peacebuilding, and apply it to professional goals of working in the fields of international development and post-conflict resolution. I would like to thank Professor Anne Merideth in particular for the lasting impact her guidance and expertise have left on me. Her support in the classroom and with my independent study have been exceptional. I would also like to thank the late Professor Emil Homerin, whose wisdom and unique perspective of the world served as the original inspiration

for my Take 5 subject and without whom I would not have embarked on this incredible opportunity.

Sierra "Sisi" Falcone: Women's Autonomy in Contemporary America

My Take Five year focuses on interdisciplinary coursework of gender, sexuality, and women's studies, and studio art. When I originally started the program, I wanted my fifth year to center around answering the question, "What does it mean for women to have autonomy in America," and to convey what I learned through meaningful art pieces. My main goal was to create an art installation centered around art activism, a call to action to end gendered injustices and bring awareness to gendered violence in this country. However, I have taken a different, more interpersonal approach, to my take 5 project. Instead of trying to figure out what it means to have autonomy, I decided to focus on the effects of not having autonomy or having autonomy taken away. This involved articulating the experience of people who deal with sexual misconduct and the aftermath of it.

As someone who has dealt with trauma surrounding my gender, and heard many similar stories from friends and family, I felt like I wanted to create art surrounding collective pain, but also the process of healing. I decided to create two projects surrounding this complicated idea and will be showcasing the combined creations in an exhibition in April. The title of the installation is called, "Reclaiming spaces: A Metamorphosis." The first project I started began with articulating collective emotions and actions people experience because of trauma, particularly sexual misconduct. I did this by reflecting on my own emotions and listening to other people in my GSW and art classes talk about their own stories. I created a series of prints, and a printed book, showing the effects of sexual harassment, and the fear and anxiety many women fear when walking home.

My second project focuses on the other side of the effects of trauma, the process of healing and recovering from traumatic events. I am creating a 3-dimensional art installation in the ASIS gallery in SAGE. The installation will consist of my prints from the first project I executed, along with the creation of a bedroom made up of my own art. My designs will be integrated into all aspects of this mock bedroom, from printed bedsheets sheets, to light fixtures, to windows and books. printed on the bed, on a lamp at a bedside table, and hanging on the walls and inside of books. Each piece will center around what it means to heal, and what it means to take back and grow confidence in oneself after trauma. This final installation will be the result of all my work throughout my Take Five scholarship.

Stefanie Faucher: Historical and Linguistic Analysis of the English Language

English has been around for 1000 years, and it has been undergoing constant change. I wanted to understand how my language had changed and why it was changing; also, I wanted to know how the language is changing right now. I was taught how languages change and what social factors can influence that process. I learned about the history of English – what languages it encountered, what words it adopted from these languages, and how its movement affected its change. I read books, poems, plays, and songs to see the language from the time in which it was actually used in. I learned everything I hoped to learn.

But beyond that, I learned more than I expected to. I read short stories and poems I never would have heard of without these classes. I was also able to read both British and American literature from the same years, discussing similar topics and I could compare the language varieties. Through sociolinguistics, I now know that some varieties of languages face extreme prejudice despite arising the same way as the other accepted varieties, but most people don't know they hold this prejudice. There was so much more to these classes and this material I never could have anticipated and I would have never known existed without this program.

I would like to thank Dr. Maya Abtahian for supporting me as I applied for this. I would also like to thank all the professors who taught me in this past year; I am grateful you all gave me the opportunity to learn

something new. And lastly, I would like to thank my parents who have always supported me through all my endeavors.

Alana Ferris: The Impact of Chronic Stressors, like Discrimination, on Public Health

Throughout my first four years of college, I solely looked at pathology from a biological perspective. I had examined what diseases do to a person's body and the biological pathways that cause the phenotype, but I had yet to examine why diseases may manifest. I wanted to investigate the intersection between biology, psychology, and the environment in order to better understand health and illness. I used my fifth year to examine the social determinants of health, ranging from what factors in a person's environment make them more susceptible to disease, to why some people are able to get better and others are not. Taking a year to better educate myself on these topics has prepared me to have a well-rounded approach when considering problems surrounding a person's or a community's health. Our world is a multi-dimensional space; therefore, the problems within it should be analyzed as such.

This program has broadened my education and allowed me to discover new passions while deepening my desire to pursue biological research after graduating. I have learned about the data bias against women within biomedical research (many drugs marketed to our entire population have only ever been tested within male bodies), and how concussion research mainly focuses on male athletes' experiences when we know that people who experience domestic violence have higher rates of TBIs. I learned how the way we describe the fertilization process in humans is imbued with society's sexist ideas about how men and women should behave. I learned about the creation of our modern medical systems and how they were specifically designed to exclude BIPOC individuals as well as women. I now better understand how the healthcare systems in place contribute to illness; how the environment you grow up in can determine your health later in life. I learned how there is more to the occurrence of disease than issues within our DNA.

I have learned so much during this extra year of university and I am so grateful for it. This education has shown me how important it is to bring a more holistic, feminist lens to scientific research. It has shown me that I can be a scientist that pursues inclusive research while simultaneously working to support marginalized groups' entry into the STEM field. As a first-generation college student and a queer woman, I have seen firsthand how academia is a difficult space to enter and feel welcome in. This fifth year has given me some of the tools to combat that. Lastly, thank you to Dr. Elaine Sia for always believing in me, my mother for supporting me, and the Take Five Program for this opportunity.

Serena Flint: Using German as a Lens to Analyze Language and Culture

When I was first accepted into the Take 5 program, I had no idea where this journey would take me. Initially intending to study the interaction between language and culture through the lens of German, the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for me to study abroad in Austria and complete my original program. As a result, my project has shifted into a more broad study of sociolinguistics, with influence from both German and American Sign Language (ASL) courses.

The curriculum I have completed as a result of my Take 5 has only served to reinforce the idea that I held before I began my journey — that the connection between language and culture is more finely woven together than I could have ever imagined. With each course, I was given a solid foundation with which I could use to analyze the language and culture surrounding me on a daily basis. From social media trends, to advertising, we see the interaction between two everywhere, sometimes in the most unexpected places.

As my program comes to a close, I am very fortunate to have had this opportunity to study something so

disconnected from my major. Without this experience I don't think my undergraduate experience would have felt nearly as complete, and I'm very thankful to all of the friends, family, and University faculty who kept me sane along the way.

Madeleine Fordham: Black America: Incarceration, Politics, and Protest

I was originally accepted into the Take 5 program with a focus on Islamic studies, but due to a number of factors, that eventually become no longer plausible. While I searched for a new area of study, I happened to be taking Incarceration Nation as part of the requirements for my ASL major. The further we progressed in the class, the more engrossed by the subject matter I became. After class I would hang back to talk with my professor or TA, wanting to analyze our topic for that day more deeply, every day, and yet I was never satisfied. That unscratchable itch became my new Take 5 topic, allowing me to finally dig into that material more deeply, if not necessarily find all the answers I was looking for.

Black history, literature, or politics are not generally required classes and are not always offered even as electives. Everything from African history to famous Black writers, to religions and cultural history is largely relegated to post-secondary education, where a limited number of students will choose to learn about it. My own study of Black America previous to this year mostly focused on slavery, with small lessons on the Civil Rights Movement, and moving slightly beyond the US to include Apartheid. Although I was inspired by Incarceration Nation, I expanded the scope beyond what the class covered, because while incarceration is a deeply important aspect of Black America, it is by no means the sole measure by which we should understand it. My program covered civil disobedience, slave narratives, modern literature and drama, and black politics from before the Civil War until the present day.

What do I feel I've learned from this year? I feel like I have a broader understanding of the issues POC face in the US, as well as some of what schools tend to miss or gloss over when teaching Black history. But more importantly, there was the realization that there is so much more that I have yet to learn and some things I will never understand, due to my whiteness and the privilege that comes with it. None of my classes for Take 5 were taught by Black professors - not a single one. In fact, in ten semesters here I've only ever had one (Professor Tucker, for African-American Drama). Additionally, the classes I took boasted a much higher percentage of POC students than any of the other classes I've taken ever, including in elementary or middle school. Completing this program had inspired me to try and do more after graduation to fix some of the inequalities we've accepted as normal in our society - they're not. I am now proud to call myself an abolitionist, and want to continue educating myself and others, even when it may not be easy.

Syed Arsalan Ghani: I am the Truth: The Dichotomy of Mysticism and Violence in Religion

My Take Five is titled "I am the Truth," Ana Al-Haqq, a saying commonly attributed to Sufi poet and teacher, Mansur Al-Hallaj. Al-Hallaj probably uttered this when he reached the station of annihilation, fana'a, in his spiritual journey, wherein one becomes united with Ultimate Reality. As Al-Hallaj's Ultimate Reality is characterized with truth, it follows that the unification imbued in him that quality as well. However, these words, while profound, became the cause of his death as the government in Baghdad found them to be blasphemous, summarily executing him.

This story, while apocryphal to an extent, summarizes completely what I set out to do in my Take Five: explore the intersecting roles of religion, mysticism, and violence, and their implication for the most basic elements of life, such as constructing the self, philosophy of law, and nation-building. And this was a worthwhile pursuit: I have come to find that the troika—religion, mysticism, and violence—can be found at every turn of life.

Through applying game theory to religion, I have seen how nation-states rise and fall, providing a glimpse into ethnic and religious tensions in our world. By bringing together literature and faith I have seen how rhetoric—in form of autobiographies, storytelling, and poetry—has been used by Augustine, Ibn Sina, and Lao Tzu to further their conceptions of the ultimate state of being. I have refined my understanding of the law by focusing on how religious and areligious forces can be used to provide equal justice under law: and how, sometimes, may explicitly work against it.

I knew going in that the role of religious mysticism is to construct a narrative of the self that is vied even by Ultimate Reality. In diametric opposition, I also knew that violence destroys our individual and collective narratives by diminishing the self. Therefore, I knew that their intersection would yield insight into everything from the ethical jurisprudence to 9th century Arabic Sufi poetry. And it did: now, I can confidently say that I, too, am one step closer to being the Truth.

In finding this Truth, I would be remiss if I did not mention Dr. Th. Emil Homerin, my sponsor, who passed before he could see me start my program. I could not have done most things without his love, advice, and support.

Emma Glassie: Marginalization and the Justice System

Growing up in the south, I was taught a very narrow version of history that only included the perspective of white, straight men with an occasional lesson dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr or Amelia Earhart. With age came the unsettling realization history is written by those in power and that has almost always been a specific, minor demographic. And that distortion goes beyond history and has been introduced into law, creating unequitable, discriminatory systems to perpetuate a specific power structure. This understanding only came to me towards the end of college, which motivated me to formulate a Take Five program. I wanted to learn the history of more identities, how various identities came to be discriminated against in America, and how we can fight that discrimination. Thus, my program, Marginalization and the Criminal Justice System, was born.

My program was primarily divided into two parts: the history of various identities and the criminal justice system. For the first aspect of my program, I took courses on the history of different types of feminism; LGBTQ cultures and movements in America; the black family; and the intersection of sexuality and religion. These courses showed me just how much I didn't and still don't know of history. However, I now have a much better understanding of what transpired in these communities in America and how they came to be where they are now. I know that there were not "waves" of feminism and there isn't one type of feminism either; interracial marriage only became legal in 1967; and it was years after the epidemic started before President Reagan even said the word "AIDS" in public. The history of marginalized communities should be taught, and we would all be better for learning it.

For the criminal justice aspect of my program, I took courses on how to measure and test discrimination; the interaction of politics, philosophy, and economics to change the world; incarceration in America; and constitutional principles and criminal procedures. These courses showed me that every cop show ever has lied to me. In a way, these courses were simultaneously disheartening and inspiring. The understanding I gained showed me the brokenness of the systems in America and the pain it continually inflicts. Before this program I knew there were systemic injustices, but I did not know the magnitude. However, the people who dedicate their lives to fight these systems absolutely amazed and inspired me. They gave me hope that one day those injustices would be dismantled. Change can take place, but it's grueling and time consuming.

Sarah Diane Grabowski: An Exploration of the Visual Modalities of Language

Human communication through language extends beyond speech to a rich diversity of visual modes. My decision to do Take 5 was motivated by a desire to study these representations of language, with a focus on writing and sign. My initial goal was two-fold, intending to investigate the effect the mode of delivery has on meaning and cultural significance; however, progressing through my coursework strongly shifted the focus to the latter.

Beyond a conversational proficiency in another language, studying American Sign Language has given me an appreciation of its central role in Deaf culture. It has also instilled an understanding that the relevance of a visual modality of a language is independent of the existence of an auditory analogue. Writing, however, almost always develops to represent an existing language. To consider a broader scope of cultures, I dove headfirst into the art of Japanese calligraphy, where the forms of letters are equally significant as what is being written. The method and appearance of writing varies over time as well and Writing Across Technologies, with Dr. Karl Mohn, gave me the chance to engage with different methods of writing, from clay tablets to typewriters. This course became a core part of my Take 5, and its discussions encouraged me to wrestle with abstract questions I hadn't before thought about, such as what is required for something to be considered writing? Could the khipu of the ancient Inka (a knot-based recording system) be a type of writing? I had the chance to further push this line of inquiry in another class where I explored the inscriptive capacity of khipu by phonetically encoding English through the articulatory features of sounds.

This Take 5 program has given me the opportunity to explore my fascination with the physical representation of language through courses I would not have otherwise had time to take. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge both my academic advisor Dr. Andrew Berger, who has been a staunch supporter of my pursuit of Take 5, and my program recommender Dr. William Bridges who, beyond being an instructor of one of my courses, was crucial in helping shape my Take 5 program. This year has been an invaluable opportunity to enrich my university experience, and it has truly given me the space to grow, both intellectually and as a well-rounded individual.

Toni Anne Hahn: Renaissance Art and its Presence in Museums

I have always been fascinated by art, and while many can appreciate its aesthetic value, the social and political implications of art are often overlooked by those outside the field. Through my Take 5 program, I intended to not only learn about such implications throughout the history of art, but also develop the tools necessary to express my own social or political opinions via various artistic mediums.

Inspired by my mother, who worked as a muralist for most of her adult life, I grew up loving to draw and paint. This love persisted and continued to be a source of stress relief throughout my collegiate experience, and it has now transformed into a compelling academic pursuit. Taking both art history and studio art courses, I have learned about various techniques and artistic movements, as well as how to assess, analyze, and discuss works, taking into account a multitude of perspectives and potential meanings. As a STEM major who is more used to having one true answer, the ambiguity of art was difficult to grasp at first. However, it quickly became clear that this open-endedness merely adds to its beauty and intrigue, and encourages complex, eye-opening discussions. Such discussions, often with individuals that have academic or cultural backgrounds unlike myself, has allowed me to truly appreciate a wide range of perspectives and emphasize the impact our own personal experiences can have on the ways we view or conceptualize any piece of art. Accompanied by a semester abroad, I also got to witness the role of art in different cultural contexts and compare it to my experiences in the US. This immersive experience has really helped to expand my understanding of different cultures, which will assist in my future career in medicine, as well as a better general understanding of how different people can experience the same thing in very different ways.

Overall, this program has not only helped me to learn about art and its social impact, but also granted me the opportunity to learn from a wide range of individuals and gain a much more inclusive, global perspective on many different issues. Additionally, my new knowledge and practice with artistic techniques has led to the creation of both personal and political works in my studio classes that I look forward to potentially sharing with others in the future. I also plan to build upon these skills I have gained and continue making art - using a variety of mediums - as a means of creative expression, social activism, and relaxation.

Martin Horwath: How to Create Lasting Gender Equality in an Ever-Fluid World

The world where I designed my Take 5 program and the world where I am writing this reflection are very different, in more ways than one. When I first designed my Take Five, I was a junior hoping to take a more academic route to understanding both how to create more long-lasting, permanent changes in equitability and fairness for the world's women and how to extend this to our continuously growing understanding of gender fluidity. I was taking a look at this larger issue through multiple angles, both historical and geographical, and I knew that differing viewpoints would help to enrich my program. However, I had no way of knowing just how drastically the next two years would shift my program.

Aside from the global pandemic, the biggest social development in my program came from the recent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. In particular, the experiences of Black women and how racism so often intersects with sexism, while never ignored by my program, became much more centralized, both through my readings in my classes and books and papers I read on my own initiative. Seeing the needs for these perspectives to be expressed dominated my work mindset in these classes, and the topical nature of discussions that often came up in class. On a much more personal level, though, the quarantine allowed me to take some time to analyze my own sense of gender, eventually coming to the realization that I am, in fact, non-binary, which also influenced how I thought about and discussed gender fluidity. Both of these major developments shaped my program immensely, and while I did not need to change my course layout drastically, they shaped what happened in these courses immensely.

Claire Janezic: Art of Incarcerated People

Qingyuan Jia: From Movements to the Mind- An Investigation on the Development of Self

I had the idea of doing a Take Five Program on this topic while I was sitting in the classroom for Theory of Personality and Psychotherapy. I found the content covered in class extremely interesting and personally relatable. Listening to the professor speaking about mindfulness, I thought of the classes I had taken in the dance department, where the professors would always emphasize bodily awareness. During the lectures, I always find myself trying to relate psychology topics to what I have learned from the dance classes. However, the linkages seemed ambiguous and vague. Therefore, I thought of doing a Take Five so that I can further investigate the concept of "self" with perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology, Dance, and Religion.

Throughout my Take Five journey, I took deeper dive into psychology and dance. My perspective on Psychology has changed a lot since taking introductory Psychology during the first semester of college. My experience in college has made me appreciate the emotional development of individuals and how they view the world around them, which also contributes to how they view themselves. Learning about human motivation was enlightening. I became a big fan of the Self-Determination Theory, which states that people need autonomy,

competence, and relatedness to be motivated and reach psychological well-being. The theory applies to many aspects of life – from romantic relationships to work environments – and it encourages me to seek things in life that can fulfill these needs.

Take Five also gave me a chance to further explore my interest in dance, making me appreciate the art of expression through movements, as well as the personal growth one can gain from mindfulness and martial arts practices. I also enriched my knowledge in psychopathology and learned how dance and movement therapy could contribute to mental healing. Lastly, I used Take Five as an opportunity to learn about my own culture, which is rooted in Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism.

I would like to thank Shandra Kieffer and J.B. Rodgers for their guidance and support throughout the Take Five program. I would also like to thank Professor Rose Pasquarello Beauchamp for making me fall in love with contemporary dance and Professor Douglas Brooks for his thought-provoking lectures. The Take Five Program provided me with an incredible opportunity for personal growth, and it will be an experience that I will always think back upon.

Darman Khan: Faith v. Feminism: The Impact of Religion on Gender Inequality

My Take Five program is titled ‘Faith v. Feminism: The Impact of Religion on Gender Inequality’ which is precisely what I consistently questioned growing up in predominantly Muslim culture. In a society where religion and culture are deeply intertwined, the idea of abolishing gender roles is framed at odds with religious values and the acceptance of feminist ideas creates cognitive dissonance, especially for women who have deep ties to their faith. Coupled with the fact that as a physics major, I was a firsthand witness to the gender disparities in STEM, I was motivated to combine humanistic and empirical approaches toward studying an issue that had long perplexed me.

My decision to devote a fifth year of college to studying these issues was truly fulfilling. I wanted to resolve the resentment I built up towards religion by growing up in a society that prided itself on suppressing the individuality of women and rationalizing it as a sign of faith.

I took a diverse array of courses in history, religion, political science, anthropology, gender, and sexuality which made me deeply familiar with the prolonged and complex interconnections that result from religion being deeply embedded within human history and society. As my motivation to study the relationship between religion and gender stemmed from my experience growing up as a Muslim, I had intended to focus my Take Five on Islam. However, as the program progressed, I diversified my track to include courses that addressed the same themes but in various major religions. It was incredibly fascinating to explore the ideologies of different religions and understand the underlying similarities and differences. Learning that the problematic issue of framing religion in opposition to gender equality is present not just in Muslim societies, but in other cultures as well, was extremely interesting. Religion is often used to justify gender roles that subordinate the status of women and perpetuate an inherently unequal social structure, and for too long now it has been institutionalized and interpreted in ways that warrant women’s oppression.

As I approach the end of my Take Five program, I can confidently say that for me this was personally a huge step, and only the first one, towards exploring a topic I have been intrigued by since childhood. I want to especially thank Professor John Thibdeau, who taught me one of the most enlightening and engaging courses of my Take Five– History of Islam. Lastly, I want to thank my dad, and the endless engaging conversations with him on Islam, that piqued my interest in studying religion in the first place.

Miles Kim: A Philosophical Examination of American Politics

When I wrote my Take Five proposal, President Donald Trump was still in office. The COVID pandemic was in its infancy. Police officers had murdered Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away, leaving room for yet another Trump appointee on the highest court in the land. These events seemed to me to be symptoms of a deeply divided and polarized nation. I wanted to use my Take Five year to examine the causes of this damaged state of affairs. I wanted to find hope in potential cures to the pathology of the current American political landscape.

It should come to the surprise of nobody that I did not discover the exact causes of the current political divide in our country. Regrettably, I did not find the panacea to the ills of American politics. On many occasions, I walked home from my courses slightly crestfallen, having learned some new, saddening perspective or narrative. It was overwhelming to learn about the multitude of incentives that combine to create this current, discordant political reality.

I found hope in an unexpected place. I found hope in the naivety of the most abstract, aspirational, and ingenious scholars that I was fortunate enough to study. In reading John Dewey, John Rawls, Elizabeth Anderson, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and so many others, I am inspired by their dreaming and philosophizing of impossible worlds, devoid of institutional injustice. Cynicism may be the true path of least resistance for a newly-disillusioned college student such as myself. I am inspired by these great thinkers to fight my cynicism and be naive enough to hold on to hope.

I am incredibly grateful to my program advisor, Professor Rosa Terlazzo, for her guidance in developing my course program, as well as for teaching two of my favorite courses I have taken at the University of Rochester.

Celia Konowe: Jewish Diaspora in the Wake of the Spanish Inquisition and Ladino Culture

On the Lower East Side of Manhattan, on Orchard Street, is the Tenement Museum—a historical site located in an abandoned tenement building discovered behind a storefront in the 1980s. The museum explores the unique intricacies of American immigration through neighborhood walking and tenement tours. Of the eight available building tours, one allows you to meet a former resident—Victoria Confino, a teen who immigrated to New York with her family from Kastoria (present-day Greece) in 1913. During the tour, an actress playing the role of Victoria shares what life as an immigrant family is like, particularly as a Sephardic Jewish family (hailing from the Iberian Peninsula). The Confino family sticks out in the heavily Ashkenazi (central and eastern European) city of New York, providing the perspective and history of an often forgotten community. Their story is also the beginning of my Jewish identity—Victoria Confino was my great-grandmother and the inspiration for my Take 5 project.

I've grown up proud of my family history, but it wasn't until I learned in the fall of 2019 that our family has (confirmed) Spanish heritage prior to the Inquisition and therefore qualified for Spanish citizenship that I felt the drive to understand our path. How did we get from Spain in the 1400s to New York in the 1900s, and where did the diaspora take us along the way? What did paths of immigration look like for Sephardic Jews, and how did these foster Sephardic culture as we know it today? Where was “home” for us? I focused largely on the evolution of identity; by taking courses in history, Jewish studies, and Spanish and Hebrew (in an attempt to move one step closer to understanding Ladino, the Sephardic equivalent to Yiddish), I was able to better understand where the Sephardim started in Medieval Iberia, why they were forced to leave, migration paths during the subsequent centuries, and how these factors (and many more) influenced the evolution of community, culture, and identity.

My Take 5 project has been incredibly rewarding, allowing me to connect further with my roots, expand my educational knowledge, and give back to my family who has worked so hard to preserve and share the stories

of our ancestors. I've gained a broader understanding of diasporic movement throughout history and the often tricky balance between religion, culture, and ethnicity. I've managed to find new family members (who knew that a seemingly random kid on my Birthright trip six months before I even began my Take 5 application could be my third cousin?) and have yet another opportunity to appreciate the incredible academics here at the University of Rochester. I would like to thank: Professor Andreatta for being my Take 5 advisor, Professor Berger for being a continuously supportive major advisor throughout all aspects of my undergraduate career, Professor Devaney for taking a leap of faith and encouraging my curiosity during an independent study, Professor Rubel for teaching the single coolest course I've ever taken (about Jewish food throughout history), Shandra Kieffer for being the most supportive and attentive Take 5 Program Admin, and my parents and grandma for raising me to celebrate my identity and never stop exploring my interests.

Joshua Liao: An Economic and Political Connection: Understanding the Modern World

I initially applied to the Take 5 program for a chance to learn more about the intersection between economics and political science, and how those two influential areas have a powerful impact on shaping the world that we live in today. As an undergrad statistics major, I had spent my first 2.5 years here on campus in a world of theoretical probability and mathematical variables, and sought the opportunity to broaden my educational experience in two vastly different fields of study. Little did I know just how much I would learn and see classroom material applied in the world around me.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic halfway throughout my college career, I saw firsthand just how much of an impact the political arena has on a country's economics and how closely they can be intertwined. From the government's intervention with the economy through monetary, fiscal, and public policy to the response that corporations and small businesses had across various sectors, I watched live news become case studies for the material I was learning. I was fortunate enough to have some incredible professors who actively applied course concepts to the emerging current events. Courses such as Money, Credit & Banking built the foundation for my economics understanding while others such as Politics & Markets were much more focused on the niche yet impactful overlap between business and government. Additionally, I had a chance to branch out and take a philosophy course to gain exposure thinking with a 10,000-foot view with the course "How to Change the World Using Economics and Political Science". The incredible educational experience of my 5th year on campus is something that I will never forget.

My Take 5 year would not have been possible if it weren't for the outstanding supporting cast that I had around me. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for the incredible support all these years and urging me to apply for this program – I couldn't have done it without you. Thank you Professor Primo for helping me with the Take 5 application and for the two amazing classes I had a chance to take with you as a part of my Take 5 program – I learned so much more than I ever imagined I would. Lastly, thank you Professor Ciminelli for all of your guidance over the years as my major advisor – your statistics program was the heart of my educational experience at the U of R.

Emily Loose: Gender and Power- How Cultural and Historical Factors Shape our Perceptions of Modern Men and Women

Sabrina Mai: Communication in the Modern World: Understanding How Language is a Carrier of

Culture, Thought and Identity

Quirina Geary, the chairwoman of the Tamien Nation and a speaker of the Mutsun language once said, “There is something about language that is so deeply rooted in identity. It’s how you see the world, and how the world sees you.”

As an Asian-American and bilingual speaker of Cantonese and English, that quote resonated deeply with my own experiences with language. Throughout my life, interactions with my family and community prompted many questions regarding identity, culture, and language that never had fulfilling answers. Thus, it sparked the motivation for me to investigate the close-knit relationship between those three things in my Take-5. To first gain some insight into how language is intertwined with society and culture, I took courses in the Linguistic and English departments. Through these courses, I was able to see how the English language specifically carries evidence of many significant cultural events in history and how those events can be traced from the etymology of even a single word. I learned how we as speakers not only continue preserving culture in our everyday speech but are continuously shaping it through various language changes as time goes on.

To apply and explore the individual experience that one may have with language, I took courses in the Philosophy, Literary Translation Studies and Writing departments. From the Philosophy of Language course, I learned many theories about the complex process that we use to construct our sentences and convey meaning and ideas with language. From the course Translation: Interpreting and Adapting, I was able to have hands-on training in creating translations and learned how to navigate the fine balance between honoring the original language while making the text accessible for the target audience— somehow making the un-translatable more understandable. I learned how other languages, especially indigenous languages, hold different perspectives of our world, and that protecting them is crucial in maintaining their communities and their autonomy in a society where they are often misrepresented and ignored. Furthermore, the loss of these languages can not only have profound impacts on an individual’s identity and their culture, but also on our knowledge as a species at large.

I am grateful to be a part of the Take-5 program as it has given me the opportunity and resources to broaden my horizons away from my scientific studies. I have gained a much greater appreciation for the art of communication, and how powerful and unique language is as a form of expression. I would like to thank my mentors and faculty members in the Neuroscience, Linguistics, Philosophy, English, Writing and Translation Studies departments for all their support, as well as Shandra Kieffer, and J.B Rodgers for their guidance and coordination of this program. I would also like to specifically thank Professor Stella Wang of the Writing, Speaking and Argument Program. Her translation course was a huge inspiration for my Take-5 proposal and her enthusiasm and wisdom about linguistic diversity have greatly influenced my perspective on languages and their communities. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, and friends for their continuous encouragement and support throughout my undergraduate studies

John Mantus: Climate Change Bootcamp

In Spring of 2020 I took a course on Environmental Economics with Michael Rizzo. I learned the many ways humans can both doom and protect environmental assets. In particular, we discussed the costs of both climate change and mitigation/adaptation efforts. While engaging, I always felt slightly behind in our discussions as I lacked an underlying knowledge of Earth’s climate system. For example, I knew that more CO₂ emissions causes more warming but didn’t understand the underlying mechanism which drives this greenhouse effect. I wanted to better engage in the climate change conversations I’ll be having for the rest of my life and Rochester’s Take Five program seemed like the perfect way to do that.

While you won’t see me giving presentations on climate change, I do think I have achieved my goal. I now

have a rudimentary mental model on how various human actions will affect Earth's climate in both the short and long term. Further, while not part of my plan, I have gained an understanding of the many ways our climate is studied and how these studies inform predictions of our future climate. This knowledge will further enrich inevitable future conversations about climate change.

I would like to take this space to thank several people who helped me in these last few years. First, I would like to thank Professors Asen Kochov and Vas Petrenko, both of whom graciously wrote me letters of recommendation for the program. I would also like to thank Rizzo for inspiring me to think more carefully about "the environment" and measures to protect it, and Professor Tom Weber for making climate science so much fun, from the David Bowie sound checks to allowing me to present the case for nuclear energy as a substitute for fossil fuels. Lastly, I would like to thank Zina for working through my application process with me, and Hailey for making my last two semesters here some of my best.

Zina Miqdadi: Developments in Premodern European Christianity

As a psychology major, I have always been endlessly fascinated by behavior. Why do people do the things that they do? Why is the spectrum of human behavior so complex and varied? In my psychology courses, discussion of behavior had always focused on the role of the environment in shaping behavior. However, I was raised in a Muslim household, so the answers to the questions that I had about human behavior were always religious in nature, and they relied on a different method of logical reasoning than the one I was learning in school. As such, I developed an interest in ideology. I became interested in how religious ideology guides, determines, and manifests itself in human behavior.

As a result of Western European colonization and imperialism throughout the world, the values and beliefs of Western Christianity form the ideological foundations of the religious and cultural institutions that we interact with daily. Given how integral these ideologies are to affecting human behavior, I was motivated to focus my Take Five program on researching developments in early European Christianity.

This program allowed me to take an interdisciplinary approach to researching ideology and behavior, which was a departure from the psychological methods that I had been accustomed to. Throughout my fifth year, I took a variety of courses in philosophy, anthropology, and history. This exposed me to a range of perspectives and examples of religiously motivated behaviors. As a result of this program, I have learned a significant amount about the influence of religious ideology on behavior and the mechanisms by which abstract ideas are manifested materially. Religion is so important to our lives because it helps humans formulate a framework of ethics that guides behavior, and it creates rigid distinctions for socialization that dictate what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Consequently, I have gained a greater appreciation for how important religious ideology is in governing human behavior and explaining the reasons as to why people do the things that they do. This appreciation has helped me learn more about myself, the world, and the people around me. I hope to take these new insights further with me in my future academic explorations.

I would like to thank the people in my life who have encouraged me to grow, both personally and intellectually, throughout this program. I am forever grateful to my friends for their unwavering support. Additionally, I would like to thank Professor Gresens for his assistance and guidance this year. I am incredibly grateful for his kindness and confidence in my abilities. Thank you for making my last year so fulfilling.

Jasmine Moon: Musical Extension of the Development of Our Language

For over a decade, I've always wanted to re-learn piano. I started to learn when I was young but was not able to continue. I also wanted to learn about the language of music: music theory. Realizing the Take 5 Program

could help me to pursue my area of personal enrichment, I thought it was too perfect of an opportunity to pass up!

Throughout my fifth year, I have achieved my original proposed goal, and beyond. First, I took linguistics courses to learn about how the structure of the English language relates to the application of English, my everyday speaking language. Accordingly, I established a foundation for musical knowledge by taking two sequential music theory courses. Then, I learned to play the keyboard, which allowed me to apply my new knowledge of music theory to reading and playing on the keyboard. I have gained a richer understanding of the intersection of the structure and application of both the English and musical language.

I would like to thank my family for supporting me during my Take 5 journey, as well as my close friends. I would also like to thank all the professors (Departments: Music, Linguistics, Anthropology, History, English, Korean, Spanish) with whom I have spoken to initially develop my Take 5 proposal. Specifically, my favorite Take 5 courses were Theory I and Keyboard Skills, so I would like to thank Professor BaileyShea and Professor Frank, respectively, for comprehensively expanding my knowledge of music theory and keyboarding application. Ending my academic career at UR with this Take 5 Program has been an invaluable experience for which I will be forever grateful.

Thien Hung Nguyen: Japanese Modern Language and Culture

Trent Noordsij: Music Composition and Production

As someone with a major in mechanical engineering and minor in business, I had very few available credits to study interests outside these disciplines. One of these interests that presented itself during my undergraduate years was music. I started gaining a greater appreciation for music and how it is composed and produced. As a result, I applied for a Take 5 program in music theory and production. The goal of this program was to learn more about how music is created from a theory perspective, as well as how its produced from a technical perspective. To accomplish this goal, I proposed a program consisting of courses from the music department and audio and music engineering department.

Going into my Take 5 program, I had virtually no knowledge of music theory. I began learning basics concepts: how to read sheet music, basic scales, and basic harmony. This foundation was important as it has allowed me to explore more advanced and interesting topics in later music theory courses, such as song form in popular music and how chromatic harmony is often used. In my audio and music engineering courses, I've learned more than I thought was possible about recording instruments, audio mixing and mastering, production software, sound design, etc. I hope to take what I've learned in these past two semesters and build upon it, by learning to play more instruments, learning more about popular music composition and to continue to increase my knowledge in audio production.

This program has allowed me to do an in-depth exploration of a budding passion of mine, at a level that would not have been possible on my own. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity and would like to thank the Take 5 administrators, Professor Matthew BaileyShea and Professor John Lambropoulos for aiding me in this journey. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents for their everlasting support.

Thanh Pham: Language Variations in French

I decided to apply for the Take Five program to learn about the variations of French language. This is an

interdisciplinary program between French and Linguistics, during which I hoped to learn about the different variations of the French language and how various factors influence the creation of those variations. I have always been interested in this topic but was always too busy with my coursework, so I thought the Take Five program was the perfect opportunity for me to explore this interest.

Throughout my Take Five program, I was able to expand my knowledge about linguistics, including why and how languages change over time, how different varieties of language are created as well as how language influences cultures and society. Moreover, I also had the opportunity to advance my French, a language I really enjoyed learning. I'm in my final semester of the Take Five program, and I have been learning about French as a language, different French-speaking societies, and language variations more than I have ever imagined before starting this program. This knowledge will probably not be helpful for me in my professional life after graduation, but it will always be an important part of my personal development and interest. I'm really grateful to be part of the Take Five program and to have the opportunity to explore the topic of language variations in French.

Ichchha Pradhan: Statistical Perspective on Violence Against Women in South Asia

During my four years taking courses for my double majors in Political Science and Psychology, I briefly encountered topics concerning gender inequality/ discrimination, statistical models and South Asia. However, the discussions and readings were limited to one or two classes per semester (if I was lucky), and were not enough for me to develop a deeper understanding of these topics individually or how they connect to one another.

As a Take-5 scholar, I have been able to draw from courses from Anthropology, History, Public Health, Statistics, and Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies departments to help me understand the interplay between factors that contribute to assault on women globally. A measurable skill I learnt was the ability to perform categorical data analysis in R to interpret the strength and relevance of cultural and social factors that guide how we pursue the issue of gender violence. Through enriching discussions in my Humanities classes, I learnt about and was exposed to a wider variety of topics than what I had set out to explore. I am well-versed (or at least informed) about multiple facets of the feminist movement, structural/ intersectional inequalities and the plight of women and LGBTQIA community, historically and at present. I found myself particularly keen on investigating emerging issues in gender health which also informed my choice of independent study.

I completed an independent study/ research project over the academic year with Dr. Diane Morse, University of Rochester Medical Center in collaboration with academics from Columbia University and Yale University. I am taking the lead on a qualitative paper examining social determinants of health that affect recently released incarcerated women's participation in health intervention programs in Rochester, NY and New Haven, CT. Over the course of my research internship, I was exposed to interventions and research related to substance abuse, trauma and domestic violence in formerly incarcerated women, who are disproportionately Black and Latina.

I would like to thank the Take-5 program for helping me grow as a person and make the most of my college experience. I am immensely grateful towards Professor Joseph Ciminelli for making statistics fun and approachable, for his patience and dedication, and for being the most incredible advisor and teacher through and through. I would like to thank Dr. Diane Morse for her research mentorship, and Professor Tanya Bakhmatyeva and Professor Rachel O'Donnell for introducing me to amazing feminist scholarships. I am grateful to Shandra Kieffer for always being so kind and prompt to help me out with anything and everything. Thank you to my dear friends, Elena Robson for being my fellow Take-5 pal in this journey and Siddhant Iyer for supporting me through the application process and the entire year! Lastly, I would like to thank my father for his

unwavering faith and support, my family and friends for their love and presence, and my mother to whom I owe everything I learn and achieve.

Rafael Ramirez: The Impacts of Race on American Politics and Healthcare

Starting in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic was not ideal but made what I was learning in the classroom much more applicable to the current events and improved my understanding about the politics surrounding race and public health in the United States. I started my Take 5 experience by taking Intro to the US Health System and American Health Politics and Policy. Taking these two courses really made me more versed in the history of health disparities affecting POCs, as well as the policies that made it possible for these to persist. Seeing America's racist history, which I felt was not represented well when I was in high school, further opened my mind to realities of this white perspective of American History. From the Tuskegee Study on Black men to the forced sterilization of minority groups for the sake preserving the "American" race, which later served as a model for the Nazi regime many years later, there was one thing in common: whitewashing of atrocities that America committed and never really being held accountable for.

I then took a class on the History of White Supremacy, which put so much into context about the racist policies and racist ideas that were intertwined with the birth of the United States as a nation. This tied in neatly with my introductory course on US Politics. From these two classes I came to understand that racist policies are not the result of racist ideas. Instead, it is the other way around. According to Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, anyone can create or consume racist ideas, but they themselves are not the cause of racist policies. It is the racial discrimination that is at the very root of this issue. For example, if we take a look at capitalism, specifically racial capitalism, we see that it is the policies that were defended or created for the sake of economic self-interest fuel these ideas (e.g., the beneficiaries of slavery, segregation, mass incarceration have made it clear that Black People are best suited to be trapped to this idea).

I also took Health care and the Law and Public Health Law and Policy. These two courses further integrated race, politics, and public health in a critical way. From the case law examples to the policy making process to address health disparities, I was amazed about how much work is needed to improve the health of our minority groups. Specifically for Public Health Law and policy, I was actually able to attend health coalition meetings as part of the course requirements. I was fortunate to be in the Latino Health Coalition meetings for the City of Rochester. I was able to see first-hand how they go about partnering with community partners and paving the way to take a stance on policy agendas in NYS. Lastly, I am taking a film class on race, which has added a whole new layer of understanding to how I viewed race. Media, I believe, has had a huge impact on how we view representation as a whole. Today, we are still seeing the need to be inclusive on media because the US is far from being White. I saw how in the early days, films help reaffirm the stereotypes of certain minority groups (predominantly Black People) or with tearing down of minority groups to advance another in society. I think this class has been most beneficial in helping understand the culture of the United States and see how detrimental it has been towards POCs because it was another attempt to rewrite perspectives of society, which further made it difficult to be a person of color in the United States. I would not change my experience for anything in the world. I feel that being a Take 5 scholar has helped me grow as a scholar and a person. It had an influence on the direction I want to take for my career. I want to be a medical professional who will fight for racial justice in the Healthcare System and Public Health law.

Omaira Rivera: Exploring the Relationship of Humans and the Environment

Coming into the Take5 program, my goal was to learn about the different factors that play into the

relationship between humans and the environment, with the personal goal of becoming a more well-aware consumer regarding environmental impacts. At first, I simply thought it would be a good way to learn a bit about something I was genuinely curious about. Little did I know, the Take5 year would inspire a new passion in me. Through this experience, I expected to explore topics such as environmental law and policy-making, the social construct of what constitutes nature, the state of the environment through the decades, environmental justice, and environmental economics. Given the nature of most environmental issues, studying this topic required an interdisciplinary approach. Thus, my Take5 program of study comprised of courses from various departments such as environmental science, economics, international relations, political science, and gender, sexuality and women's studies (GSW). Reflecting back, I can conclude that I learned much more than I anticipated. Ultimately I was able to get valuable insight and build a strong base regarding this topic.

This experience would not have been possible without the support of many people. For that, I would like to thank professors Karen Berger and Katherine Schaefer for being such amazing advisors. Also, to all the professors I have had during the Take5 journey. A big thank you to Shandra Kieffer and JB Rogers for directing the program and making the Take5 year such a meaningful experience. This year has been an amazing educational experience and I will be forever grateful for it.

Elena Robson: Technical Approaches to the Arts

My Take Five program, "Technical Approaches to the Arts," has allowed me to develop my skills in the areas of studio art, creative writing, and dance to prepare me for a lifelong pursuit of creativity. The courses I had the opportunity to take as a part of my program were Creative Writing: Poetry, Advanced Creative Writing: Fiction, Introduction to Painting, Advanced Painting (two semesters), Introduction to Drawing, Tap Dance: Beginning, and Primary Voice Lessons (two semesters). In each of these courses, there was an emphasis on personal growth and self-direction, honing the ability to workshop my own creative output and to work independently. I gained precisely what I had hoped to from my Take Five: the tools I needed to create on my own throughout my life and the confidence to get started. My sizable portfolio is a lovely bonus!

I would be remiss not to recognize those who helped me along the way. First, I would like to thank Professor Mariah Steele of the Department of Dance and Movement, whose input was invaluable in honing my ideas for this program and crafting my proposal. I am also grateful for the support of Dr. Joanna Scott, whose instruction and investment have encouraged me in my writing since my first year at UR. I would not be half the artist I am today without the influence and kindness of the incredible Heather Layton, who taught me to paint, pushed me to take risks, and gave me a new mantra: "Fail fast." My voice teacher Sarah Luebke has been one of the best parts of having one more year at UR – I am so thankful for her superb teaching and for her friendship, and I will miss her very much. Lastly, I thank my most devoted supporters: my parents, my fiancé Curtis, and my Papa – who knows where I would be without you?

Ariel Schwartz: Social Movements, Social Media, and the Politics of Race in Rochester

My intention for this program was to learn about the vastly unequal circumstances of people of different races who live within close proximity of each other in the United States, and how media allows for and directs knowledge about these inequalities. While COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter Movement have brought more of this issue into the spotlight in recent years, my coursework has exposed me to the underlying structures that make this so, adjusting my worldview, as I prepare to transition from the undergraduate setting to adulthood.

Due to changes in course offerings since the time of my proposal, my Take 5 transitioned from technical work in digital media studies and computer science to more theoretical lessons about Blackness in politics,

literature, and social constructs. In spite of that, courses in media studies still enabled me to evaluate the media we are exposed to on a daily basis, allowing me to consider what content is being created, by whom, and for what reason, especially in relation to the politics of race. Technical coursework served as an introduction for understanding the backend that enables the access people have to information and social networking on their devices. Although I'm still no expert, I can appreciate all that goes into creating the platforms that ordinary people use to change the narrative. I have learned, and now recognize, that there are also societal implications that come from uneven power dynamics and unequal access to media creation and control.

Access to the Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African-American Studies has been the most enriching experience of my Take 5 Program. I have had the opportunity to take classes about African digital works and plant poetry, about Black politics and incarceration in America, and about perceptions and experiences of the Black body. I have been exposed to how race intersects with other aspects of personal identity and how that is represented – and I learned to evaluate whether or not that portrayal is accurate. Media represents people differently depending on who those perceptions are created for, garnering more support for different agendas, a lesson that I will be able to take with me throughout my future endeavors. Thank you to the University of Rochester for this opportunity, and to the professors who I would not have had the privilege of learning from without this program!

Katherine Stankevich: Mind, Body, Spirit: The Art of Science and Somatic Practices

Emma Strawderman: Artivism for Issues in Intersectional Feminism

Since I was a young girl, I have been captivated by the arts; as I became more socially engaged, particularly with feminism, I realized the unique power that art has in the world of activism. The purpose of my Take 5 was to learn how to harness this power with the ultimate goal of using my art to make the world around me a more compassionate place. To do so, I sought to learn more in depth about various topics relevant to intersectional feminism, such as ecofeminism and female genital cutting, in addition to exploring what elements of artwork are critical to be a compelling activist tool.

Throughout my GSWS and AAAS coursework, I learned to take a more thoughtful and critical approach to exploring issues related to gender, race, and other salient identities. This learning process was bolstered by my classmates, who used their unique stories and backgrounds to inform our class discussions. Using an intersectional lens to analyze information has become more intuitive as my Take 5 journey has progressed. I took a course called Art and Activism which used specific examples to illustrate that art is most powerful as an activist tool when it can strongly evoke emotion—and subsequently compassion for other's situations—in its audiences. Studio arts courses honed my artistic skills, allowing my pieces to be more nuanced, thought-provoking, and resonate with my audience at a deeper level.

I have already had the opportunity to apply the knowledge I have gained; for example, I organized an art fundraiser to donate profits to the BLM movement following the murder of George Floyd. I believe that this program has made me a better social actor, and I am thrilled to be taking these critical analysis skills with me as I begin my career as a physician scientist. I also want to express my sincere thanks to Heather Layton—the wind beneath the wings of countless aspiring artists! Thank you for being an unfaltering source of guidance for the past two years. Lastly, thank you to my family and Tyler for your abundant love and encouragement.

Zivile Vebrate: Setting Standards for Women

My Take Five program was motivated by a quote from feminist Simone de Beauvoir, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” I, like many other women, have experienced society’s unrealistic and unsustainable physical and intellectual feminine standards. My goal to take control of my own destiny—and to hopefully become a future role model and mentor for young girls and women—must have begun with a scholarly approach to investigate what the roots and impacts of standard setting for women were.

To investigate how our society’s gendered expectations shape my and other women’s self-perceptions, I designed my Take Five curriculum with courses from departments of psychology, dance, and even computer science. The psychology classes helped me to distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that govern my actions and reactions and to understand how each of them affect my well-being. They helped me to realize what are the universal “nutriments” for one’s psychological health regardless of culture, gender and socio-economic status, and helped me to explain to myself why women are constricted to many societal limitations. The dance classes I took allowed me to appreciate my body the way it is and use all the experiences in my life as a resource for dance. Through the Department of Dance, I had an opportunity to share the curative nature of dance with a non-profit organization in Rochester, which provides rehabilitation for homeless women with a criminal history and who are entering the community from jail, in-patient facilities, the streets, and other homeless situations. Finally, the Computer Science course that I took was an optimal challenge for me to examine my biases towards myself with regards to high-tech and to learn how to “talk” with computers.

Overall, the courses that I took enabled me to understand how to navigate external and internal expectations. My Take Five year helped me understand how to constructively overcome societal pressures, set healthy expectations, and embrace my authentic self.

I could not have been able to investigate this topic so deeply and meaningfully if not for my Take Five Advisors, the UR professors who I have worked with since my freshman year, and the UR professors whose courses I took during my Take Five year. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to each one of them because they all contributed to my journey into myself.

Brian Yegela: What does it truly mean to be Pan-African in the 21st Century

Learning should be a pleasurable experience, and what’s better than learning about your people. Throughout my Take 5 experience, I made it clear to my peers and my professors that I wanted to bring the Pan-African perspective to the classroom. It may be the 21st Century, but we are still leaving out credible experiences from underrepresented backgrounds when we talk about global issues. This abstract will serve as a brief description of my journey in understanding what it really means to be Pan-African in the 21st Century, through the lens of the different fields of study I immersed myself in.

Civil Disobedience: Whilst taking Civil Disobedience with Prof. Jack Downey, it was emphasized that conformity is a privilege. To have those privileges, one must come from a position of comfort. adrienne maree brown’s emergent strategy, a text we explored in this course, stated that “many of us respond to change with fear or see it as a crisis.” Africans around the world are envisioning a change that is necessary, and for observers to be onboard without the presence of fear has been difficult. This course helped in my understanding of disobedience to such narratives.

Elections in Developing Countries: Politics in developing African nations has always been a conversation of controversy. The negative connotations of African leaders will be put on television without context. Prof. Anderson Frey’s course focused on the role historical institutions play in elections, and how the imposed colonial strategies still exist amongst our people today. This course was influential in understanding the influence of

greed on modern Africa today, and how power is still sought after as a resource for oppression.

The Making of a Modern Africa: When you speak about the African continent, you cannot leave out its history. Prof. Mandala's course touched base on three different timelines, the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial phases of the African continent. My understanding of capitalism and its ongoing impact on the African people was enriched in the texts that were read in this course. Furthermore, whilst reading Chinua Achebbe's *Things Fall Apart*, it was clear that the African people had a clear working identity before the invasion of the settler colonies. This identity remains present, but has been diluted by the events of history. It is up to us to reclaim and supplement who we are without the interference of self-gain motivated parties.

Sexuality in World Religions: The African continent is arguably the most religiously diverse continent in the world. However, the conversation surrounding sexuality has been one to spark much controversy. The Rev. C Denise Yarborough's course allowed a deep study in queer theology across most of the world's prevalent religions, and how scripture could be deciphered in several ways. It is saddening to me that our nations on the continent still choose the same patriarchal theologies that were imposed on us by historical interpretation, but this course gave me hope as both a student and a citizen of an increasingly educated continent. We mustn't shy away from conversations that may get us in trouble, if they will indeed make another person's life free to live.

Cry Freedom – Liberation Theologies: Whilst on the topic of theology, why not explore liberation theologies on the conversation of Pan-Africanism. During the pandemic, we have seen African states fall to religion whilst ignoring scientific progression. This course has enabled me to look at things from the perspective of faith and science, rather than separating the two, it combines the ideologies.

Poverty & Development: The west has constantly depicted Africans as originating from a position of poverty. However, how do historical institutions imposed on Africans on the continent play a part in its eventual development strategies. Prof. Anderson Frey's course served as an opportunity to derive the origins of the current underdevelopment of Pan-African states around the globe, and how resource and commodity drain plays a part in not just today's present but tomorrow's future.

In conclusion, it was a journey. Individuals should challenge themselves when seeking education. There's always a gap in perspectives, and being in a position where one can directly apply their stories to bridge those gaps is a privilege. I still have a long way to go to understand what it truly means to be Pan-African in the 21st century, but it's a trip worth taking.

Hao Zhang: Dreams and Disillusionments: Seeking the Identities and Values of Chinese International Students in American Universities

I have always been curious about the intersection of culture and society, partly due to my experience as a Chinese international student studying in America. Spending four years with different host families from diverse cultural backgrounds as a high school student bewildered me. I came to realize that sometimes conflicts arise not out of personality but different understandings through which people see the world. However, it was difficult for me to verbalize what I saw and experienced. In college, I felt alienated from other Chinese students who had just arrived in America. I was curious to know that although we came from the same place, why sometimes I felt like a cultural "outsider."

My curiosity motivated me to apply for the Take Five Scholar program, but I was unsure which subject was the best to pursue. As I browsed through the subject page on our university website, I found that Anthropology explores "humans and humanity, past and present, in an attempt to document the way people behave and why." I instantly clicked with that statement and proposed Anthropology to be my main area of study. In the end, I was lucky enough to have an extra year of undergraduate study to explore my intellectual

interests.

I learned a lot during my Take Five year. Now I could explain why I felt alienated from other Chinese students because we had different educational trajectories: they went through the Chinese Gaokao system, and I went to an American Catholic high school. Social class positions back in China also made a difference: I could not financially cope with the consumption patterns of some of my affluent peers. It was not because I was a weird person that I could not fit in. Such a realization made me feel relieved. There were many underlying social processes that put me “not in sync” with other Chinese students. This kind of weird feeling has a name, cognitive dissonance. I learned it in one of my anthro readings assignments.

I am grateful that I found like-minded friends along with my Take Five journey. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Panda, Vivian, Iris, Victor, and Siyang for their kindness and companionship. I enjoyed those conversations that extended out from the classroom. I also would like to thank Professor Osburg for his constant guidance and support in my academic growth. He helped me bring alive my project on Chinese international students' lived experiences in American universities. I also want to thank Professor Foster, Professor Mariner, and Professor Searle for their intellectually challenging yet stimulating courses. They pushed me to the limits again and again, and I grew tremendously intellectually over the past year. I also want to thank those who participated in my research. I appreciate your acts of kindness. I also want to thank Professor Jörgensen, who recommended me for the program and had faith in me. Last but not least, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. All in all, without you guys, I would not be able to go anywhere.

A year has passed by quickly. I felt I learned a lot but, at the same time, learned so little. There are so many more articles, theories, and ethnographies to be read! Learning is a life-long activity, as the old Chinese proverb goes. I will move forward with the knowledge learned during Take Five and hopefully disentangle puzzles that will take five, ten, even a lifetime to unravel.