

**Philosophy of the Civil Person**  
**Alfie Scholars Junior Conference**  
**Seattle University**



**September 2 & 3, 2021**

# **Philosophy of the Civil Person**

## **Presenters**

Simone Bergeron  
Phanghouy Chea  
Plamedi Diakubama  
Asmerom Ghirmai  
Sirish Gurung  
Bokyung Kim

Lia Matias  
Serah Ombongi  
Elma Sacic  
Mashaal Shameem  
Salina Timalsina

## **Alfie Team**

Professor Natalie Cisneros  
Director Carol Cochran  
Professor Nathan Colaner  
Professor Paula Lustbader

Director Scott Petit  
Professor Jeff Philpott  
Professor Jason Wirth

# Conference Schedule

**Thursday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- 10:00-10:20     **Welcome**  
Professor Paula Lustbader
- 10:20-10:45     **Underemployment: Why it matters  
and its consequences**  
Presenter: Lia Matias  
Moderator: Abem Fekade-Tessema
- 10:45-11:10     **Racial Disparities in Healthcare: A problem due to  
Systemic Racism**  
Presenter: Serah Ombongi  
Moderator: Viktoria Buina
- 11:10-11:25     **Break**
- 11:30-11:55     **Chhaoupadi (Menstruation taboo)**  
Presenter: Salina Timalsina  
Moderator: Brenda Mata-Diaz
- 11:55– 12:20     **Underrepresentation of Cambodian Women in  
Politics and Leadership Roles**  
Presenter: Phanghouy Chea  
Moderator: Abem Fekade-Tessema
- 12:20– 12:45     **Lunch**
- 12:45- 1:10     **Sex Trafficking in Nepal: A Rising Concern For All**  
Presenter: Sirish Gurung  
Moderator: Afrikaan Osman
- 1:10-1:35         **Food Waste in American Households**

Presenter: Plamedi Diakubama

Moderator: Yao Yao

1:35-2:30

**Closing**

Professor Paula Lustbader

**Friday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

10:00-10:20

**Welcome**

Professor Paula Lustbader

10:20-10:45

**Hardships Faced by New Immigrants in America**

Presenter: Asmerom Ghirmai

Moderator: Kevin Respicio

10:45-11:10

**The Scapegoats of Terror: The Disparity in Muslim Representation in the Western Media**

Presenter: Mashaal Shameem

Moderator: Chelsea Arnold

11:10-11:25

**Break**

11:30-11:55

**Equity and Equality for All: Justice by Education Reform**

Presenter: Simone Bergeron

Moderator: Natalie Hutson

11:55-12:20

**The Student to Prison Pipeline**

Presenter: Elma Sacic

Moderator: Anastasiya Davis

12:20– 12:45

**Lunch**

12:45-1:10

**Climate Change is Urgent: Time for the U.S. Fossil Fuel Industry to Go Green**

Presenter: Bokyung Kim

Moderator: Afrikaan Osman

1:10-1:45

**Closing**

Professor Paula Lustbader

# **Presentation Descriptions**

## **Underemployment: Why it matters and its consequences**

Presenter: Lia Matias

The system of unemployment is designed to foster underemployment which is why society should pay more attention to the resources it offers and how it's lacking growth opportunities. In the presentation, Lia will talk about what underemployment is, showcase some examples, examine what leads to this issue, the consequences that affect the lives of those underemployed and present some solutions that could help the issue.

## **Racial Disparities in Healthcare: A problem due to Systemic Racism**

Presenter: Serah Ombongi

We should make great efforts to achieve equal treatment in the healthcare sector despite the color, gender, and socio-economy of a person. With the ongoing high cases, the COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed the racial inequality that has been in existence in the health care system for such a long time, the history of health inequality, and the statistical data relating to the population and particular groups affected. I will tell my experience at the start as a healthcare worker with some of the feedback I have gotten from people from these affected communities, and I will provide the reasons that brought up racial disparities. Towards the end of the presentation, I will provide some recommendations and solutions to how we can manage and handle such inequalities in healthcare to provide better healthcare solutions to everyone.

## **Chhaoupadi (Menstruation taboo)**

Presenter: Salina Timalina

We should strive towards a society that promotes equality and eradicates all forms of prevalent discrimination. I am going to talk about Chhaoupadi, the Nepalese practice of requiring menstruating women and girls to be in isolation, its history and the demographic that is impacted. I will add my own experience in the beginning of the presentation with some pictures. I will provide the reason behind this practice and how it is rooted in the Nepalese society. At the end I will provide some solutions that show how we can eliminate such an unhealthy and unhygienic practice from the society

## **Underrepresentation of Cambodian Women in Politics and Leadership Roles**

Presenter: Phanghouy Chea

The underrepresentation of Cambodian women in the major role of leadership and politics causes serious barriers for Cambodia to be sustainably developed; therefore, Cambodian women need to have equal rights and opportunities to uplift their voice in enhancing their goals as well as the country's well-being. Two significant factors have prevented Cambodian women from assuming leadership roles: poverty and cultural norms. On one hand, poverty has prevented women from going to school, rather, forcing them to work menial jobs and becoming sex workers. On the other hand, cultural norms negatively stereotype women as unsuitable for assuming leadership roles in high-ranking positions. However, it is not only of benefit to Cambodian women, but to the well-being of the entire country, that women become established in more leadership roles. Thus, solutions to the poverty and cultural norms that prevent women from assuming these roles must be explored. In this presentation, I will explore the background and causes that prevent Cambodian women from assuming leadership roles. Next, I will propose solutions for how to address this problem, including increasing female role models in politics, providing educational and training opportunities, eliminating cultural norms with the help of the government to create some programs to support women in leadership, and promoting all of those campaigns by social media. Last but not least, I will call for action with everyone in the conference to be aware of this issue because I think this issue still happens in every country. The matter is just a big or small issue in the country itself.

## **Sex Trafficking in Nepal: A Rising Concern For All**

Presenter: Sirish Gurung

To save the lives of Nepalese women and girls, a comprehensive approach should be adopted, which will necessarily require the active participation of the government, non-governmental organizations, as well as the citizens in promoting education, eradicating poverty, and enforcing stronger laws and border security.

Each year, thousands of Nepalese women and girls become the victim of modern-day slavery, and this has been a steady growing criminal industry. Women's rights in Nepal have been ignored due to issues such as illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, political instability, and corruptions. Despite the government of Nepal being well aware of this issue, its initiatives and strategies

have been too minor to be efficient. Abuse of women and children has become an epidemic that requires more attention than ever before. The heinous conditions in which these helpless victims are trafficked, as well as the circumstances in which some manage to flee and survive leave them with immense physical as well as mental health threats. This presentation will explore the data and statistics of the Nepali sex trade industry, its historical connection, the main contributing factors and finally, the strategies and initiatives taken by the government of Nepal and other non-governmental organizations.

## **Food Waste in American Households**

Presenter: Plamedi Diakubama

Food waste in households is a significant issue in the United States that needs special attention from the government and the population. This issue has numerous environmental, economic, and social consequences for the country itself and the entire world. The presentation will clearly define food waste and explain why the focus of my research is on consumers. Then, it will present worldwide data regarding food waste and particularly in the U.S. The presentation will also discuss the environmental, economic, and social consequences of food waste before moving on to the root causes. Finally, the presentation will propose solutions to address food waste in the United States.

## **Hardships faced by New Immigrants in America**

Presenter: Asmerom Ghirmai

As immigrants leave their circle and start to resettle they face countless things to encounter. The main obstacles that immigrants are facing are the language barrier, being integrated into a new culture, and dealing with economic stability. As I am an immigrant, I can deeply understand the hardships that immigrants are facing. In my presentation, I will speak about the hardship that immigrants are facing, the cause of the hardship, and how it should be improved and solved.

## **The Scapegoats of Terror: The Disparity in Muslim Representation in the Western Media**

Presenter: Mashaal Shameem

The representation of Muslims as terrorists in the Western media is reinforcing negative stereotypes in our society, and the media should be aware of their responsibility in contributing to this. This presentation will first focus on how Muslims are portrayed as violent and most likely to be labelled terrorists in the news and in pop culture, then discuss the effects of this portrayal on the Muslim community. Additionally, this presentation will discuss the relationship between the media and the concept of terrorism and finally, provide solutions for media



outlets to focus on a more objective portrayal of violent incidents and a more positive portrayal of Muslims.

## **Equity and Equality for All: Justice by Education Reform**

Presenter: Simone Bergeron

Education in our society contributes to the sustainability of racial inequalities; therefore, we must reform the structure which it abides by. This presentation will discuss the modern-day status of the achievement gap for students of color and how it has influenced the actions and words of people in society. Then, it will analyze the beliefs that people have about the topic, to further understand where the issue stems from. Finally, it will provide insight into solutions to address the issue and to further develop education through reform.

## **The Student to Prison Pipeline**

Presenter: Elma Sacic

The student to prison pipeline is a present-day issue that is depriving students from their right to an education, and we must act accordingly. It is an injustice to lead students down this pipeline and restrict them from leading a successful life. This presentation will cover how the zero-tolerance police fed the pipeline and its target of students of color. Next, an analysis will cover how lack of training and diversity of school faculty contributes to the pipeline. Lastly, a series of solutions will be provided to move away from the pipeline.

## **Climate Change is Urgent: Time for the U.S. Fossil Fuel Industry to Go Green**

Presenter: Bokyoung Kim

Climate change is a global issue that affects every part of humanity: our environment, our health, and our morality. Among so many contributors of climate change in this world, the biggest contributor is the fossil fuel industry, in which the U.S. industry plays a significant role. Thus, in order to help prevent a climate catastrophe, the U.S. fossil fuel industry needs to change. In the U.S., fossil fuel companies' climate denial and lobbying activities have caused lack of awareness and regulation regarding the issue, allowing them to emit a huge share of emissions for the last several decades. However, the U.S. government and investors are now starting to care more about the issue and thus changing

their behavior, and this shift suggests that the fossil fuel companies in the U.S. have no option but to change their business model: to renewable energy. This presentation will explain what climate change is and how it is detrimental to our home and our people. Then, with a special focus on U.S.-tied fossil fuel companies, it will discuss how the fossil fuel industry has contributed hugely to the issue and how the industry's specific activities enabled this huge contribution. Finally, the presentation will explore the current shift in the U.S. government and investors regarding this issue and what options U.S.-tied fossil fuel companies have in order to keep their social license: transition to renewable energy.

## **Presenter Biographies**

### **Simone Bergeron** **Major: Management**

Simone Bergeron is a Management major at Seattle University. Growing up as a young, Black girl in the melting pot that is Los Angeles, education has always been seen as the path to success. It is through her struggles with understanding lessons in high school, her inability to connect with most teachers, and lack of guidance from people that relate to her situation that has conceptualized her passion for justice in education. She seeks to establish safe spaces in which people have creative control and the ability to succeed within the entertainment industry. This can only be done through the knowledge gained by education and experience, as well. Still, the aspect of education is what makes one considerable for an opportunity. In other words, reform within the education system is necessary to push forth the succession of ethnically diverse groups or people.

### **Phanghouy Chea** **Major: Business Analytics**

I grew up in Cambodia where unequal treatment between genders still exists. I am also the victim in this contentious issue because it has prevented me as well as other women in my country from being empowered as the leader of our society and the country. We lack the chance to be involved in political positions because most of the positions are taken by men. I barely see women holding a high-ranked position in politics or the leader in the bigger company. When I was in Cambodia, nobody told me to grow up to become a leader, but I was told to grow up beautifully and become a good housewife for my family. I couldn't express myself on what I was thinking that "it's not right" to people who told me

that because it was considered rude and a bad attitude toward the elders. Therefore, I spent my childhood and teenage years listening to them thinking for me and seeing the environment of the male dominant world. I witness this unequal treatment in my own life, and that is why I want to make change. I want to encourage women to have their dream, make their own choice, and speak for themselves in public without fear of being judged because of their gender. I hope we could increase more women in politics and leadership roles so that women would uplift their voice to be a part of developing the country as the men can do.

## **Plamedi Diakubama**

### **Major: Computer Science**

Plamedi was first introduced to the term “food waste” in 2018 in an English writing class, and since then has always been trying to learn more about the subject. During two quarters of her sophomore year at Bellevue College, Plamedi had the opportunity to work on a project with four other students to develop a website to help reduce food waste among the Bellevue community. Even though she could not finish up the project, it allowed her to learn more about food waste in America.

Born and raised in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Plamedi knows the struggle to get food. She was not used to seeing Congolese families discard food at any point. Food insecurity is among the biggest fights of her country, and Congolese have to learn effective planning and storage techniques to make the most out of their survival. While food is not very cheap in the US, it was shocking for her to see the perfect food that people throw away every day. So, numerous questions came to her mind: What leads people to waste so much food when food insecurity occurs? Why are people comfortable wasting that much food? What are the consequences of food waste? What can be done in order to solve this problem? That is how Plamedi started this journey to find answers to these questions.

## **Asmerom Ghirmai**

### **Major: Nursing**

I am originally from Eritrea in Africa. I had to go through terrains and valleys crossing borders of country after country, 15 countries altogether, until I made it to the U.S. With the high expectations I had, settling in the US had been

tremendously difficult. I resumed my education and came to Seattle Central college to pursue my childhood dream of becoming a nurse. Acquiring successful time management skills was another challenge I faced as a student in the U.S. It was an aspect of college that I underestimated the significance of. As a full time worker, it was hard at first to keep track of my studies, but because of the time management skills I developed, I managed to work as a driver for 34 hours a week while taking full time credits at college and still maintained a high GPA. I have come to the conclusion that the challenges I was facing were a factual pathway that will eventually direct to my ultimate goals.

The thing that qualifies me to speak on this topic is because I have felt the hassles of being a new arriving immigrant to the US. I faced a language barrier, difficulties integrating into a new culture and sustaining myself economically. Therefore, I chose to research these challenges and recommend solutions to them.

## **Sirish Gurung**

**Major: Computer Science**

Growing up in Nepal, the peaceful land of Himalayas and the country of Buddha, I have witnessed the country has been in search for its own peace. The story of someone's daughter being sold, a husband selling his wife or a boyfriend selling his girlfriend frequently makes the national news headlines. With thousands of Nepali girls being trafficked each year, Nepal remains one of the busiest sex trafficking transits in the world. Being born and raised in Nepal, the news of Nepali sisters being trafficked has always been concerning for me. Innocent Nepali girls and women are continuing to be trafficked across the nations, and it's more urgent than ever for the issue to be addressed. I believe we all should contribute in whatever possible ways we can to combat against the traffickers and save the lives of Nepali girls and women.

## **Bokyung Kim**

**Major: Business Analytics**

Bokyung is currently studying Business Analytics at Seattle University, in addition to studying Economics and Environmental Studies as minors. With her life mission of eliminating human suffering in this world, Bokyung aspires to contribute herself in making this world, especially the business sector, more sustainable. Due to her life experience of growing up in South Korea and living in several other countries, Bokyung identifies as a global citizen and considers climate change as a threat to her home and her people. For this presentation, Bokyung has done a significant amount of research on climate change and fossil fuel industry. She considers her work on this presentation as a

first step in her journey to fighting climate change, and she wishes that it can also be an important step for someone else in their journey of making the world a better place.

## **Lia Matias**

**Major: Management**

Lia Matias is a third-year transfer student at Seattle University majoring in Management. Throughout her life she has seen firsthand how underemployment has affected her family. Touched by the lack of awareness on the topic of underemployment, she seeks to remedy the issue by starting the conversation.

## **Serah Ombongi**

**Major: Nursing**

My experience in volunteering and working in hospitals and nursing homes as a healthcare worker has enabled me to interact with several patients. Other than being a victim and a person from a minority race, being at the frontline duty in offering medical assistance to our country revealed the extent of these disparities and inequalities in healthcare. I will provide some of the recommendations and solutions to racial inequalities. I have also researched the demographics of racial disparity in the provision of healthcare, and listening to the heartbreaking stories from friends and relatives from minority races who have had to experience the ugly side of our health system that was built against them just shows how urgent and grave the issue is. I hope to change the existing statistics by lobbying for support from leaders to encourage policies that observe equal treatment in health care provision. I also hope that this presentation will encourage people to observe civility that would see the ultimate solution to the problem.

## **Elma Sacic**

**Major: Nursing**

Elma Sacic is currently enrolled at Seattle University's College of Nursing Program as a junior. Throughout Elma's educational journey, she recalls the many encounters she has had with her peers being fed into the pipeline. Lack of teacher representation and understanding of the struggles that students faced

outside of the classroom was one of the main factors that led them towards a dark path. Elma's lived experiences have motivated her to fight for educational support in schools especially populated by students of color. Elma has visited her previous middle school to shed insight and inspiration for younger students to continue their education post-high school.

## **Mashaal Shameem**

### **Major: Accounting**

Mashaal Shameem is a junior pursuing a Bachelor's in Accounting with a focus in Global Business and Strategic Communications. Shameem is a proud global citizen who has lived experiences in Canada and Pakistan and continues to use her culture and perspective to tackle social issues related to equity and justice. As a Muslim herself, Shameem picked up on the inconsistent balance of Muslim representation in the Western media from an early age, and has shared experiences in dealing with the negative stereotypes that come from being constantly associated with an agenda of spreading fear. Shameem is a strong believer in creating and maintaining an attitude of acceptance in the communities she is a part of and hopes that this presentation can initiate a discussion with regards to a more positive media portrayal of her own, as well as other religious and ethnic groups in the U.S.

## **Presenter: Salina Timalsina**

### **Major: Nursing**

I am one of the victims of the practice of Chhaoupadi. I have experienced the practice and seen the people practicing and how it is affecting the women mentally and physically. My experience when I was in the hut was a traumatizing moment that I still can't forget. I feel like I need to talk about this issue, so we can help other people who aren't able to raise their voice.

