

**Ethics of the Civil Person**  
**Alfie Scholars Senior Conference**  
**Seattle University**



**August 20, 2022**

# **Ethics of the Civil Person**

## **Presenters**

Simone Bergeron  
Phanghouy Chea  
Plamedi Diakubama  
Asmerom Ghirmai  
Sirish Gurung  
Bokyoung 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

## Saturday, August 20th

- 9:00-9:20      **Welcome**  
Professor Paula Lustbader
- 9:20-9:45      **Hope for Indigenous Identity: How We Contribute to the Erasure of our Nation's History**  
Presenter: Simone Bergeron  
Moderator: Samira Ugas
- 9:45-10:10    **Lack of Access to Abortion: The Danger to Vulnerable Mothers**  
Presenter: Phanghouy Chea  
Moderator: Deonta Bebbler
- 10:10-10:35   **Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup: Disguising A Dark Reality**  
Presenter: Sirish Gurung  
Moderator: Deonta Bebbler
- 10:35-10:50   **Break**
- 10:55-11:20   **The Controversy of Affirmative Action**  
Presenter: Plamedi Diakubama  
Moderator: Kaleab Belete
- 11:20– 11:45   **Lack of Staffing in Long-Term Care Facilities Negatively Impacting Acute Care**  
Presenter: Salina Timalsina  
Moderator: Pratistha Kharel
- 11:45– 12:10   **The Blank Ballot: A Look at Voter Engagement in Local Politics**  
Presenter: Mashaal Shameem  
Moderator: Samira Ugas

- 12:10- 1:10      **Lunch**
- 1:10-1:35      **Poverty in Kenya and its Impact on Education**  
Presenter: Serah Ombongi  
Moderator: Elizabeth Johnson
- 1:35-2:00      **Where the Wolves Come From: Social Media  
Breeding Lone Wolf Terrorism and What We Can Do  
to Stop It**  
Presenter: Lia Matias  
Moderator: Sarah Hall
- 2:00-2:25      **Self-Defense as a Pretext to Possess Guns**  
Presenter: Asmerom Ghirmai  
Moderator: Abraham Desta
- 2:25-2:40      **Break**
- 2:40-3:05      **From Heroes to Death: A Call to Action to  
Save Veterans Impacted by Burns Pits**  
Presenter: Elma Sacic  
Moderator: Cherish Stack
- 3:05-3:30      **No means No; Environmental Injustice  
Indigenous People Face on their Own Land  
from Gas and Oil Development in the U.S.**  
Presenter: Bokyoung Kim  
Moderator: Tyler Andrews
- 3:30-4:00      **Closing**  
Professor Paula Lustbader

# Presentation Descriptions

## **Hope for Indigenous Identity: How We Contribute to the Erasure of our Nation's History**

Presenter: Simone Bergeron

The claiming of Indigenous artifacts by non-Indigenous peoples is unjust and enables the erasure of a nation's identity – specifically the United States and its history. I will discuss the illegal registration of intellectual property – artifacts – belonging to Indigenous people and how this denies the existence of entire nations. In accordance with this, I will explain the significance of “bearing false witness” in this nature ruins civility from the roots.

## **Lack of Access to Abortion: The Danger to Vulnerable Mothers**

Presenter: Phanghouy Chea

When the US Supreme Court overturned the ruling of Roe v. Wade in June 2022 allowed each state the right to make decisions on making abortion accessible to women. Since then, many states have started the law banning abortion right away. This news hurts me the most since as women, our voices are not powerful enough to make any change in society, and now we cannot even make decisions about our own bodies, our health, and our well-being. Therefore, it is unethical to ban abortion rights because it would cause many impacts on women.

Abortion bans cause major impacts on the mothers' health and well-being. The right to abortion and access to abortion are necessary to provide them with great support and resources to make decisions on their bodies and health as well as their future well-being in participating in education and the workforce. This presentation will introduce the two controversial arguments of Pro-Choice vs. Pro-life on abortion and discuss the specific group of vulnerable women who are suffering most from the restriction on abortion. Then, it will analyze the cause of banning abortion and the major impacts that it has on those women. Finally, it will provide some possible approaches to gain public attention to lifting up the accessibility to abortion.

## **Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup: Disguising A Dark Reality**

Presenter: Sirish Gurung

This year, the FIFA World Cup will kick off in the Middle East for the first time in footballing history. However, the decision to award the World Cup hosting rights to a scorching Gulf state with a poor human rights record has caused massive uncertainty, suspicion, and indignation. In the 10 years since Qatar was awarded the right to host the World Cup, the country has been relying heavily on migrant workers, and there has been widespread exploitation and mistreatment of these migrant workers, with workers being subjected to forced

labor, unpaid wages, and long working hours. The Qatari government should ensure that all migrant workers have access to proper living and working conditions, as well as ensuring that their human, social, and economic rights are respected.

## **The Controversy of Affirmative Action**

Presenter: Plamedi Diakubama

Affirmative Action is both supported and opposed as an answer to racial and gender inequality. The debate has been ongoing for many years, and yet there is no concrete answer or conclusion to whether the pros outweigh the cons and if it is an ethically right or correct solution. I think it is important to take the time to fully analyze how affirmative action is currently implemented and used and find an alternative solution that might address the existing concerns. The presentation will begin with a brief definition and context of Affirmative Action. Then, I will discuss the arguments for and against as well as analyze it through the lens of two ethical theories. Finally, I will present some recommendations on how to address this issue. I will focus on affirmative action in the workforce and on one segment of the Affirmative Action protected classes, which is people of color

## **Lack of Staffing in Long-Term Care Facilities Due to Gender Injustice**

Presenter: Salina Timalisina

We should strive toward a society that promotes equality and eradicates all forms of discrimination. I am going to talk about the lack of staffing in long-term care facilities due to gender injustice. I will provide some statistics, what are the reasons behind the lack of staffing, and how it is rooted in our society. In the end, I will provide some solutions that show how we can end systemic gender injustice and solve the problem of staffing.

## **The Blank Ballot: A Look at Voter Engagement in Local Politics**

Presenter: Mashaal Shameem

In our communities, we have the opportunity to vote for leaders who are responsible for enacting public policy in the neighborhoods we live in. Why is it then, that when it comes time to vote in local elections, ballots are left blank? This paper delves into voter engagement, its presence in local politics, and questions the idea of voter fatigue and political apathy in alignment with virtue ethics, while providing potential solutions to enhance voter engagement.

## **Poverty in Kenya and its Impact on Education**

Presenter: Serah Ombongi

While poverty has affected several sectors in Kenya, the education sector had been highly impacted; people in lower-class families who earned below \$1.90 per day face challenges in accessing education. This can be attributed to rampant corruption and mismanagement of public resources in most government sectors. Rising poverty levels and overcrowding in the cities have resulted in kids dropping out of school due to a lack of tuition. There is no higher need than that of a society committed to civility and a country that realizes there is a need to make ethical and political commitments to assure all citizens who call Kenya home have a decent living and that their children have equal education opportunities as any other children regardless of where they are born.

## **Where the Wolves Come From: Social Media Breeding Lone Wolf Terrorism and What We Can Do to Stop It**

Presenter: Lia Matias

Lone wolf terrorism refers to shootings or mass attacks done by an individual without the help of organizations that advocate for the same ideology. Lone wolf terrorism has been increasing in the United States for the past three decades with 13 deaths this year alone. Those affected by it daily cannot wait and sit by as members of our communities get killed, which is why it is up to the companies, bystanders, and decision-makers to implement reporting systems that can help prevent these attacks. Social media has heightened lone wolf terrorism and due to the controversial nature of the regulations that could help solve this issue, an actual regulation is years away from fruition. In this presentation, I will explore what lone wolf terrorism is and its trajectory in relation to social media, apply a philosophical perspective on why this is wrong and how this strategy goes against the ideologies the attacks claim to follow, and propose what we can do about it.

## **Self-Defense as a Pretext to Possess Guns**

Presenter: Asmerom Ghirmai

Although many people try to justify gun ownership under the pretext of self-defense, stating that it is a constitutional right, a way to protect oneself from criminal threats, and a way to close the safety gap left by the lack of security enforcers, such justifications are bound to fail. In my research paper, I will speak about the "right to possess guns" as a relative concept. It is also subject to change because possessing a gun encourages criminal behavior and increase the likelihood that safety would prevail.

## **From Heroes to Death: A Call to Action to Save Veterans Impacted by Burns Pits**

Presenter: Elma Sacic

We have seen the effects a delay in a call to action can have on the lives of veterans and if we don't act now, then they will be a repeat of Agent Orange.

This paper will introduce the history and benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as provide anecdotal testimonies of those affected by Agent Orange and Burn pits. Further, an analysis of research that has been done in recent years of the effects of burn pits will be provided to prove the urgency of this matter. The solution isn't to pile money and hope for the best. What we can do now is call representatives to vote for legislation that will help research, and most importantly we need to see this population for who they are— not soldiers, warriors, heroes, or disposable: humans that now need to be fought for the same way they fought for us.

## **No means No; Environmental Injustice Indigenous People Face on their Own Land from Gas and Oil Development in the U.S.**

Presenter: Bokyoung Kim

Despite the special historical obligation that Americans have – to respect indigenous rights to land, liberty, and life – people in the U.S. are violating the rights of the indigenous people through gas and oil development on their lands. The pervasiveness of liquified natural gas facilities and gas and oil pipelines in indigenous lands not only threaten the tribes' health and well-being, but also harms their spirituality: their home mother earth, the legacy of their elders, and the lives of the unborn children. This environmental injustice is caused by targeting of the indigenous lands, weak regulatory processes, anti-protest campaigns and lobbying, and funding from large banks. To find solutions to this environmental injustice, this presentation applies the philosophical values of autonomy and equality and analyzes the case of the Keystone XL pipeline project that serves as an important precedent for indigenous environmental justice.





# **Presenter Biographies**

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

Simone Bergeron is a Management student at Seattle University seeking to develop skills in ethical reasoning and building marketing strategies to enhance the careers of people in the entertainment industry. It is through familial experience, as well as her own, that she is influenced to change the nature of people's process within media. In accordance with this, she strives to apply these same skills to research in the sociological geometrics affecting the unethical treatment of ethnically diverse groups. Thus, she wants to establish and build spaces for ethnically diverse groups of people to succeed in their lives, but intentionally help people to position themselves in industries – more so the entertainment industry. However, the denial and even erasure of the identities of some people, specifically Indigenous people, prevents understanding of who someone is and where they would like to go with their career. This is why it is important to recognize the unlawful use of Indigenous artifacts and how this affects the identity of not just Indigenous people, but the way in which other ethnically diverse groups see themselves in this country.

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

As a woman myself, I have seen that so many unequal treatments between gender still exist in many ways. Whether it is in education, the workforce, or politics, women remain differently treated from men, and their voices are less powerful compared to men. Women have fewer opportunities to participate in any big decision-making in society. I acknowledge that those are still continuing issues that we are all trying to solve. After moving from Cambodia to the United States, I thought that the United States is the land of freedom where that discrimination against women wouldn't too be severe as in my home country. Now I am not so sure.

## **Plamedi Diakubama** **Major: Computer Science**

The whole concept of affirmative action was completely new to me until the beginning of 2021 when I heard my driver instructor complaining about people of color receiving privilege in the hiring process. What she said was a complete surprise to me because I personally know and have witnessed Blacks having hard time finding jobs. So, I decided to go into depth with that conversation the

next day, and that is how I learned about affirmative action. I started doing my research on the topic and since I am surrounded by Blacks, I started having discussions with them as well. From there, I knew that this topic was a big debate that has been ongoing almost since the beginning of the policy. In the midst of my learning, I also discovered that there was a lot of confusion on this topic both for employers and the public.

As a woman of color myself, affirmative action concerns me at more than one level. Even though I am not working full-time yet, I have held part-time positions, and I am surrounded by Blacks who fully work in this country. Plus, I will be graduating soon and starting my job search. So, it is important and beneficial for me to educate myself on the topic as well also raise awareness to the best of my ability.

## **Asmerom Ghirmai**

### **Major: Nursing**

I am originally from Eritrea, Africa. I had to go through terrains and valleys crossing borders of the country after country; 15 countries altogether; until I made it to the US. With the high expectations I had, settling in the US has 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. Last year on my junior classes to keep my grade as it was I lowered my work time, and as I planned, I still kept my grade above 3.5. I have come to the conclusion that the challenges I was facing were a factual pathway that will eventually direct me to my ultimate goals.

The thing that qualifies me to speak on this topic is that I passed all the difficulties and crossed all the countries to live and exercise peace with no worrying of harm. Besides, there is also my personal experience – I almost got shot during my work as a delivery driver– and the feeling that I felt after the Texas school gunshot motivated me to raise my voice to stop the gun violence.

## **Sirish Gurung**

### **Major: Computer Science**

Growing up in Nepal, a country with limited resources and opportunity, I have witnessed thousands of Nepali workers flying to the Gulf countries, especially Qatar, in search of a better future. After Qatar won the right to host the World Cup in 2010, thousands of people were hired from Nepal to work on the

construction project of this mega sporting event. However, many of these migrant laborers have died or have fallen prey to modern-day slavery in Qatar during the past ten years. Seeing all of the sadness and suffering that were happening behind the Qatar 2022 World Cup was both unsettling and heartbreaking, and my deepest calling from within was to speak for these underprivileged and disadvantaged migrant workers in Qatar.

## **Bokyoung Kim**

### **Major: Finance and Marketing**

Bokyoung is a fourth-year student at Seattle University, studying Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. As an Alfie Scholar and a global citizen, she cares about the world and the people, and she aspires to contribute her personal and professional life to making this world a better place. She has particularly been interested in solving the issues of climate change and environmental injustice, and she had studied those topics in a deeper level through taking an environmental studies class and writing a research paper about climate change and the U.S. fossil fuel industry at Seattle University. As a person originally from South Korea and currently living in Seattle, Bokyoung is conscious that she is living on the land of the Coast Salish people, one of the indigenous tribes who have been the victim of historical colonization and oppression. With this passion and awareness, Bokyoung has done extensive research on the prevalent environmental injustice that the indigenous people currently face, and through this presentation, she hopes to empower the audience to always remember whose land they are standing on and to bear witness to the suffering of the true owners of this land.

## **Lia Matias**

### **Major: Management**

Lia Matias is a fourth-year transfer student at Seattle University majoring in Management. After taking a class on Race, Ethnicity, and US Catholicism, Lia learned about the strategies that white supremacist groups use to spread their message and how powerful they can be even with a small presence. As a Hispanic woman, people's perceptions and hatred are at the forefront of her mind when she interacts with the world, which is why this topic is a constant and real fear. By researching this topic, she hopes to help fight against this strategy and prevent more mass killings. As a member of this digital generation, her perspective on how others on the same platforms can help is one to listen to.

## **Serah Ombongi**

### **Major: Nursing**

I am a first-generation student who faced difficulties when it came to poverty and who never allowed it to define her as a person. While growing up as a child

I was impacted by poverty to a point whereby I had to walk long distances to school, with no shoes, and no school backpack, and at times we had to go without meals. We would wait for free milk government milk and sometimes drink water for lunch. During study time I used a lantern lamp and sometimes studied outside before sunset, I did not have the opportunity to have a normal education like other children. I must work extra and long hours despite my college education to support my family back at home and, support my education just because I grew up in poverty.

**Elma Sacic**

**Major: Nursing**

I have had the pleasure and honor to volunteer to have my mental health clinical rotation at the Veterans Affairs hospital in Seattle. This experience showed me the harm that is done when we use and dispose of veterans for their service, and when action is required to care for their needs, they are often left in the dust. Many feared being discharged because it meant they were left for the streets. From this experience I research the benefits veterans have regarding mental health, from there I discovered the effects of burn pits.

**Mashaal Shameem**

**Major: Accounting and Management**

Mashaal Shameem is a senior pursuing a Bachelor's in Accounting and Management with minors in Entrepreneurship and Philosophy. 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 an individual who has the right to vote, Shameem began to reflect on the process of local elections and awareness around local politicians when she received multiple ballots in her mail and did not feel comfortable enough to exercise her given right to vote. Shameem is now committed to figuring out how a person with this right is able to utilize it to become an active member of their communities and hopes this presentation will spark a conversation on the importance of local elections and the necessity of voter engagement.

**Presenter: Salina Timalsina**

**Major: Nursing**

I have witnessed it firsthand and experienced the effect of a lack of staffing in patients as well as staff members. I feel like as a future nurse, I need to talk about this serious issue, so we can help each other and solve the problem of discrimination.

