

# UK Summer Institutes

## Meet our 2025 Participants



# Fulbright King's College London Summer Institute - Modern Britain: Institutions, Power, & People

## Noor Atkinson

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Noor Atkinson is an undergraduate student entering her sophomore year at Syracuse University, majoring in History and Law, Society, and Policy. Her commitment to social justice and equity is deeply rooted in years of experience working within underserved communities, both as a tutor in the Syracuse City School District and as a long-time volunteer with Harlem Grown in New York City—a role she's held since childhood.

With a passion for ensuring that powerful institutions serve rather than exploit the public, Noor aspires to become a public defender, advocating for those too often overlooked by the legal system. She is particularly driven to dismantle structural barriers and elevate underrepresented voices in law and policy.

Through the Fulbright program, Noor looks forward to examining the British political and judicial systems firsthand, immersing herself in London's dynamic legal institutions. This opportunity will allow her to broaden her understanding of global justice systems and deepen her commitment to community-centered legal advocacy.

Beyond academics, Noor is dedicated to fostering inclusive environments wherever she goes and is eager to continue championing equity, both at home and abroad.

## Ace Farris

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Ace Farris is a rising junior currently enrolled at the University of Louisville. He is pursuing a double major in history and political science with minors in classical studies and criminal justice. At the University of Louisville, Ace is heavily involved with the history honors society, Phi Alpha Theta, serving as the organization's treasurer. Additionally, he is a member of his university's Honors Scholar program.

Growing up in Eastern Kentucky, Ace realized his passion for various issues afflicting citizens throughout his region such as homelessness and substance abuse. After he moved to Louisville, he realized that these issues touched more than just his region and affected all of Kentucky, which only served to intensify his passion.

By studying abroad at King's College London, Ace hopes to broaden his worldview and meet new people from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, he hopes that creative solutions to the problems facing Kentucky can be found by studying British politics. Significantly, by studying the English roots of the common law system, Ace seeks to gain a firmer understanding of American jurisprudence, which would support his aspiration to become a lawyer.

## Brynnan Smith

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Brynnan Smith is a Mass communication major attending the Xavier University Of Louisiana. His hometown is Minneapolis, Minnesota and has come to Louisiana to pursue a career in public affairs.

While in London he will be a student at King College University where he will study Power, People, and institutions of modern Britain. He is extremely excited to attend Kings college and get an in depth look into the current state affairs of Britain. He also looks forward to trying all the diverse and tasty food London has to offer!

Over this summer he is certain he will walk away with a deeper understanding of not only Britain, but global affairs as a whole. He also looks to foster genuine connections and bonds with peers from across the globe.

## Madison Thompson

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Madison Thompson was raised in Greensboro, NC, and is currently a second-year student at North Carolina State University. She is double-majoring in Computer Science and Science, Technology, and Society, with minors in Biological Sciences, Genetics, and Mathematics. Her research centers on applying computational methodologies to push the boundaries of biomedical innovation. Academically, she seeks to understand health sciences through a social lens—particularly how diverse communities impact and are impacted by scientific development.

Madison is the Co-President and Co-Founder of Students Leading Collaborative Computing Education (SLCCE), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit expanding access to computer science and engineering education for underresourced and underrepresented high school students, while also supporting university students from similar backgrounds. She is an undergraduate researcher with the Bioelectricity Lab and holds active leadership roles within the Goodnight Scholars Program, Greenhouse Scholars, and the NAE Grand Challenges Scholars Program.

Madison is thrilled to study at King's College London, where she aims to deepen her understanding of how social structures influence engagement with research and healthcare. She looks forward to learning from her Fulbright peers and UK communities, applying that growth to advance equity in engineering, medicine, and education in the United States.

## George Tom

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George Tom was born and raised in Manhattan, New York, and is a rising third-year student at the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY Hunter College. A proud first-generation student, George is studying Political Science and Women and Gender Studies with a Certificate in Business. Inspired by NYC's diverse communities, he remains committed to uplifting underrepresented communities through policy and intersectional advocacy.

Having served in student government since his first year of college and explored how politics, law, and society intersect through experiences in judicial courts and American government, George understands the value of mentorship and civic engagement—both of which fuel his passion for public service. He is eager to dive deeper into the political and legal frameworks that have shaped Britain's institutions within a global context. With its dynamic culture and diverse communities, London offers a setting that echoes his hometown of NYC and inspires him to broaden his understanding of transatlantic governance and equity-driven policymaking. In his free time, George enjoys trying new cultural cuisines, building plastic model kits, and mentoring high school students as they navigate the college application process.



# Fulbright Lancaster University

## Summer Institute - Film

### Ava Barton

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Ava Skye Barton grew up in Wilmington, Delaware, where she still formally resides when not at school. She attends Elizabethtown College as a Stamps Scholar where she majors in philosophy, politics, and economics and minors in family business & entrepreneurship, public heritage studies, and marketing. An internationally awarded filmmaker, Ava's work has been recognized by groups such as The Breakthrough Prize, Khan Academy, WHYY, and the Congressional Family Business Caucus. Ava is passionate about using filmmaking as a mode of communication to share stories that are often overlooked or under researched.

At the Fulbright Lancaster University Summer Institute, Ava looks forward to investigating how cinema reflects, responds to, and influences the political, cultural, and social landscape of a country. She's equally excited to delve into the more technical conventions of cinema which will culminate in a collaborative film project at the end of the program.

Ava will be the first in her family to study abroad and she cannot wait to gain a deeper understanding of UK history and the culture which informs it. She is beyond excited to work with similarly passionate individuals in her cohort and learn about their perspectives and backgrounds.

### Lindsay Bitner-Mitchell

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Lindsay Bitner-Mitchell, raised in Plainfield, Illinois, is currently a rising sophomore at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, majoring in Communication. For the past 5 years, Lindsay has been a video editor and content creator of film and media. On campus, she is a marketing intern for her school's student-run media company and is also a part of many organizations in her community.

Passionate about film and popular culture, Lindsay hopes to pursue a career in entertainment and public relations while also continuing video editing and social media management. With an interest in intercultural communications, she plans to explore the connections between cinema and culture on a broader scale in hopes of including more underrepresented groups on the big screen.

Excited to learn more about the history of the UK and film production, Lindsay will be able to bring back valuable knowledge to further apply in her professional and academic career. The University of Lancaster Summer Institute will allow her to create new connections abroad and create a project that will display both theoretical and practical film techniques.

## Hays Romano

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Hays Romano, born in Alabama, is a rising junior at Mississippi State University. Hays is double majoring in Political Science and Asian Studies and pursuing minors in Film Studies and Pre-Law.

Hays Romano is doing much more than just pursuing his degree. When not in class, he serves as the Student Association's Elections Commissioner, competes with the Debate Team, and writes and directs plays for the Honors Onstage organization. He is also a proud member of the Shackouls Honors College.

Film is one of Hays's greatest passions. Whether it be writing screenplays or standing behind the camera, there is not a single aspect of filmmaking that does not fascinate him. He is particularly interested in the medium's ability to present diverse perspectives to those who otherwise would not be exposed to them, and by doing so, change their hearts and minds.

Through his study at Lancaster University, Hays hopes to gain a better understanding of film theory, the filmmaking process, and the broader impact film can have on society as a whole. He also very much looks forward to diving into the culture and history of Lancaster and the United Kingdom as a whole.

## Eduarda Silva

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Eduarda Silva was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey and is currently a rising sophomore at New York University (NYU). She is majoring in Drama and studying in the Meisner Studio at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. As a Drama major, Eduarda is passionate about using performance and visual mediums to explore themes of identity, culture, and social justice.

As a proud first-generation Brazilian-American, Eduarda dedicates her academic work to researching the intersections of film, cultural identity, and access to education. One of her research focuses examined how the portrayal of Latin Americans in film influences first-generation adolescents' self-perception.

During her participation in the UK Fulbright Summer Institute at Lancaster University, she hopes to experience the craft and perspective necessary to create narratives that foster empathy and connection on an international scale.

While at Lancaster, Eduarda looks forward to engaging with local artists and scholars, exploring the UK's rich cultural and theatrical history at venues such as The Dukes, and collaborating with peers on cross-cultural artistic projects.

## Ryan Smith

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Originally from Schaumburg, Illinois, Ryan Smith is a freshman student at Marquette University studying Digital Media and Writing-Intensive English. Post-graduating, Ryan dreams of earning his MFA in Directing at NYU with the ultimate goal to direct his own feature films.

At Lancaster University, Ryan will study film techniques and the wider conventions of cinema through a combination of lectures, seminars, and workshops. During his time in Lancaster, Ryan hopes to hone and expand on his technical skills, and is extremely excited to collaborate with students from a variety of different cultures, lives, and experiences compared to his own. He can't wait to meet and learn from new people, build new friendships, and to explore the UK—especially London as he is a massive Chelsea fan!

Outside of his academic pursuits, Ryan spends his free time writing short stories and screenplays, listening to his favorite artists Frank Ocean and Mac Miller, playing soccer and basketball, thrifting clothing, reading at coffee shops with his friends—and of course, going to the movie theater.



# Fulbright Queen's University Belfast Summer Institute - Understanding Northern Ireland

## Humza Ahmed

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Humza Ahmed is a first-year Architecture major at Virginia Tech, currently calling Allen, Texas home. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, and raised in Chicago, Illinois, Humza's life is stitched across cities, which fuels his curiosity about how place, identity, and design intersect. This summer, he'll continue that exploration at Queen's University Belfast, studying Identity and Intergroup Relations in Divided Societies.

Through the lens of Belfast's intricate history, Humza plans to investigate how architecture and the built environment influence, and are influenced by, social division and reconciliation. He is particularly interested in how cities like Belfast embody their histories in physical form and how thoughtful design can support healing and unity.

Outside the classroom, Humza looks forward to immersing himself in the rhythms of Belfast's cultural scene. From food and art to music and local traditions, he hopes to experience the city beyond the surface. He aims to return with a deeper understanding of Northern Ireland, enriched design perspectives, a solid foundation in international exchange, and a renewed commitment to creating inclusive spaces that bring people together.

## Cecelia Escobar

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Cecelia Escobar was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, and is currently a rising Junior at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she is pursuing a double major in Political Science and Latina/Latino Studies. She is deeply invested in exploring the relationship between political polarization and the histories that are and are not shared within mainstream school curricula. As she continues on in her educational journey, she aims to learn more about how the inclusion of diverse stories can discredit biased narratives and rhetoric.

Cecelia is passionate about making education accessible for everyone and utilizing it as a valuable tool in inducing positive change in society. In her time at the Queen's University Belfast Summer Institute, she is excited to learn more about Northern Ireland's history and politics. Through this experience, she hopes to take the skills and lessons she gains with her into her future career in order to uplift her community.

Cecelia will be the first person in her immediate family to study abroad, and she looks forward to learning from her peers and the experts at Queen's University Belfast. She is incredibly grateful to the Fulbright Commission for this opportunity and cannot wait to explore Belfast.

## Mo Fahad

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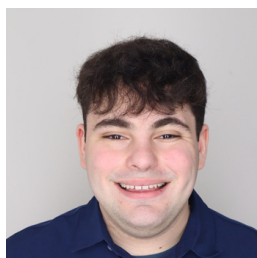
Raised in Long Island, New York, Mo Fahad is an upcoming sophomore at Carnegie Mellon University, pursuing a double major in Technical Writing and Literature & Culture. His interest in civic engagement began while working in local government within the Town of Babylon, supporting veterans affairs and constituent services under his councilman. There, he assisted with database management, outreach, and day-to-day operations.

Mo is a Humanities Scholar, part of a selective interdisciplinary fellowship that emphasizes exploratory learning, community development, and intellectual engagement across the humanities. He has conducted research in digital humanities, contributing to conversations around the impact of technology on culture and human expression. Outside the classroom, he serves on the Salon team at TEDxCMU, helping to connect the greater Pittsburgh area to the Carnegie Mellon community through events and public discussions.

This summer, he will attend the Fulbright Summer Institute at Queen's University Belfast, where he will explore identity and intergroup relations in divided societies. Through this program, he hopes to examine how storytelling and personal narratives can serve as powerful tools for reconciliation, social cohesion, and reimagining identity in post-conflict societies.

## Jake Richfield

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Jake Richfield is a rising junior from Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, and is pursuing a major in Political Science at Saint Joseph's University. Jake is passionate about diplomacy and conflict resolution.

In his community, Jake has served as a Global Smarts Mentor with the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia where he worked with students from under-resourced schools and prepared them for Model UN. Jake has also served as the Vice President of Commuter Students on campus and worked to advocate for the specific needs of the community. Jake is also the Opinions Editor of The Hawk Newspaper and is committed to promoting interest in international affairs.

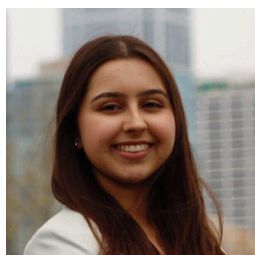
In his first time traveling abroad, Jake is excited to gain first-hand experience with the peace and reconciliation process in Northern Ireland and hopes to gain a better understanding of Northern Irish history and culture. He also hopes to immerse himself within the community and engage with diverse perspectives. Through this opportunity, Jake hopes to learn more about how conflicts can be successfully resolved through dialogue and negotiation, and how to ensure that a successful reconciliation process can ensue in the aftermath of conflict.

# Fulbright University of Birmingham

## Summer Institute - British Cultural Heritage

### Maria Balhara

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Maria studies philosophy and religion at the University of Pennsylvania, learning from Professors Quayshawn Spencer and Steven Weitzman.

Her favorite work is being an Americorps teacher and mentor to 5-7th grade students each summer. She also volunteers with the National Publications Committee of the Latino Medical Student Association.

Since 2021, Maria has pursued research on SDOH related to food and housing. She also worked on hypertension in the lab of her mentor, Dr. Annet Kirabo. She is now working on a university-funded project to link homelessness and philosophy findings under her mentor, Dr. Jennifer Morton.

Maria's interest in philosophy and religion first took root after classes with Professors Matthew Congdon and Adeana McNicholl, respectively. She is building on these interests through Clinical Pastoral Education under Rev. Liam Robins.

Maria volunteers with Philly House, a shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. She contributes remotely to the UK-based Nutrition Society, working with Cassandra Ellis.

Maria is excited to explore British culture and learn more about innovations in compassionate patient-centered care, particularly within the National Health Service (NHS), where chaplaincy has long been integrated into patient support. She's excited to bring what she learns in the UK back home to the US.

### Michael Bryant

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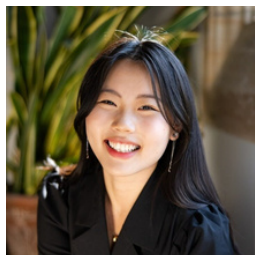


Michael Bryant is a first-year undergraduate at the University of Michigan studying Economics and International Studies. He currently writes for the Michigan Foreign Policy Council and Michigan Journal of Economics, serves as captain of the Michigan Ethics Bowl team, and works as a campus tour guide. In his free time, you'll find Michael playing chess, reading history books, and watching Manchester United.

Having never traveled outside North America, Michael is beyond excited to participate in the University of Birmingham's British Cultural Heritage Program this summer. He looks forward to exploring historical sites across the UK and taking classes at the university. He is also excited to explore Birmingham with fellow summer institute and full-time students. Michael has never studied in a big city and can't wait to see all of the amazing things Birmingham has to offer. Through his experience in the program, Michael aims to become a more thoughtful and globally-engaged thinker.

## Chloe Lu

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Chloe Lu was born in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is a rising sophomore at Ohio State University and a Stamps Eminence Scholar majoring in architecture, double minoring in business and city and regional planning.

Deeply involved in community-based organizations and projects, Chloe is passionate about exploring how the built environment tells stories of people and place. As an aspiring architect, she hopes to design spaces that prioritize sustainability, cultural preservation, and social impact. Her goal is to become a licensed architect with a practice rooted in community and environmental resilience.

During her time at the University of Birmingham, Chloe will study British cultural heritage and investigate how architecture, history, and arts intersect to shape identity and place. Growing up closely connected to her Chinese heritage, she is eager to learn from other cultural narratives and share her own.

Outside of academics, Chloe enjoys dance, photography, and sketching. She looks forward to trying new cuisines, visiting historic sites, and engaging with peers from across the world. She hopes to return to the U.S. with broadened perspectives and fresh inspiration to guide her studies and creative practice.

## Joey Pallmann

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Joey Pallmann is a current honors undergraduate majoring in International Business at the University of North Florida. Joey was adopted from La Ciudad de Guatemala at a young age, and growing up in the United States, Joey cultivated an immense interest in understanding his background and culture. Joey would like to use his business degree to reconnect with his Hispanic heritage and form a nonprofit for Guatemala.

Throughout his life, Joey encountered abuse and violence that tested his core values. Joey learned from an early age that he had to step up and speak up to survive and ignite change. With a supportive community at UNF, Joey persevered and wants to use his experiences to remain firm against challenges and to advocate for others.

This Fulbright experience at the University of Birmingham will provide Joey with the opportunity to support his community even further. As an agent of change, Joey will gain valuable experience studying British Cultural heritage, learning how to contextualize, and promote intercultural appreciation on an international level. Outside of the classroom, Joey is active in the UNF Hicks Honors College on the board of Honors Student Union and enjoys working at a Jacksonville nonprofit serving refugees.

## Rei Tedoco

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Rei Tedoco is a sophomore at Arizona State University studying journalism and mass communication. Originally from Columbus, Ohio, Rei is a storyteller with a deep love for culture, sports, and community. On campus, she helps lead a culture and sports media network, spotlighting stories that bridge identity and innovation. She also serves as the student body vice president-elect, working closely with students from all backgrounds to expand access to academic, career, and wellness resources.

This summer, Rei is ecstatic to join the British Cultural Heritage program at the University of Birmingham. With an interest in metropolitan life, local businesses, and the intersection of culture and community, she's excited to explore how journalism operates in the U.K. — especially within the world of sports.

Rei hopes to use this global experience to build a more inclusive and dynamic campus community back in Arizona. She plans to document her time in Birmingham through a journalistic project that captures the city's lifestyle, values, and voices.



# Fulbright University of Bristol Summer Institute - Arts, Activism and Social Justice

## Obse Abebe

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Obse Abebe was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, but she moved to the United States at a young age, settling in Silver Spring, Maryland. As an undergraduate, Obse studies Human Rights and Political Science, a combination that deepens her understanding of power dynamics and countermeasures to these dynamics. Grappling with power dynamics in the context of migrant and incarcerated populations especially interests Obse and propels her to aid organizations like the Asylum Support Clinic.

Obse hopes to enrich how she contends with these dynamics by discussing rectification for historical injustices and vehicles for social change with fellow UKSI participants and Bristol community members. She also looks forward to learning about and creating fond memories with these participants and community members, especially by enjoying local art and music scenes, natural attractions, and community programming. When not out and about, Obse anticipates enjoying her favorite pastimes, such as reading, writing poetry, and practicing yoga.

However, Obse knows her enjoyment will not end at the conclusion of the Bristol Summer Institute because she will forever carry the lessons, relationships, and memories she experienced thanks to this institute. She believes these gifts will enable her to further develop as a scholar, organizer, and human.

## Demetrisk Booker

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Demetrisk Booker was born in Walterboro, South Carolina, and raised in a military family that moved frequently across the U.S. He is a sophomore at Duke University, majoring in Public Policy with a minor in African & African American Studies. His interests include racial justice, combating systemic disenfranchisement, and the intersection of policy and community empowerment.

He is excited to attend the University of Bristol Summer Institute and to explore how arts, activism, and global history shape social movements. This experience will deepen his understanding of transatlantic racial histories and the role of cultural expression in political change. The Summer Institute aligns with his academic goals and his long-term aspiration to attend law school and pursue civil rights advocacy.

On campus, Demetrisk is the incoming Vice President of the Black Student Alliance, Secretary of the Black Pre-Law Society, and a representative on Duke's Presidential Council on Black Affairs. He also works as a research assistant at Duke Law and at the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture. A Spring 2025 initiate of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., he serves through community advocacy.

In his free time, Demetrisk is a passionate vexillologist, collecting world flags and gaining a deeper appreciation for global cultures.

## Lloyce Frimpong

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Lloyce was born in Columbus, Ohio, and raised in both Ghana and Maryland. She is a rising junior at Towson University, double majoring in Biology and Environmental Science. Passionate about research, she is involved in nanotechnology work, synthesizing metal nanostructures. She is a STEM peer mentor to incoming freshmen and volunteers at her local hospital's infusion center. Her interests lie at the intersection of environmental and human health, particularly in addressing unhealthy food systems and their disproportionate impact on marginalized communities.

As a first-generation college student, Lloyce values education and strives to bring an integrated perspective to medicine and healthcare. She aspires to become a physician committed to building communities that support holistic healing. In her free time, she enjoys crocheting and running.

Traveling to the UK for the first time, Lloyce is excited to participate in the University of Bristol Summer Institute Program and immerse herself in Bristol's vibrant arts and historical scene. She looks forward to exploring the curriculum, gaining social and historical context on global issues, and learning about effective strategies for change. She hopes to carry these insights into her future career and is eager to connect with and learn from the 2025 cohort.

## Sophie Glenn

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Sophie Glenn is a rising second-year student from Cincinnati, Ohio, double majoring in English Literary and Cultural Studies and Latin American, Caribbean, Latino/a/x Studies at the University of Cincinnati. As a lifelong nerd, she looks forward to intense study at the University of Bristol's institute in Arts, Activism, and Social Justice.

Her academic interests include decolonization, ethnic studies, critical theory, and translated literature, and she is overjoyed to apply an interdisciplinary lens to these interests at such a prestigious institution as the University of Bristol. She plans to attend graduate school and have a career as an educator of underserved populations outside of the academic mainstream.

Sophie intends to engage fully with the culture of Bristol by spending her free time visiting its variety of incredible artistic and historical sites. In her free time in Cincinnati, she works with Cincinnati Community Aid and Praxis, a revolutionary mutual aid and political development organization. She is excited to learn from grassroots organizers in Bristol so she may bring their diversity of knowledge back to her beloved Cincinnati community. She knows that her time at the Institute will affirm her belief that hope for the future lies in the study of the past.

## Carter Johansen

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Carter Johansen is a student at the University of Tulsa majoring in English Literature with minors in Psychology, Philosophy, and Historical Trauma and Transformation from Edmond, Oklahoma. Ever since Carter can remember, he has been enamored with the inherent power of storytelling, and he aims to better understand the sociocultural impact of the emergence of the British novel.

At the University of Tulsa, Carter is a committed student in the Honors College, which specializes in classical studies. Additionally, Carter is a University Ambassador (UA); in this position, he gives campus tours and encourages high schoolers to explore a future in Higher Education. Carter's role as a UA has blossomed into a greater, long-term goal, for he hopes to spend his career making Higher Education more accessible and welcoming to people from all cultures, economic classes, and historical backgrounds.

The Fulbright Summer Institute will be an integral part of Carter's academic and personal progression, as it will give him the tools to better understand cross-cultural perspectives concerning Higher Education and allow him to experience the cities that inspired a plethora of great literature. With this Fulbright, Carter has been launched into a future filled with academic activism and unending passion.

## Theresa Lindberg

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Theresa Lindberg is a student at Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin studying English, Spanish, Justice, and Peacebuilding where she has received a full ride scholarship for students interested in social justice. On campus she holds several leadership positions including Vice President of the Student Government Association. Outside of school, she is on the board of a nonprofit that fundraises for potable water for indigenous populations in Guatemala, volunteers at the Wauwatosa Health Department, and is interning with a national political advocacy organization.

While at the University of Bristol, Theresa aims to strengthen her education in activism and gain clarity on how she can influence public policy in the United States through studying past movements. This Fulbright will give her the opportunity to integrate learning from the classroom and community to influence meaningful dialogue surrounding social justice change in the United States.

Armed with the skills she has learned at Mount Mary and at the University of Bristol, Theresa hopes to pursue law school and eventually work in public policy, affecting life-giving change for all community members in the United States.

## Jayson Smith

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Jayson Smith was born in Ashland, Kentucky, and raised in the countryside outside of Ironton, Ohio. A rising sophomore in the Ohio University Honors Tutorial College, Jayson studies Political Science, with a concentration in education policy. As a lifelong resident of the Appalachian region and a graduate of a small, rural public school in Southern Ohio, Jayson is no stranger to the struggles in both education and everyday life that many in Appalachia face.

At the University of Bristol, Jayson aims to learn more about movement building and the intersection of activism and the arts—specifically, how activism takes shape in different contexts and how music, art, and literature serve as powerful vehicles to drive positive social change.

Jayson looks forward to immersing himself in the UK's rich cultural heritage, engaging with an entirely new context of activism, and procuring a deeper understanding of transnational approaches to social justice. Jayson hopes to return with insights that will inform his long-term goal: advocating for policy reforms that expand opportunity and equity for rural and underserved communities, particularly in Appalachia.



# Fulbright University of St Andrews Summer Institute - Scotland's History: Kingdom, Nation, People

## Audrey Bird

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Audrey Bird was raised in Brecksville, Ohio and is a rising junior at Miami University. She is pursuing an interdisciplinary degree in Economics and Public Health. At Miami University, Audrey is involved in Women Who Invest, Butler County Stream Teams (a local environmental conservation group), and Club Broomball. She has also served as a teaching assistant in the Department of Computer Science as well as the Center for Student Success, and looks forward to assisting as a Peer Career Coach next fall.

Audrey is passionate about human behavior and dedicated to advancing social mobility by addressing systemic barriers to economic advancement. Coming from a small town in Ohio, she is eager to study at Scotland's oldest university and to soak up the rich historical context while gaining a deeper understanding of social dynamics and global awareness.

In her spare time, Audrey enjoys spending as much time as possible outdoors, either hiking, hammocking, or skiing. Never having traveled outside of the US, she cannot wait to bridge connections with individuals of diverse backgrounds and explore the beauty of Scotland.

## Nik Gillaspie

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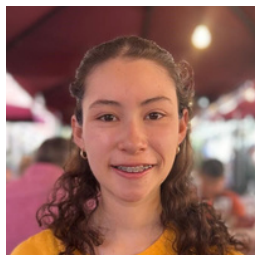
Nik is a rising junior at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Born and raised in central Massachusetts, Nik has had the opportunity to experience and appreciate the cultural diversity of the United States having moved across the country for college. While at Baylor, he is double majoring in History and Political Science, and enjoys studying Chinese. After Baylor, he is planning on attending law school, then beginning a career in law and politics.

Nik's passion for history and politics began from a love of reading, and has only grown exponentially as he spends much of his time in college digging through archives for primary sources. Nik just recently completed research on media reforms in the Soviet Union, and is currently working on research regarding Hispanic media sources in Waco, Texas. Nik is excited to be immersed in the history and culture of Scotland, and is especially looking forward to studying the power, propaganda, and print of Renaissance Scotland.

In his free time, Nik has a passion for fitness and is working on plans to make the sport of rowing more accessible to marginalized groups. He is excited to meet new people from diverse backgrounds who share similar passions and drive.

## Brunella Meini

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Double majoring in Finance and Marketing at the University of Miami, Brunella Meini is a Peruvian American passionate about advocating for a more equitable and compassionate society, striving to create opportunities for underserved communities. Although she embraces Peruvian and American culture, she has always dreamed of broadening her perspective by exploring the UK's cultural diversity, vibrant cities, and historical landmarks.

Being the oldest University in Scotland and third oldest University worldwide, studying at the University of St Andrews will allow her to learn about Scotland's captivating history within the real-life historical locations across St Andrews, filled with stories of heroes, villains, and everyday people who shaped the country's destiny. She will explore complex themes like identity, power, culture, and nationhood, which will offer her a rich and nuanced understanding of Scottish heritage.

By participating in a cultural and academic programme at UK Summer Institute, she is determined to leave her comfort zone, navigate unfamiliar situations, and become a globally-minded individual who, beyond her cultural-awareness, is able to foster positive change from her cultural knowledge.

## Sensi Messner-Baker

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Sensi Messner-Baker is a rising junior at American University in Washington, D.C., where she studies Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Legal Studies. Originally from Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, she is passionate about education and disability advocacy, gender justice, and the role of law in advancing equity. She is committed to reforming and building systems that recognize and support the full complexity of people's identities and needs.

At the University of St. Andrews, Sensi is looking forward to exploring the intersections of culture, identity, and colonialism, with a particular interest in Scottish Gaelic language revitalization and cultural preservation. She is particularly interested in comparing U.S. and Scottish approaches to disability legislation and educational accommodations, analyzing how cultural attitudes shape the implementation of legal protections. She also hopes to draw connections between the cultural marginalization of the Scottish Highlands and her home region of Appalachia.

During the Summer Institute, Sensi looks forward to engaging in academic seminars, cross-cultural dialogue, and community-based learning. She hopes to return to the U.S. with a broader global understanding of advocacy, identity, and legal systems, insights she plans to carry into a future career in family, reproductive rights, and education law.

## Gray Zeisse

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Gray Zeisse is a student at the University of South Florida majoring in Biomedical Sciences and minoring in Aging Sciences. Gray is interested in researching about identity and how it's constructed, specifically in the St. Andrews LGBT+ community. Scotland has a vibrant history of notable queer activists that advocated for the LGBT+ community despite anti-LGBT+ rhetoric and policing.

Something he hopes to gain from researching at this university is how LGBT+ citizens in St Andrews continued to advocate for their community despite this rhetoric. He is also interested in exploring how Scotland has pivoted to becoming such a haven for LGBT+ people. By studying the history of St Andrews this will bring him a wholistic understanding to how wellbeing and identity sit together. This applies to Gray's future goals as physician as he believes medicine and humanities should work in tandem to create meaningful change in patient care.

During his time in St. Andrews he hopes to learn more about the intersection of identity, wellbeing, and history and he would like to write a paper on how St Andrews and Scotland embraced the LGBT+ community and what policy implementation occurred to make this change.

