## MEET THE 2024 COHORT









**SUMMER COURSE ON MIGRATION** AND REFUGEE **STUDIES HARVARD UNIVERSITY &** NKUA



**Eman Sari Al-Drous** 

Eman Sari Al-Drous (she, her) serves as the Assistant Director of the First-Year Writing Program at the University of Delaware, concurrently pursuing her Ph.D. candidacy in its final year while also fulfilling the role of a graduate instructor. Recognized for her academic excellence, Eman has been selected for the university's prestigious doctoral fellowship for excellence. Moreover, she has been honored with several awards and fellowships, such as The Modern Language Association's Reading and Writing Institutes at Princeton University, the WISE Graduate Research Fellowship sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, the Ractfille Eco-Entrepreneurship Grant, alongside various teaching awards. In her instructional capacity, Eman teaches rhetoric and composition, world literature with focus on refugee narratives, business writing, technical writing, and other specialized subjects. With a keen interest in migration studies, critical refugee studies, human rights, and climate change, she recently assumed the role of Delegate for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and participated in the United Nations' 68th Commission on the Status of Women. Eman's academic and social pursuits culminate in her dissertation, a nuanced exploration of the rhetorical and literary portrayal of refugees in post-9/11 literature through narrative frameworks. Her interdisciplinary work embodies a dedication to scholarship, advocacy, and the pursuit of social justice. She frequently presents her findings at national conferences such as MLA, CCCC, and NeMLA.



Samy Amkieh

My name is Samy Amkieh, and I am currently a first-year medical student at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, US. I recently completed my Bachelor's and MPH at Brown University, where I focused on barriers to refugee housing for my thesis. I have previously worked on research grants to address nutritional knowledge and access for refugees, as well as working for over 5 years in education, mentorship, and healthcare for refugees in Rhode Island. I enjoy Isshin-ryu Karate, cartography, meteorology, League of Legends, and playing with my cats Mishmush and Momo in my free time.







**Timothy Anderson** 

Timothy Anderson is a social anthropologist specializing in European asylum and migration policy. During his doctoral studies in Estonia, Timothy conducted ethnographic fieldwork in two state-operated facilities: an asylum accommodation center and an immigration detention center. His work examined the ways in which migrants interpreted and engaged with Estonian asylum practice and human rights discourse, highlighting instances of migrant agency, resistance, and activism. Beyond academia, Timothy has worked as a Data Analyst for the Shifo Foundation in Sweden, where he evaluated new child healthcare delivery systems in Uganda and Afghanistan. Starting next year, Timothy plans to conduct a comparative analysis of contemporary EU and US asylum policies. He holds a PhD from Tallinn University, an MA from the University of Edinburgh, and an MSc from Radboud University Nijmegen.

**Gerasimos Avgerinos** 

Gerasimos Avgerinos is a fourth year undergraduate student at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He has participated in many European mobility programs (Erasmus+, CIVIS) and MUN conferences and he enjoys learning foreign languages. Having a particular interest in border studies he desires to follow a career on European Common Asylum Policy or International Development and Humatarian Action. He is currently working on investigative journalism. He also studies the rise of far right parties and populistic discourse in the EU.





Sara Bin Mahfooz

Sara Bin Mahfooz began her career at UNESCO through the Young Professional Programme in 2011 and now serves as an Education Programme Specialist. In this role, she works to support governments in developing resilient education systems using data to shape more effective policies, with a special focus on developing countries. Before joining UNESCO, Sara worked an Operations Analyst at the World Bank in the Europe and Central Asia Human Development sector. Sara is passionate about enhancing access to educational opportunities for all, especially marginalized communities. Her work emphasizes the significance of school happiness, aiming to improve teaching and learning environments. She is from Saudi Arabia and holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, as well as a Master's in Technology for Education from Johns Hopkins University.



**Alison Burns** 

Alison is a lifelong learner and a natural connector of people, ideas, and systems. As Manager of Immigrant Education at a public college in Toronto, Alison is committed to developing meaningful post-secondary pathways, programs, and services for refugees and immigrants who are re-establishing their lives and careers in Canada. She builds partnerships with settlement academic institutions, governmental bodies, philanthropic foundations, and the corporate sector to expand immigrant education offerings and deepen their positive impact. As an active member of municipal, provincial, and national level newcomer advisory groups, Alison also works to influence policy and funding directions in support of newcomer integration. Prior to her academic career, she spent years working in the NGO sector globally (El Salvador - with women survivors of civil war) and locally (Toronto - with Latin American migrants). Alison studied international political economy at the Master's and Doctoral levels, as a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) national scholar. Outside of work and study, you can find Alison in a pool, at a music festival, or glued to her very entertaining eighteen-month old niece.







**Linda Caballero-Sotelo** 

Linda Caballero Sotelo, is an MPA graduate from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, She is also the Executive Director & Chief Curator of New Americans Museum & Immigration Learning Center [NAM] in San Diego, CA. NAM is a visual arts & oral histories museum, advocacy & research NGO whose mission is to document, educate about and disseminate the contributions of multigenerational immigrants & refugees into the American narrative through arts, culture, and civic programming to confront & dispel stereotypes, & hate. Throughout her career, Linda's work has centered on service while dismantling systems of oppression, uplifting community self-determination, and social justice. She believes in the power of civic engagement and cultural public policy practices as tools for social change and for building understanding & tolerance. Linda, a US citizen, was born in Tijuana, Mexico. She is a transnational, bicultural, Mexican-American leader and scholar whose childhood was spent crossing an international border daily for educational opportunities. She credits those experiences as informing and profoundly shaping her inclusive and pluralistic world view, understanding the painful, and difficult challenges of being misunderstood or unwelcome as an immigrant, refugee, or marginalized person in a world of inequality, conflict and flux; yet fueled by human resilience and hope.



**Avery Closser** 

Avery Closser is a student in her last semester at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University where she is completing her Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy. Avery studies human security and gender and intersectional analysis, with a focus on migration and displacement in Latin America. At Fletcher, Avery works as a Research Assistant at the Henry J. Leir Institute of Migration and Human Security, through which she completed a six-week field research project studying migration in Costa Rica. Prior to starting at Fletcher, Avery worked for an Immigrant Rights Organization, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the World Affairs Council in Seattle, WA, an intellectual property law firm and, lastly, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Avery graduated from the University of Puget Sound with majors in International Political Economy and Spanish, and a minor in Latin American Studies.









**Santiago Creuheras** 

Santiago Creuheras served as a deputy minister for the Environment and Energy in Mexico. Recently, he was a senior consultant on Sustainable sustainable infrastructure and energy at the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). He was also a senior consultant for energy policy at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation(APEC), and a member of the Group of Expert Advisers on Su stainability and the Environment of the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico (Mexican Congress). Internationally, he has worked with the United Nations Organization (UN-Environment, UN-Industrial Development and UN-Sustainable Energy for All), World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, International Energy Agency, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Foundation, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Embassy from Mexico in Washington, Mexico-United States Chamber of Commerce; and in the Office of Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II (MA) in the United States Congress, among others.

Santiago was recently appointed as Graduate School Director for the Board of Directors of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA). He completed his term as an HAA Elected Director with endorsements from the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, Harvard Forward, and more than 20 other Harvard organizations. He is also a member of the Mexican Council for Foreign Affairs, the Academy of Political Science, Harvard Alumni Entrepreneurs, the Leading Change Network, and the Cambridge Sustainability Network, co-president of Harvard Alumni for Climate and the Environment, and Vice-President of the Cambridge Alumni Society in Mexico. Santiago completed his bachelor's degree in Economics at the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico, and he obtained two master's degrees: in Government and Economic History from Harvard University, U.S.A. He was also awarded a Master's degree in Sustainability Leadership from the University of Cambridge, U.K.









**Farah El Rohayem** 

Farah is a Lebanese woman, born and raised in Beirut. She is a full-merit scholarship awardee of the American University of Beirut, where she graduated as an Electrical and Computer Engineer in 2019. After graduation, she worked as a consultant at McKinsey & Company in the Middle East for 3 years and moved to New York in 2022. At McKinsey, she focused on public sector clients tackling social problems, particularly education. She was the social impact awardee at McKinsey, for designing and implementing a mentorship program for Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that resulted in ~8,000 1-1 mentorship sessions with 140 students. She sees Migration and Refugees studies as an opportunity to apply her education experience to empower refugees with the education and support they need to rebuild their lives.



**David Friedman** 

David Friedman is a Master in Public Policy (MPP) candidate at the Harvard Kennedy School, where he studies political and economic development, advocacy, and social inclusion. Before his graduate studies, David was an analyst at an international law firm based in Boston. His portfolio was mainly pro bono-and immigration-focused; this work included impact litigation alongside ACLU-Massachusetts in support of immigrants' rights, coordinating a legal aid clinic for Boston's AAPI immigrant community, and advising the firm's asylum and unaccompanied minor clients. More recently, in summer 2023, David helped the state of Massachusetts implement new legislation that allows undocumented residents to obtain driver's licenses.









**Sophie Frushell** 



**Disha Ganjegunte** 

Sophie Frushell is an Ed.M student in the Harvard Graduate School of Education's (HGSE) Leadership, Organizations, and Entrepreneurship program. At HGSE, Sophie is part of the Child Protection Certificate Program through the Harvard FXB Center for Health and Human Rights and is a member of the Global, International, and Comparative Education Concentration. She holds a Bachelor of the Arts in International Studies from Boston College and was previously awarded a Fulbright research grant to the Dominican Republic, where she explored best practices to promote positive youth development and identity formation for Dominican and Haitian youth. Sophie is interested in refugee resettlement and future building as facilitated by meaningful educational opportunities and hopes to work at the forefront of innovative pathways for refugee youth globally. Sophie is originally from New England, and has seen firsthand the power of small communities to offer localized and impactful support for displaced youth and their families.

From El Paso, Texas, Disha is a current student in the Masters of Global Health and Population program at Harvard Chan School of Public Health. She graduated from Texas Tech University double majoring in Nutritional Sciences and General Studies; with minors in Chemistry, Biology, and Theatre: Acting. As a firstgeneration student in the US, Disha has worked with the House of Representatives, the UNICEF Foresight Circle, the Frederick Douglass Global Fellowship, served as the Post Secondary Vice President of Texas HOSA, and has been featured on several shows such as the "Late Late Show with James Corden" and the "Jennifer Hudson Show." Disha has studied and works with conflict negotiation in several high violence countries such as Ireland/Northern Ireland, South Africa, Israel/Palestine, Brazil, and on the Texas/Mexico border. Using her diverse work experience, Disha wants to create awareness, empathy, and positive change throughout a global community. Her use of directing, film making, acting, and keynote speaking are one outlet that she utilizes to work towards this goal. Her most recent work includes incorporating important global and social issues into the short film, "To Be Loved," and interning with the Oscar-nominated production company, Smartypants Productions. Throughout the 2023-2024 term, Disha serves as one of the Top 40 Youth Global Changemaker Catalyst leaders combatting the global refugee crisis.









**Evindar Gürel-Sari** 

Evindar Gürel-Sari, a 29-year-old Student from Germany, is currently enriching her academic journey by pursuing a degree in International Relations and Diplomacy at Trier University. After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Duisburg-Essen in 2018, she worked for five years in the world of press and journalism. Her passion for human rights led her to an NGO that works hard to stop sexual violence in conflict zones. As the daughter of political refugees, Evindar's life has been profoundly intertwined with themes of migration, which have profoundly influenced both her academic pursuits and professional choices. She is immensely grateful and thrilled for the opportunity to participate in the upcoming summer school on Refugee and Migration Studies. This unique platform will help her learn more, inspire new ideas, and connect with other visionaries around the world who are all committed to advancing human rights.



**Sirad Hassan** 

Sirad Hassan is a first-year PhD student at Harvard Chan School of Public Health and Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, specializing in maternal health, mental health, and nutrition within refugee and migrant populations. Before her doctoral pursuit, she earned her M.S. in Human Nutrition from Columbia University and her A.B. in Public and International Affairs from Princeton University, with minors in African American Studies, African Studies, Cognitive Science, and Global Health and Health Policy. Her notable undergraduate thesis titled "Trauma and Resilience: An Analysis of Somali Refugee Women and their Experiences in Health Care in the United States" was a cross-sectional study where she conducted over 30 interviews with Somali refugee women and 50 interviews with key informants at four key case study sites in Columbus, Ohio; Phoenix, AZ; San Diego, CA; and Seattle, WA. An advocate for improving mental health for refugee communities, Sirad has contributed to the Princeton Public Health Review and continues to raise awareness about public health disparities affecting marginalized communities.







**Mike Howe** 

Mike Howe is a Consultant and is the Director of Health Equity at New England Baptist Hospital. He holds a Master of Bioethics degree from Harvard Medical School, a Master of Business Administration in Health Sector Management, and a Master of Public Health in Human Rights & Social Justice from Boston University, and a dual Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Government from Suffolk University. His work and research focus on consulting on crisismanagement, hostile negotiations, operational efficiency, and using community outreach and advocacy to reduce access barriers-to-care for underserved and marginalized populations. His interest in this area is motivated by experience empowering and mentoring refugees and new immigrants to be successful upon settling in the U.S., and driven by lived experience as a refugee and immigrant himself. Mike's passion for travel and culture intertwines with learning about reasons for forced migration and challenges faced by displaced persons. His research interests include the right to healthcare access, public policy bioethics, and artificial intelligence in health care. Post-graduation, Mike plans to continue advancing health equity initiatives, through research and advocacy.

Milo Johnson-Wheeler







**Pedro Katopodis** 

I'm an undergraduate student of international relations at Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP). I had experience in corporate work, as a Marketing Manager, although what really got my attention was social studies. Last year I had the opportunity to join many congresses about climate change, diplomacy between cities, and migration. I am also working with one of the biggest researchers at my university, Mônica de Carvalho, to identify the neoextrativism debate and performance all over the world. The scientific initiation that I have been working on in the last months is an effort to understand this new phenomenon that has been deeply harming many societies with the widespread degradation of ecosystems, desolation, and damage, permeating human relationships, making it more difficult to view disasters as "natural", besides its impact on the refugee and migration issues. Nowadays I'm involved with two social projects named Dazong and Núcleo C.M.J, the first one makes donations of clothes, toys, and toiletries to those who really need it, and the second one has the mission of promoting inclusion, acceptance, and debate that encompasses present diversities.



Alexandra Lastra, Ecuadorian, is a Mason Fellow and a candidate for a Master's in Public Administration at Harvard. She holds a master's degree in International and Development Economics from Panthéon-La Sorbonne (Paris-I) and a B.A. in Economics from the Catholic University of Ecuador. With a strong commitment to public service, she has accumulated 17 years of professional experience in public policy design, monitoring and implementation, collaborating primarily with the government of Ecuador. Throughout her career, she has held high-level positions, including Technical Secretary of Social Development, Vice-minister of Urban Development, General Coordinator of Economic Policy, and external consultant for the World Bank. Lastra has made significant contributions to drive social and economic transformations in her country. Notably, she led the design of the Social Development Agenda 2009-2011 and the fossil fuel subsidy reform. She also worked in Dominican Republic where she established the Observatory of Social Policies.









**Islam Masood** 

Islam is a 6<sup>th</sup> year medical student at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. He has lived through 5 wars in Gaza in his lifetime, including the most recent one. Islam has volunteered in multiple roles in UN youth groups representing Palestinian youth, including as a key member of the UN Youth Advisory Panel and the Y-Peer Network. He has also held several elected leadership positions in the Palestinian Medical Students' Association and served as editor-in-chief of the Palestinian Medical Students' Magazine. Islam is a sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) advocate and mental health enthusiast. He has organized trainings and workshops on gender and related social stigmas, gender-based violence, SRHR and breast cancer awareness in Palestine. He has experience working with internally displaced people in Palestine and now has the experience of being a refugee of war himself. Islam is interested in serving refugee populations as a medical doctor and hopes to learn more about the intersection of health and human rights for migrants and refugees through this course.

**Damla Metin** 







**Ezza Naveed** 

Ezza Naveed is a graduate of Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she pursued her master's in education. Having grown up in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Pakistan, she went on to pursue her undergraduate degree at Minerva University, a university with a 1.9% acceptance rate, which enabled her to study in a new country each semester. She worked with CodeYourFuture in London, focused on empowering refugees with tech skills, the Ministry of Education in Buenos Aires, and 826 Valencia in San Francisco. After engaging with issues that refugees and migrants faced in global contexts, she faced the issues in her context of Pakistan after moving back home in 2022. She thereafter launched the Young Leader's Program at Urraan, a free tech fellowship that empowered low-income students in KPK, Pakistan, with technical and professional skills. Among her students were Internally Displaced Persons from the FATA and FANA regions of Pakistan who, in addition to overcoming the challenges of being lowincome, dealt with the challenges of being misplaced from their communities. Her interactions with her students enabled Ezza to grapple with the complex reality of being misplaced, its impact on learning, and the important role that educators and communities in learning spaces play in shaping this journey positively. As an international student since 2017, she too, feels like an eternal migrant and has grounded herself in her Minerva and Harvard GSE communities.







**Kristin Phaneuf** 

Kristin serves as a Liaison Officer at the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is responsible for operating influx care facilities capable of providing safe and comprehensive services to unaccompanied children until they are reunified with a vetted family member or sponsor. Prior to joining ORR, Kristin worked as an Allied Engagement Analyst for the Department of Defense's U.S. Strategic Command. Her core duty was to identify strategic opportunities for sustained cooperation, specializing in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) country integration. Kristin has a M.A. in International Relations from University of Oklahoma, a M.S. in Administration, emphasis in Leadership, from Central Michigan University, and a B.A. in International Relations from Creighton University. She studied in Switzerland to earn an International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance from Fordham University. She also has a Women in Leadership graduate certificate from Cornell University. Kristin is deepening her knowledge by pursuing a Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies: Government at Harvard Extension School. She is committed to maximizing protections for special populations while navigating complex governmental systems.







Matilde Pozzi, 24, is currently pursuing a master's degree in international relations and development at the Geneva Graduate Institute, where her studies center on migration and gender studies. Raised with Italian and Swiss dual citizenships, Matilde's multicultural background fueled her passion for global issues and cross-cultural dialogue. At seventeen, Matilde's transformative exchange year in Thailand ignited her passion for international affairs. Living with a volunteer Thai family, she embraced a new cultural context and immersed herself in learning the Thai language to fully engage with their culture and daily life. At the University of Padova, Matilde merged her values with education, attending the course of Political Science, International Relations, and Human Rights. Seeking to broaden her perspective, she participated in the Erasmus program in Vienna, deepening her understanding of European geopolitics and migration policy.

Complementing her academic pursuits, she volunteered with the Italian Red Cross where she then conducted her curricular internship analyzing a recent discovered archive of World War II documents. As she found the documents interesting, she decided to write a research Bachelor thesis on the archive focusing on human rights violations in URSS against Italian prisoners. Matilde's commitment to understanding migration issues firsthand led her to volunteer at a refugee assistance center in Corinth, Greece, where she gained invaluable insights into the challenges faced by displaced populations. To further deepen her knowledge and engagement, Matilde has applied to the Refugee Studies summer course, eager to enrich her understanding of migration dynamics and policy frameworks.









Jessica Aldrich Strassman

Jessica "Jesse" Aldrich Strassman is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy and Practice. Her dissertation, a collaboration with UPENN's history department, examines intergenerational trauma narratives and their impact on WWII forced migration populations, anchored in a socio-political historical context. Jesse's research centers on war, forced migration, and immigrant populations, especially those perceived as perpetrators. In 2022, Jesse secured a grant from the Jews of Color Initiative for her qualitative study, "Aging Jews of Color and Their Lived Experiences of Resilience in Times of Social Unrest." She also serves as a guest editor for a special edition of Human Behavior and the Social Environment, focusing on antisemitism in social work education. A seasoned presenter, Jesse has shared insights at the Society for Social Work and Research conferences, covering topics like re- traumatization in Holocaust survivors and the impact of withheld knowledge in WWII forced migration populations. With a background in child welfare, including internships at the White House Domestic Policy Council and the Child Welfare League of America, Jesse runs a private practice in San Francisco, specializing in adolescents and young adults. Her goal is to deepen her understanding of forced migration populations, advocating for an interdisciplinary and contextualized approach to social work practice and education.



Samriddhi Vij

Samriddhi focuses on conflict-affected programming, peacebuilding and processes of international mediation. She has a Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School and has previously worked with the Executive Office of the Secretary General in United Nations, New York. At the UN, she worked on mapping global programmatic and thematic issues requiring Secretary General's attention and organizing senior level decision making on the same. At Harvard, she has worked with Belfer Centre's Middle East Initiative and Harvard Kennedy School's Student Policy Review. Prior to Harvard, she completed her undergraduate as well as masters degree in economics from Delhi University. Further, she worked with one of India's largest education non-profits, Pratham Education Foundation, where she led program management nationally for primary grades, girls' education and life skills programs.



**Amber Yildizel** 

Amber is a 2024 MPH graduate from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health within the Population and Family Health Department and a focus on humanitarianism. She also holds a BA in International Relations from Brown University. From a young age, she has been passionate about human rights and health as a human right for women and forcibly displaced populations. As a proud Turkish-American, Amber has a personal connection to the Mediterranean region and a desire to support asylum-seekers and refugees in Türkiye, Greece, and Western European countries. Last summer, she spent 3 months working at an NGO in Samos, Greece interacting with asylum-seekers from over 10 different countries. She hopes to work within the intersection of humanitarianism and human rights and in support of mental health and sexual reproductive health.







**Nari Yoo** 

Nari's research is motivated by promoting social justice and improving the mental health of ethnic minorities and immigrants/refugees both in the United States and Asian context. Nari is particularly interested in the role of community-level factors in predicting mental health outcomes, e.g. advocacy, collective efficacy, racial climate, or community engagement. Further, She desires to investigate and develop a community-based intervention including culturally and linguistically appropriate services. In South Korea, she is on the executive committee of Migration to Asia Peace, a non-profit organization that helps refugees resettle.



**Bomy Yun** 

Bomy is a recent graduate of the Harvard Chan School of Public Health with a Master in Public Health. She currently works as a health consultant at the World Bank where she assesses countries for their health system resilience. She is also an advanced registered nurse practitioner who worked for many years in community health settings in the U.S. serving refugees and migrant populations. During this time, she learned of the social determinants of health that are unique to migrants and refugees, and the importance of considering these factors to provide quality and dignified health care to this group of people. Most recently, she has been to Palestine three times, where she learned about the Palestinian context, including the plight of internally displaced peoples. Bomy has been working on a community-run humanitarian aid project in Gaza since October of 2023 to get urgently needed humanitarian assistance to families displaced during the war. Through this course, Bomy hopes to gain valuable knowledge and insights on migrant and refugee health and human rights in global settings.



