

SMALL WORLD NEWSLETTER

International Studies • The Ohio State University • 33 Townshend Hall • 1885 Neil Avenue • Columbus, OH • 43210-1222 • USA
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AUGUST 2019

Critical Language Scholarship



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Faraz Ansari, a Spring 2019 graduate of International Studies, has been selected to receive a Critical Language Scholarship to study intensive Urdu during summer 2019. Faraz, who also finished a major in economics and a minor in Chinese, will be studying in Lucknow, India, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, at the American Institute for Indian Studies. Below is his essay, which details the academic and personal significance of this experience and award.

"As the son of first-generation immigrants from Pakistan, I've been no stranger to Urdu. My parents often speak it interchangeably with English at home, and over the years I've developed an ability to understand most of what is being spoken around me. However,

only very recently have I attempted to speak it back to family members - with less-than-stellar results. This inability to speak the language of my heritage was put on full display the last time I was in Pakistan, in 2005. It was my uncle's wedding, and the elaborate celebration was packed with extended family members from all over Pakistan and the surrounding nations. Even with such a wide variety of ethnicities represented, those in attendance defaulted to speaking Urdu. Naturally, that was less than desirable for then-7-year-old me - my Urdu then was even worse than now and I subsequently had a very difficult time communicating with my relatives. So there I stood, in the incredibly strange position of being on the outside looking in upon the culture that was supposedly mine. I vividly remember appreciating the beauty of "my" people's traditions, while also acknowledging my "otherness." Looking back, it was the first time I critically thought about the existence of multiple cultural perspectives; perhaps that is what sparked my interest in my current major, International Relations and Diplomacy.

Since that experience, I've had the opportunity to travel and observe a number of beautiful cultures. Traveling, coupled with my classes, further illustrated to me the importance of cultural exchange and diverse global perspectives. Additionally, in my time at Ohio State I've joined the Model United Nations team. Through Model UN I've been forced to put aside my views as an American and examine the world through other nations' points of view. Eventually, I hope to join the Foreign Service as a Foreign Service Officer. In this profession, being able to step into the shoes of other nations is essential

for understanding their perspectives. For example, in the case of United States-Pakistani relations, there are many key differences of thought that have roots in economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. As I was raised in a religiously conservative Pakistani household in Dallas, Texas, I believe that I have served as a bridge between these two very different cultures for all of my life. However, further Urdu acquisition and cultural immersion would cement that I am uniquely qualified to help resolve the issues between my two nations in the future.

As a Foreign Service Officer, I will continually immerse myself in foreign cultures and learn languages at an accelerated pace. To that end, I believe participation in the Critical Language Scholarship program would allow me to hone my adaptability as a necessary tool for my desired career. Additionally, learning Urdu through the CLS program will provide me formal and informal education in a culture that I already possess strong ties to, and such education would further develop my cross-cultural communication ability to relate to people across the world."



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Natalie Majidzadeh, a third-year International Studies major, has been selected to receive a Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic in Morocco during Summer 2019.

Natalie Majidzadeh, a third-year International Studies major, has been selected to receive a Critical Language Scholarship to study Arabic in Morocco during Summer 2019. Below is her essay, which details the academic and personal significance of this experience and award.

“My last name has always been an unavoidable trademark of my heritage. Majidzadeh. Maa-jihd-zah-day. It took me five years to spell it, eight years to pronounce it, and nineteen to have a true understanding of what it means. I grew up distant from my Iranian background, always feeling a separation but never knowing why. Through conversation with my grandparents I was able to put our family story into a new context. When my grandparents immigrated to the United States they began to let go of their native language, Farsi, and slowly worked through the challenges that come with being new Americans. Learning about their stories of Iran and their difficulties finding footing in a new home helped create a drive to close the gaps in my own understanding. I want to learn the languages, histories, and politics of the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia to one day work through policy, advocacy, and service to help new Americans adjust to an unfamiliar setting without feeling a pressure to let go of their heritage.

During college, I have already taken steps to pursue my goals, starting with my commitment to studying Arabic. I have not only had the opportunity to take two years of language instruction, but I have taken culturally-based courses as well. In my Arab culture courses I have been introduced to the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, the film of Tamer el Said, and the histories of the Arab world. In this respect, I have had a more holistic learning experience.

Extra-curricularly, I take part in activities that have helped build a stronger foundation of knowledge. I attend movies, panels, and discussions held by the Arab Student Union, the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department, and the International Affairs Scholars to improve my understanding on social issues. I work in the Office of Risk Management where I research the safety and cultural considerations to take into account when studying abroad in the Arab world. I also mentor Arabic-speaking students through Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS), a non-profit dedicated to helping new Americans feel adjusted and supported within Columbus.

Due to the opportunities I have had in Columbus, I have become a better language learner and community member; however, I am ready for the next steps in my educational experience. The cultural immersion and

rigorous workload offered by CLS is unparalleled. Being apart of CLS will strengthen my language skills both inside and outside the classroom by allowing me to experience life entirely in Arabic. Intensive lectures will strengthen my vocabulary and grammatical comprehension. Meetings with a language partner will help me navigate conversation naturally and without hesitance. Experiencing Moroccan culture and history first-hand will completely redefine my cognizance. The lessons I learn will carry with me as I continue to pursue Arabic at Ohio State and work toward my aspiration of creating a more welcoming community for all.”