

2025 SOCIAL SCIENCE SUMMER WRITING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM SHOWCASE

INTERNSHIP PRESENTATIONS AND
INVITED TALKS
CISS CONFERENCE ROOM
JULY 22, 2025



Summer Writing Internship Program

The Social Science Summer Writing Internship Program (SWIP) is a collaboration between the Center for Innovation in Social Science (CISS) and the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) program. SWIP provides paid summer writing internships to undergraduate students studying social sciences by placing interns at a social science research institute on the BU campus for a nine-week period in the summer. Interns work 15 hours per week and attend a 90-minute weekly writing workshop/seminar led by Writing Program Senior Lecturer Dr. Stephen Hodin. Interns also attend an orientation during the first week of the program, and a concluding program which includes interns' presentations and guest speakers.

We sincerely hope you enjoy today's final Showcase.

Acknowledgements

SWIP is grateful to University and CAS Advisory Board member Jennifer Simpson (CAS '00), and the Psalm 103 Foundation for their generous financial support of this program.

TIME	Presentation	Speaker
10:00 AM	Welcome and Introductions	Deborah Carr, Director, CISS
10:10 AM	SWIP Introduction	David Shawn, Associate Director for Writing in the Disciplines
10:15 AM	Remarks	Alene Bouranova, Writer/Editor, <i>BU Today</i>
10:25 AM	Remarks	Joseph Harris, Associate Professor, Sociology
10:35 AM	Moderator	Stephen Hodin, Senior Lecturer, Writing Program
10:40 AM	Intern Presentations	Shayla Brown (CAS '26), Joshua Emokpae (CAS '26), Sofia Sanchez (CAS '26), Yousseff Souayah (CAS '27), Xiaowei "Kiwi" Yang (CAS '27)
11:10 AM	Q&A	
11:25 AM	Concluding Remarks	Deborah Carr, Director, CISS
11:30 AM	Lunch	



Shayla Brown (CAS '26)

“Project 32: Stories of Thirty-Two Women Navigating Division I Athletics”

Internship Placement: Center for Innovation in Social Sciences (CISS)

Shayla Brown is a rising senior from Rochester, New York, majoring in Anthropology with a focus on social justice and advocacy work. Outside the classroom, she plays on BU’s Division I women’s soccer team and is an active member of Student Athletes of Color and Athlete Ally – student groups that promote safe, inclusive athletic spaces. Her passion for advocacy began in childhood through volunteering with her parents’ nonprofit, *A Place to Stand*, which focuses on education, equity, and support for marginalized communities. Their work continues to inspire her commitment to social justice on campus and in her future career, where she hopes to combine her interests in equity, cultural studies, the arts, and activism.

This summer, Shayla is interning at the Center for Innovation in Social Science (CISS), where she publishes articles and profiles highlighting student and faculty research and manages social media content. Her recent projects include work supporting LGBTQ+ voices and an initiative exploring the connection between the creative arts and more literary disciplines within the social sciences. As a lifelong athlete, Shayla has witnessed inequities and mistreatment in sports and has taken these injustices as an opportunity to help create a more supportive and equitable environment for female athletes. Through her summer work with SWIP, she is laying the groundwork for her senior thesis, where she aims to study team culture and identity, conduct in-depth interviews with fellow teammates, and research power dynamics, the culture of care, and mental health in competitive sports.

She is grateful to be working alongside fellow students and mentors this summer and appreciates Professor Hodin’s guidance in shaping her project.

Shayla’s writing excerpt:

Using the 2024 BU Women’s Soccer team as a case study, I will undertake an ethnographic study of this group in order to understand how team cultures are formed, sustained, and challenged — especially under the contemporary pressures of D1 (women’s) athletics. This project centers the interpersonal lives of athletes, exploring how individuals shape a team environment, while also exposing the institutional failures that too often go unexamined in elite college sports — revealing how personal dynamics and systemic issues are deeply interconnected.



Joshua Emokpae (CAS '26)

“The International Monetary Fund’s Role in Central American Gang Violence”

Internship Placement: Center on Forced Displacement (CFD)

Joshua Emokpae is a rising senior in the College of Arts & Sciences with a double major in political science and classical civilization.

During his time at BU, he has written several articles and op-eds for the International Relations Review, including “The IMF’s Role in Caribbean Gang Violence,” which directly inspired his project.

This summer, Josh worked at the Center on Forced Displacement under the guidance of Dr. Carrie Preston: During his time, Josh wrote several profiles for students who participated in the Border Studies Program this past Spring, as well as those in the Summer Program on Forced Migration and Borders in Belgrade during the summer.

For his SWIP project, Josh analyzes the explosion of organized crime in Central America, arguing its roots lie not in sensationalized media narratives but in an international system of austerity and corporate exploitation. Focusing on MS-13 in El Salvador and the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico, his research connects the rise of these criminal enterprises to IMF loan conditions since the 1970s, which forced cuts to public spending that eroded social safety nets and created the conditions for gangs to thrive. He then contrasts the two nations' starkly diverging public safety strategies: El Salvador's military-style "war on cartels" under President Nayib Bukele, which has been criticized for human rights violations, against Mexico's "hugs, not bullets" philosophy under Presidents Obrador and Sheinbaum, which focuses on expanding social programs and seeking peaceful coexistence with local crime lords. On campus, Josh also works as a research assistant for Professor Joseph Harris (CAS/Sociology).

Joshua’s writing excerpt:

Since the 1970s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has loaned billions of dollars to the governments of El Salvador and Mexico during times of crisis. In return, both countries slashed public spending and lifted trade protections, depriving local communities of crucial social safety nets and creating conditions for gang recruitment to thrive. While these gangs offer considerable charitable support to impoverished neighborhoods, which have been abandoned by the state due to IMF cuts, they’re also culpable for the rampant death and chaos seen throughout the region.



Sofia Sanchez (CAS '26)

"Post War Cultural Preservation for Sri Lankan Tamils: The Role of Women's Narratives"

Internship Placement: Institute for Global Sustainability (IGS)

Sofia Sanchez is a rising senior at Boston University, majoring in Archaeological and Environmental Sciences with a minor in Theatre Arts. Her interdisciplinary academic pursuits focus on the intersections of culture, environment, and ethics, emphasizing how communities interact with and are influenced by environmental factors.

This summer, Sofia's work at the Institute for Global Sustainability (IGS) involves crafting narratives that highlight the experiences of graduate fellows and interns, particularly those associated with initiatives like the Clean Energy and Environment Legacy Transition (CELT) and the Campus Climate Lab. Her research delves into conservation ethics, especially concerning non-European religious traditions, underscoring the importance of cultural inclusion in sustainability efforts.

Sofia's hands-on research experience includes laboratory work in botanical identification and stable isotope analysis. She has also contributed to studies on the non-European roots of environmental ethics, assisting in projects headed towards publication.

During a gap semester, Sofia worked on permaculture farms in Guatemala and collaborated with Long Way Home to construct a sustainable "eco-school" using green building techniques. She conducted independent research on NGOs around Lake Atitlan, focusing on women-led cooperatives and grassroots development.

Sofia is also deeply involved in the performing-arts. She is active in acting, screenwriting, and directing, and contributes to PK Productions, a student-led nonprofit that supports local Boston artists through fundraising and production efforts.

Sofia is developing her senior thesis titled "Post War Cultural Preservation for Sri Lankan Tamils: The Role of Women's Narratives." This project aims to explore how the Tamil community's relationship with their environment serves as a form of cultural identity and resilience, particularly in the aftermath of the civil war. She investigates the roles of belief systems, religious practices, and cultural symbols in shaping environmental ethics and cultural preservation amidst changing economic and political landscapes.

Sofia has shared her insights at conferences, including the Future of Borders Conference hosted by the Center for Forced Displacement. She presented a personal narrative exploring the complexities of transnational and cross-generational borders and displacement, reflecting her commitment to integrating storytelling with social advocacy.

Sofia's writing excerpt:

In northern Sri Lanka, land is not just an economic resource but a symbol of identity and belonging. In the context of resettlement and post-war reconstruction, this project aims to center women's narratives and better understand how Tamil culture persists within a scattered diaspora. This research will serve as a valuable resource for academics, educators, and policy makers engaged in reconciliation work, minority rights advocacy, and the preservation of arts and culture.

She is thankful for Professor Hodin's guidance in defining her personal initiative within such a collaborative and supportive group of students.



Yousseff Souayah (CAS '27)

“Rethinking Immigration in MENA”

Internship Placement: Center on Forced Displacement (CFD)

Yousseff Souayah is a rising junior from Boston, MA, double majoring in data science and political science. He is interested in Middle Eastern studies, machine learning, and migration. On campus, Youssef is involved in Phi Alpha Delta, CDS Toastmasters, and the BU North African Student Organization.

This summer, Youssef is interning at the Center for Forced Displacement, where he profiled students from the Spring 2025 Border Studies Program and drew on the Center’s resources to advance his research on Immigration in the MENA region. This project began in the Summer Writing Internship Program (SWIP) and will serve as the foundation for his senior capstone.

Raised in a Tunisian immigrant family and shaped by experiences in both the Middle East and the United States, Youssef brings a unique dual perspective to his work. His research seeks to understand the long-term consequences of U.S. immigration and foreign policy toward the MENA region. Drawing on migration data, historical policy shifts, and current events, Youssef argues that these policies often produce the opposite of their intended effect, undermining regional stability while pushing migration into more dangerous, irregular channels. He challenges binary narratives around immigration by emphasizing the mutual benefits migration can offer—to the individuals seeking opportunity, and to the countries that welcome them.

Yousseff’s writing excerpt:

Having lived between two worlds—the Middle East and the United States—my entire life, I have gained a deeper understanding of the complex realities on both sides of the immigration debate. My objective is to illuminate the forces that have consistently driven migration from the MENA region and to articulate the mutual benefits of this exchange for both the United States and the people leaving their homes. Ultimately, this work seeks to demonstrate a critical truth: that closing borders can have the adverse effect of promoting dangerous, illicit immigration, undermining the very stability and security we aim to protect.



Xiawei “Kiwi” Yang (CAS ‘27)

“The Game of College Admissions: Different Rules, Same Pressure”

Internship Placement: Center for Innovation in Social Science

Kiwi Yang is a rising junior at Boston University double majoring in Sociology and Business Administration. This summer, Kiwi has been working with the Center for Innovation in Social Science (CISS) as a writing intern. During her time at the CISS, Kiwi has had the opportunity to interview faculty and create academic content for the center. Her SWIP project compares how individuals navigate the admissions process of China and the United States, specifically how they balance societal expectations with their personal interests (or extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation). In the West, college applicants are evaluated based on their extra-curricular activities, grades, essay-responses, and other personal factors; by contrast, Chinese schools primarily rely on a rigorous college entrance exam known as *gaokao* to select students. As someone who grew up in China prior to attending Boston University, Kiwi is intimately familiar with the unique challenges of both systems, as well as their similarities. Utilizing the skills she has honed at the CISS, Kiwi seeks to develop a cross-sectional comparative research study that will bridge the gap between Western and Eastern higher education. She will use surveys to understand how the pressure of success and the level of competitiveness are similar under these two different systems. Kiwi has previously received the Provost’s Student Award, which will be used to fund this research. Outside of SWIP, Kiwi takes classes in Managerial Accounting and Information Systems and enjoys jogging on the Esplanade. She also serves as a Dean’s Host at CAS and Admissions Ambassador at BU Admissions during the school year.

Kiwi’s writing excerpt:

I grew up in China, where the education system is characterized by its reliance on the *gaokao* —the high-stakes college entrance exam administered simultaneously to millions of students nationwide. In contrast, U.S. colleges employ a more holistic review process, considering extracurricular activities such as athletics, club involvement, and community service. Previous research has investigated how these differences manifest in student outcomes; however, having experienced both systems firsthand, I wonder if these differences ultimately stem from a shared result-driven mindset, one that views admissions criteria as replicable templates and prestigious college acceptance as the measure of success.



Boston University Arts & Sciences
Writing Program

Writing in the Disciplines

www.bu.edu/writingprogram/writing-in-the-disciplines/

The Writing in the Disciplines (WID) program supports writing across all undergraduate BU schools and colleges, as students move from their First-Year Writing courses into academic experiences that involve more sophisticated communication within particular disciplinary contexts. The WID program works from a perspective that is informed by current writing studies scholarship and supports undergraduate writing in a variety of ways, including collaborating with faculty to create unit-based writing plans; organizing faculty co-teaching of Writing-Intensive Courses; mentoring and supervising unit-based peer writing tutoring; and consulting with faculty to implement best practices for teaching writing. While writers across many disciplines may share common concerns and expectations about writing, each discipline has its own writing genres, writing conventions, citation styles, disciplinary histories, ways of using evidence, and views of what constitutes knowledge and knowledge production. The WID program is a resource to help both students in developing their writing skills & confidence and faculty in providing effective pedagogical approaches to teaching writing.



Arts & Sciences
Center for Innovation in Social Science

Center for Innovation in Social Science

www.bu.edu/CISS/

The **Center for Innovation in Social Science** (CISS), located in the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston University, provides an intellectual home for faculty and students engaged in social science research across the BU campus. The Center is dedicated to forging collaborative multidisciplinary faculty research and training future generations of undergraduate and graduate students in the social sciences and related fields by using state-of-the-art methods and approaches and demonstrating the promise of social sciences to improve human lives.



Center on Forced Displacement

www.bu.edu/CFD/

The **Center for Forced Displacement** (CFD) serves as a platform for educators, students, researchers, activists, and policymakers to engage in interdisciplinary research, discussion, and education about forced displacement. Through interdisciplinary, international collaboration, we identify, research, and work to resolve challenges of forced displacement, one of the major moral imperatives of our time. By connecting with local communities in Boston and the USA, as well as our partners in Uganda, Colombia, Lebanon, and the Western Balkans, CFD learns directly from and with the communities grappling with the challenges of forced displacement and creates venues for new ways of thinking, research, and program and project design.



Institute for Global Sustainability

www.bu.edu/IGS/

The **Institute for Global Sustainability** (IGS) pioneers research to advance a sustainable and equitable future. IGS's focus on planetary and environmental health, climate governance and sustainability transitions, and energy systems of the future is grounded in equity and justice, robust data analysis, and real-world impact.