



GLOBAL LEADERS OF PENN STATE

GLOBAL AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES PROGRAM

Monthly Email Newsletter

In this newsletter:

Welcome

[Page 1](#)

Congratulations from GLIS
Director

[Page 2](#)

Congratulations from GLIS
Faculty

[Pages 3-4](#)

Congratulations from GLIS
Adviser

[Page 5](#)

Letter to the Graduating Class

[Pages 6-7](#)

About the GLIS Class of 2026

[Page 8](#)

GLIS Class 2026 Student Marshal

[Pages 9-10](#)

Graduates in Their Own Words

[Pages 11-16](#)

WELCOME

by Kaitlyn Stum, Managing Editor

Hello! Welcome to the graduation issue! Over the 2025-2026 academic year, we've enjoyed sharing stories from the GLIS community. At the end of every school year, we dedicate the last issue to the GLIS graduating class. In this issue, we have congratulations and warm wishes from the GLIS director, faculty, and academic advisor. We also have a letter from our graduating team member Jasmin Tanner, information about the class of 2026, a spotlight on the GLIS Student Marshal Amy Schaffer, and graduates in their own words.

The GLIS newsletter team congratulates our graduating class on their success during their college experience and making the most of their time as Penn Staters. To the graduates, we wish you luck and to the rest of the GLIS community, have a great summer! We'll see you in the fall.



PennState
College of the Liberal Arts

CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE GLIS DIRECTOR

Krista Brune

**Director of the Global and International Studies Program
Associate Professor of Portuguese, Spanish, and Latin
American Studies**

You are graduating into a world of political and economic uncertainty where an awareness of global frameworks is essential. During your time at Penn State, you have learned about and experienced the critical importance of global and international perspectives to understanding the complicated issues facing us today. I applaud you for choosing this timely field of study that has allowed you to deepen your knowledge of people, places, and cultures different from your own.



As GLIS students, you have begun to carve your own academic and professional trajectories. Your chosen pathways have opened new realms of study while allowing you to gain expertise in topics of human rights, global conflict, inequality, health, environment, or culture. Guided by your curiosity and genuine interest in the world, you have taken full advantage of the flexibility of the GLIS major. By combining your GLIS degree with concurrent majors, minors, internships, study abroad experiences, and other co-curricular activities, you have delved into the possibilities of a global education and the importance of being a global citizen. Your commitment to community—be it through the classroom, campus organizations, local politics, or international exchanges—is commendable. I urge you to remain engaged with your local and global communities as you share the knowledge that you have gained as GLIS students. Your ability to treat each other with respect and dignity—even when you may disagree—is a cornerstone of civic discourse that must not be forgotten.

During your years at Penn State, you have overcome unexpected challenges and have accomplished a great deal. As you move on to new adventures and face other difficulties, I hope you will draw on the skills, experiences, and relationships that you have fostered as GLIS students. You have so much to offer your friends, families, colleagues, employers, and communities. I look forward to hearing about the next steps of your journeys.

Wishing you much success and happiness as you embark on your postgraduate lives!

Krista Brune

Director of the Global and International Studies Program

Associate Professor of Portuguese, Spanish, and Latin American Studies

CONGRATULATIONS FROM GLIS FACULTY

Yuliya V. Ladygina
Associate Professor of Slavic and
Global and International Studies

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to great places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes.

You can steer yourself

*In any direction you choose.**



Yuliya Ladygina

Congratulations, GLIS Class of 2026, on earning your bachelor's degrees! This is a remarkable achievement and an important milestone in your academic journey. I deeply admire your perseverance and dedication, and it has been a true privilege to work with many of you over the past few years. You are an exceptionally thoughtful, creative, and compassionate group, and I look forward to seeing many of you back on campus in the years ahead and to meeting those I haven't yet had the chance to know. As you move forward with your GLIS degree in hand, I am confident that you are well prepared to navigate and address the complex global challenges of our time, including climate change, inequality, political polarization, and conflict, and that you are equipped to do so not only with knowledge and expertise, but also with empathy and perspective.

Even in uncertain times, remember that you have the tools to make a meaningful difference. Today is your day—step forward with confidence, embrace the opportunities ahead, and go out and make the world better. Make us proud. All my very best!

*Excerpt from *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss

CONGRATULATIONS FROM GLIS FACULTY

Joseph Wright **Professor of Political Science**

Today marks not just the completion of a degree, but the beginning of a life lived with a broader lens and a deeper sense of purpose. You entered this program seeking to understand a world that cannot be explained by a single discipline, and you leave with the tools to engage it—across cultures, borders, and ideas. The GLIS program is grounded in a simple but profound idea: we live in an interconnected world that demands not only knowledge, but action.



You have wrestled with questions that resist easy answers, and in doing so, you have gained the ability to see the world not only as it is, but as it could be. You have learned to think across intellectual, geographic, and cultural boundaries, to understand people on their own terms, to recognize inequities, and to situate global challenges within deeper social and historical contexts. That understanding is a call to action—to serve, to stand in solidarity, and to care for the most vulnerable.

Knowledge alone is not the goal. The goal is engagement. As you leave Penn State, remember this: the world you studied is now the world you will help shape. Carry your knowledge with humility, your compassion with courage, and your commitment to others with unwavering dedication.

CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE GLIS ADVISER

Tom Spencer, Ph.D. Academic Adviser

Congratulations, graduating seniors! It has been a privilege to watch you grow — to see you take risks, deepen your thinking, and engage more meaningfully with the world beyond your local community. Now more than ever, that world needs critical thinkers like you: people who can draw on interdisciplinary knowledge to make connections and propose solutions that account for multiple perspectives.

Many of the challenges you'll encounter, or directly engage in, are what scholars call "wicked problems" — complex issues that resist easy definition, let alone easy answers. People disagree about their root causes, and some question whether certain problems even exist (think environmental crises, pandemics, homelessness, and educational disparities). These phenomena and working towards their solutions in an ever-evolving world demand exactly the kind of nuanced, cross-disciplinary thinking your education has prepared you for. Your Liberal Arts foundation, and your Global & International Studies degree in particular, leave you uniquely equipped to engage with these challenges and help shape a future that is more equitable, just, sustainable, and empathetic.

We are proud to have been part of your journey and wish you all the very best. Please stay in touch!



LETTER TO THE GRADUATING CLASS

Dear GLIS graduating class of 2026,

It is in my great honor to extend a wholehearted congratulations to each of you on this milestone in your academic journey. As you reflect on this moment, may you recognize the depth of your dedication, growth, perseverance and commitment to excellence. This moment not only holds the true essence of fulfillment and achievement, but reveals and encompasses who you have become along the way. Navigating college is not easy. It forces you to become your own self-advocate, leader and decision-maker. It challenges you to devote yourself fully as a student while also questioning where you belong in this simple yet complex thing we call life. And yet, in doing so, we come to understand we are a part of something bigger than Penn State, bigger than our careers, bigger than ourselves. We are part of a continually evolving and unfolding global ecosystem, one shaped by the diversity of human backgrounds, cultures, and identities.

A degree in Global and International Studies is a lens, one that allows you to see the world not as distant fragments, but as a deeply connected architect of people, power, and possibility. Can you remember the first time you committed to your GLIS major? That feeling of alignment within your resilient self. It was the decision to immerse yourself more deeply in our global world, to critically engage with our global systems, structures of inequality, and live shared human experiences. And when your sophomore and junior years arrived, you were asked the ultimate question: what GLIS pathway will you follow? May these pathways remain in your mind like a constellation —distinct points of focus that together form an enhanced wisdom and understanding. Human rights, global conflict, culture and identity, wealth and inequality, health and environment. Each pathway implements a new perspective of reading the world and opens your eyes to the numerous ways of caring for it. Many of you have likely been asked: what does that degree mean? Or what career does it lead to? I personally never knew how to correctly answer that question. Perhaps it's because our degree is not a token of a single destination, but an invitation to many directions at once.



LETTER TO THE GRADUATING CLASS (CONT.)

James Baldwin once said “Our entire history betrays us in this way. If one is going to get an education, if one is going to become what is called an educated man or woman, if I am a teacher the only way I can help you get this education is teach you how to think. Thinking is not a luxury. Thinking is not something that embroiders a life. Thinking is what a life, finally, in one way depends on. But in order to learn how to think, one must be taught to think about everything. There can be nothing that one cannot think about. There can be nothing that one is afraid to overhaul or to change”. Baldwin reminds us that education is not obedience – its liberation. It is the courage to think deeply, to question freely, and to refuse the comfort of easy answers. May you allow yourself to feel the overwhelming feelings of gratitude, appreciation and joy for this experience. Whether your journey continues in academia or leads you into the workforce, let us pause together in this moment and recognize a simple truth: here, now, we are infinite.

For the glory,
Jasmin Tanner

ABOUT THE CLASS OF 2026

Sommer Mitchell

**Director of Undergraduate Studies for GLIS and
Associate Teaching Professor of Global and
International Studies and Political Science**

The GLIS Class of 2026 is a talented and driven group of students bound together by a shared commitment to exploring the world through a global perspective. This semester, twenty seven undergraduates are earning their degrees—nineteen with a bachelor of arts and eight with a bachelor of science. The class include two Paterno Fellows, seven Schreyer Honors Scholars, four graduating with distinction, and two graduating with high distinction.



Sommer Mitchell

We are delighted to celebrate Amy Schaffer as this year's GLIS Student Marshal. Janan Boljevic has been recognized with the GLIS Top Academic Graduating Student award, Kathryn Pinto has received the GLIS Civic Engagement Award, Beatrice Ke has been honored with the GLIS Thesis Prize, and Megg Reddy has earned the Spirit of GLIS Award for embodying the core values of the GLIS program. Beyond the classroom, many of these graduates have taken on double majors, multiple minors, study abroad experiences, internships, and undergraduate research. Their achievements are a true reflection of the intellectual curiosity, dedication, and global mindedness that define the GLIS community.

Congratulations, GLIS Class of 2026! Your degree is a testament to the hard work, perseverance, and passion you have poured into your time at Penn State. Through your focus on the Liberal Arts and Global and International Studies, you have developed the adaptability, vision, and leadership to navigate a complex and ever-evolving world. Your time at Penn State has been filled with challenges, growth, and discovery. The road ahead is not a single straight line. It branches in countless directions, and that openness is both the challenge and gift of this moment. In every path you pursue, know that the GLIS program is proud of you and will be cheering you on every step of the way.

INTERVIEW WITH GLIS CLASS OF 2026 STUDENT MARSHAL

by Katie Stum

Amy Schafer '26

Global and International Studies, Advertising/Public Relations, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies majors
Spanish minor

Why did you choose GLIS?

I chose GLIS because of the opportunities it offered for international and interdisciplinary study, allowing me to take courses in a variety of disciplines including political science, history, anthropology, women's studies, and more. The program's ability to focus on a pathway was also a major factor as it allowed me to focus on human rights, something I am very passionate about.



What has been your favorite part of the GLIS journey at Penn State?

My favorite part of the GLIS journey at Penn State has been the opportunity to study abroad, which allowed me to step outside the classroom and experience the global perspectives we discuss in our coursework firsthand. Immersing myself in a different culture and environment has helped me to develop valuable skills.

What was your favorite class taken for GLIS credit?

My favorite class was GLIS 400Y Seminar in Global and International Studies with Professor Sommer Mitchell.

What would you say to prospective students for GLIS?

Take advantage of every opportunity that is given to you and don't be afraid to challenge yourself academically!

Have there been any professors, mentors, or experiences in GLIS that had a lasting impact on you?

Sommer Mitchell was such a wonderful professor and I learned so much from all the classes I had with her, especially the GLIS capstone course. Her teaching has definitely profoundly impacted me and made me more passionate about the major! My study abroad experiences also had a lasting impact on me.

How has the GLIS program shaped your academic or career goals?

Pursuing a degree in global and international studies on the human rights pathway has helped me hone my cultural communication skills and embrace my love for interdisciplinary study. As a triple major, my global and international studies degree is the core of my academic passions. The GLIS program has truly encouraged and empowered me to apply my education on human rights to other areas of study and to push myself outside my comfort zone to grow as a student.

INTERVIEW WITH GLIS CLASS OF 2026 STUDENT MARSHAL (CONT.)

In what ways has GLIS helped you develop your skills or perspectives you would not have gained otherwise?

GLIS has given me the opportunity to study abroad in the Czech Republic, Argentina, Kazakhstan, and Greece. I have learned so much from these experiences and developed a more intersectional and international perspective. For example, through education abroad with GLIS's support, I traveled to Almaty, Kazakhstan to report on domestic and sexual violence following its recent criminalization in 2024 and the impacts on women and the LGBTQ+ community. I also did an internship at a prestigious immigration law firm in Argentina which is known for representing Lionel Messi. I also participated in the Czechmates program, where I studied abroad in Brno, Czech Republic for three months during the summer semester. While in Brno, I interned as a project manager, created a social inclusion strategy for English-speaking residents facing discrimination in the city, and volunteered as an English teacher for Ukrainian refugees at a local school.

GRADUATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Janan Boljevic

Global and International Studies and Public Relations majors

“My time as a GLIS major reinforced my love for traveling, language and public policy. It’s been amazing learning alongside passionate and likeminded students, and I am only better for the connections I’ve made and the conversations I’ve had within this major.”

Global and International Studies and Political Science majors
Global Security minor

“GLIS has provided me with so many unique and amazing opportunities during my time at Penn State. Through the program, I’ve gained a deeper understanding of global issues and have met so many interesting people. It has challenged me to think critically, engage with diverse perspectives, and grow both academically and personally. My experience in Global and International Studies has been incredibly rewarding and has helped shape my future goals!”



Andrew Cole

Global and International Studies and Psychology majors
African American Studies minor



Mar cayla Connell

“My time in the Global and International Studies (GLIS) program at Penn State truly changed my life and sharpened the way I understand global systems, power, and inequality. Through political and community advocacy, research on how these systems affect people’s mental and physical well-being, and my work as a culture and identity reporter for The Daily Collegian, I explored how these forces shape everyday experiences, especially for marginalized communities. I gained a broad understanding of international development, human rights, and culture, which ultimately led me toward a career in advocacy and politics after graduation. I am incredibly grateful for this experience and the perspective it gave me, and especially thankful to every professor who encouraged my curiosity and passion along the way.”

GRADUATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Cody Dent

Global and International Studies major
Geography minor

“My time with GLIS has allowed me to discover my passion for international cultures, through which I had the opportunity to study in Melbourne for 6 months and make many unforgettable experiences. Thank you to all of my professors for providing me guidance and knowledge.”

Global and International Studies major
Italian Language and Sustainability Leadership minors

“I found the GLIS program during my sophomore year when I realized my interests were broader than what was covered in a typical political science degree. Joining this program has given me the opportunity to study abroad, explore geopolitics and international economies, serve as a sociology teaching assistant, and deepen my understanding of wealth and inequality across the globe. I am so grateful for the close mentorship and careful instruction I have received from all of my instructors, and I am excited to see what is next when I graduate.”



Nora Di Martino



Holden Foster

Global and International Studies and Spanish majors
Political Science minor
Master's of International Affairs

“My time in GLIS was defined by my wide interests in the international order which could only be optimized by the broad range of topics covered in the GLIS major. The wide variety of classes that I was able to take either in the GLIS concentration, or in other departments such as Political Science and Spanish allowed me to develop a breadth of knowledge that prepared me for my graduate program. Notably, GLIS 400Y helped to enhance my writing and research abilities in the context of a seminar-based course. ”

GRADUATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Daniel Goldberg

Global and International Studies major
Health Policy and Administration minor

“Being a GLIS major expanded my understanding of life and the world. I've been able to study health firsthand in Mexico, Serbia, and the Philippines, and I am grateful for the critical thinking skills I'm taking with me. ”

Global and International Studies major
Italian and Legal Studies minors

“Throughout my time at Penn State, I have had the opportunity to expand my knowledge on the world and my place in it. With a focus in human rights, GLIS has broadened my understanding and prepared a path for my future in studying international law. I am thankful for the chance to be able to study abroad and GLIS for helping me shape the way I view the world.”



Samantha Jagerdeo



Sabrina Lanning

Global and International Studies and Journalism majors

“GLIS has helped me realize some of the greatest skills and offerings I have as not only a professional, but as a person. The knowledge and experiences I gained in this program are some of the most important I have gotten in my life. GLIS has also opened doors for me as a person who wants to work abroad that I couldn't have found anywhere else. I'm so glad I choose to study in this program.”

GRADUATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Melanie Lopez-Gonzalez

Global and International Studies major
Public Policy and Leadership Across Sectors minor

“My time as a Global and International Studies major was incredibly meaningful. The major sparked my interest in human rights and deepened my passion for helping others. As a first-generation student, I’m especially grateful for the opportunity to learn alongside so many people from diverse backgrounds, which has broadened my perspective and inspired me to give back.”

Global and International Studies major
Business and Liberal Arts minor

“My experience with GLIS has been both engaging and insightful, allowing me to explore global issues through a more interdisciplinary lens. I’ve gained a deeper understanding of how cultural, economic, and political factors intersect on an international scale. The program has also strengthened my critical thinking and communication skills through discussions and coursework. Overall, GLIS has helped me better understand global challenges and my role within them.”



Vladimir Ortiz



Owen Perry

Global and International Studies and Finance majors
French and Francophone Studies minor

“I’ve absolutely loved the last four years working through the Global Studies major. My pathway of Culture and Identity has afforded me the amazing opportunity to complete multiple study abroad experiences to build my global perspectives. Beyond that, I’ve loved the flexibility within the major to explore my different interests and find the intersectionality between those interests. ”

GRADUATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Kathryn Pinto

Global and International Studies and Film Production majors

“The GLIS major was a great way to explore international studies interests through a customizable path of study. Through combining my interests in global studies and film production, I was able to work in documentary filmmaking abroad in Central Europe. GLIS helped me develop a passion for international documentary production, and a desire to continue this work after graduation.”

Global and International Studies, Public Relations, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies majors
Spanish minor

“GLIS has allowed me to pursue my interdisciplinary academic passions in a way that has deepened my understanding of global issues and broadened my perspective. I've had the opportunity to engage with international study across a variety of cultures, learn a second language, study abroad, and understand human rights issues from a more intersectional lens.”



Amy Schaffer



Calista Sirmans

Global and International Studies and French and Francophone Studies majors
English minor

“My experience in GLIS has very eye-opening on how we discuss culture and shifting norms around globalization. Through my coursework I was able to learn about how we define violence and it’s linked to culture and learning about preventative measures. I had the opportunity to spend a year in France and learn more about French culture and its broader place within the European Union.”

GRADUATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS



James Shin

Global and International Studies and Russian majors
Eastern European Studies minor

“My experience in the GLIS Program at Penn State has been incredibly meaningful. The program’s engaging courses and interdisciplinary approach helped me see global issues from new perspectives, while the support and mentorship of the faculty truly inspired my path toward a career in international relations. What made this journey especially impactful were my study abroad experiences in Bishkek (Summer 2023), Tbilisi (Spring 2024), and Poland (Summer 2025), where I was able to connect what I learned in the classroom to real-world contexts. Together, these experiences have prepared me for what comes next and have deepened my appreciation for how interconnected our world really is. Thank you to the PSU GLIS program!”

Global and International Studies and Political Science majors
French and Francophone Studies, Sociology, and Psychology minors
Facilitating Small Group Conflict and Collaboration certificate

“During my time in the Global and International Studies program, I was able to explore and integrate my interests in politics, global inequality, and cross-cultural engagement in ways I never thought possible. Though my honors thesis was written in Political Science, the work examines the structural and cultural factors that go into shaping women’s political leadership — a project deeply influenced by my interdisciplinary training in GLIS. Through this experience, I have been able to develop an even deeper and more holistic global perspective that is grounded in critical analysis and dialogue. I am looking forward to continuing on this journey at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service.”



Payton Smith

Global and International Studies major

“The major that has kept me grounded from freshman year to now. Words may never fully capture the gratitude and honor I feel as a GLIS major. As I reflect on my undergraduate journey, my understanding of globalization has been deeply shaped by my concentration in Culture and Identity. Through this path, I’ve not only grown academically, but developed a deeper sense of passion, purpose and responsibility as a global citizen to make change. The perspectives I’ve gained will continue to guide me as I strive to make a lasting impact beyond Penn State!”



Jasmin Tanner

Graduates Not Pictured

Kayla Bellotti

Halie Boop

Kelly Koury

Finnegan Underwood

Meghana Yates

Kyle Berlin

Beatrice Ke

Douglas Salamon

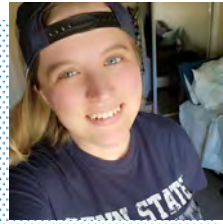
Nathan Voss

Wei-Che Tseng



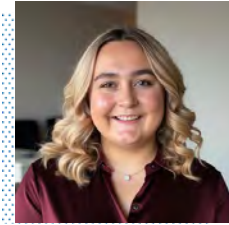
Eugene Choi

Content Writer
GLIS and Psychology majors
Human Rights pathway
Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality
Studies and Chinese minors
Fourth-Year



Sabrina Lanning

Content Writer
GLIS and Journalism majors
Human Rights pathway
Disability Studies minor
Fourth-Year



Kaitlyn Stum

Managing Editor
GLIS and Italian majors
Global Conflict pathway
Political Science and
Global Security minors
Third-Year



Mary Ayata

Content Writer
GLIS major
Human Rights and Global
Conflict Pathways
Middle Eastern Studies
minor
Second-Year



Jasmin Tanner

Content Writer
GLIS major
World Literature Minor
Fourth-year



Helen Thorp

Content Writer
GLIS major
Global Conflict pathway
French major
Second-Year



This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation Our events and programs are open to all students regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, or any other protected class. The College of the Liberal Arts is committed to building a community of belonging for all. UBR CLA 26-244