



**MARSHALL  
SCHOLARSHIPS  
2007**

**PERSONAL STATEMENT**

This should be a short statement (NOT MORE THAN 1000 WORDS).  
Candidates should describe his/her academic and other interests and  
pursuits.

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Name of Candidate:

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I became a thief at the age of eight. In third grade Mrs. instituted a totalitarian rule over her classroom that would have made Stalin blush. One could hardly color outside the lines without attracting her raptor-like gaze. Library time remained our sole refuge of liberty--until I dared to upset the balance of her regime by attempting to checkout an adventure novel from the fifth grade section of the library. The towering despot seized the text and cackled: "This book is too advanced! You can't check it out!" Enraged by this injustice, I later crept back into the library and absconded with the thin volume. I spent the remaining afternoon enthralled in adventure, and even managed to conquer the esoteric "fifth grade" vocabulary.

In this single act I discovered the two greatest passions that hence guided the direction of my life: a zeal for social and political justice, and a deep, unshakable desire for knowledge.

Later in life, however, I realized that larceny might not have been the best strategy for realizing these passions, and even though I eventually returned the adventure story, my newfound appetites persisted. In college I took up the sash of the activist. I became the Amnesty International spokesperson. I founded an NGO to inspire political action concerning the Darfur crisis and organized citywide demonstrations to protest the atrocities in Sudan. These attempts to pursue justice in the world grew out of my desire for knowledge. I believed in compassion because I treasured Herman Hesse's Siddhartha. I organized protests to criticize the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda because I had studied the insights of Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem. I sought to bring changes to the world because my reality paled in comparison to the landscape of my imagination. I was only naïve and lucky enough to believe that I could align my passions and pursue both politics and philosophy without sacrificing one to the other.

At Emory I was privileged to be able to test this hypothesis. I took courses in philosophy and literature and ravenously devoured the great books. Yet I attempted to moderate my predilection for the humanities with more practical courses in public policy and international affairs. In my extracurricular pursuits I sought to bring purpose to passion; I sought leadership roles in organizations concerned with international affairs to learn what skills were necessary to make my ideals manifest, and I debated to test my rhetorical skills against the most uncompromising opponents. In my academic life, I presented papers on existentialist philosophy and non-governmental organizations alike. I took on a Mellon Mays research fellowship to study political philosophy beyond the classroom, and received funding to work in Hannah Arendt's archive and study her analysis of modern politics. Even my honors thesis in philosophy centers on the role and influence of 20th Century philosophic discourse in Western politics. With such vast opportunities, my undergraduate education has been a blessing and a genuine chance to consider my place in the world.

There is a problem, however: while my college experience has allowed me to avoid compromising either of my passions, it has not necessarily reflected the harsh realities of the post-graduation world. Politicians, after all, are rarely philosophers; in fact, I learned from Socrates that political authorities often kill nagging, gadfly intellectuals. Today intellectuals might not always face the same degree of persecution, but they are often ridiculed as "abstract," "impractical," and "out of touch." While I have never viewed the life of the mind and political existence as two separate ontological categories, the modern obsession with specialization seems to demand that I choose between two rigidly defined alternatives: the practical world of law and public policy or the secluded academic world of blissful contemplation. Yet something in me refuses to yield to this demand. A life without philosophy would fail to satisfy my deepest desire to understand, and



a purely academic existence devoid of civic participation would leave me feeling impotent and isolated. I am determined to follow my own path, guided only by the footprints of others who have rebelled against popular attempts to isolate the academy from the polis. I do not know if I can continue successfully to tread this path that preserves both my passions; I know only that I will spend the rest of my life following wherever it leads.

Applying for the Marshall is a further attempt to follow this path. The two different degree programs I have selected reflect my dual interests. The interdisciplinary program at Keele in law, philosophy, and international relations would not only prepare me for future study in the field of law, but would also allow for deep penetrating analysis of the very foundations of the international legal system. It is my hope that the program will prepare me for one of my ultimate career goals: the production of philosophic works that inform and challenge the creation of policy for an increasingly "globalized" world. I see the degree at Cambridge as the perfect compliment to the work I would do at Keele. At Cambridge I intend to investigate the ways in which philosophers, and philosophic discourse, have influenced the development of political movements in the 20th century. By examining contrasting examples of French existentialist thought and German philosophy, I hope to develop an understanding of both the successes and failures of philosophers who have attempted to be politically engaged. After returning from England, I would continue my education by enrolling in a joint JD-PhD program in international law and philosophy. In this regard, I view my Marshall experience as the necessary prerequisite for my future studies; in my career I will seek not only to practice human rights law, but also to produce philosophic works that elucidate and question our ideas about justice. My hope is that in my time spent in England I might continue to test my hypothesis about the union of knowledge and justice and outline a path for my future that preserves both my passions.

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**PROPOSED ACADEMIC PROGRAMME**

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If selected as a Marshall scholar I intend to pursue two one-year MA research degrees. The first program is a degree in Political Thought and Intellectual History at Cambridge University; the second is an interdisciplinary degree in Human Rights, Globalisation and Justice at Keele University. These two degrees compliment my undergraduate education and will prepare me for a PhD in political philosophy and a JD with a focus on international human rights and war crimes law.

At Cambridge I hope to produce a thesis that investigates the history of politically engaged philosophers in the twentieth century with a view to understanding the potential for philosophers and philosophic discourse to influence modern politics. At Cambridge I would like to build on my undergraduate thesis research and ask questions about other French and German philosophers who have attempted to participate in politics in the twentieth century. Cambridge is an ideal destination for this research for two reasons: first, the interdisciplinary nature of the program allows for an investigation both of the specific philosophies of the thinkers in question and also a broader examination of the historical contexts that influenced their political activism; second, the specific scholars at Cambridge have extensive experience with the thinkers I propose to investigate. In regards to the French intellectuals, especially Foucault, I would seek the guidance of Martin Kush whose work addresses twentieth century French political thought. Raymond Geuss would provide excellent guidance in regard to German political thought since his work addresses German political thought and intellectual engagement with ideology in the twentieth century.

At Keele my research would focus on the influence of human rights discourse in the creation of international legal tribunals, specifically the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda. As an undergraduate I published three peer-reviewed articles in the international law, and genocide; and as an intern at the I also assisted senior staff on major research projects concerning human rights abuses. At Keele I would seek to expand on these experiences and explore both the potential benefits and dangers of human rights based approaches to war crimes law. The program at Keele seems especially suited for the investigation I propose since it provides students access to the resources of both the law school and the school of philosophy and international relations. In addition, professor would serve as an excellent advisor considering his interest in both political theory and international human rights law. Professor would also serve as an excellent resource since his own research interests concern the development of social movements, like the human rights movement, that have influenced the creation of policy at the international level.

In both research programs I would hope to utilize and improve the research skills I have acquired as an undergraduate and produce relevant work that both contributes to and enhances the fields of both political philosophy and international law.

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Not for the first time, I threw my bright green Persian book across the room, muttering some obscenity or other about the impenetrable, twenty-year-old text. I leaned back and tried to rub my headache out of my temples, wondering why I was tormenting myself. Whenever I told people what I studied, I was met with that politely bland reaction which generally signifies total incomprehension: "Oh, that's interesting." What was I getting for all of my efforts? For now, that question would have to wait, as Ali Shari'ati's treatise on "The Mission of the Intellectual to Build Society" awaited my perusal, patiently staring back at me from my floor.

Perhaps it was sheer obstinacy, but a new language, a new text was a challenge to me; I couldn't satisfy myself with throwing up my hands and accepting that I understood nothing. My efforts would sometimes pay dividends in the form of the ecstasy of epiphany, when the joy of comprehension erases all prior frustrations. Yet, it never seemed like a matter of willful persistence as much as a matter of necessity. My first encounters in a foreign milieu had implanted that notion in my head, and I had never quite shaken it.

To my six-year-old self, stepping off the plane in Prague was like coming out the other end of the rabbit hole and not understanding a single word anyone said to me only compounded my youthful confusion. My mother's translations helped me make sense of my surroundings initially and as the summer months drifted by the fog around me slowly lifted. Magically, I found myself thinking and responding in Czech, which began to seem a lot like English. After three months, my new frustration was to return home after what seemed such a short time.

My summers passed like this for many years, sometimes including a trip through Poland, visiting my father's family in the farming village of Kurozweki, or Slovakia, or once, Russia. Every time I encountered a new language, it was as if I had been returned to that six-year-old boy, who understood nothing and could express even less, yet drank in his new surroundings greedily. After a few years, middle school gave me the opportunity to study what to me was a truly exotic language - Spanish - and I pursued it with the zeal of the convert through high school.

When I finally arrived at Emory, uprooted from the only hometown I had ever known, a new beginning in my studies seemed appropriate and I jettisoned math and the sciences for the Middle East. On a whim, I decided to study Persian and was surprised to find beauty in a totally new form of linguistic structure. I began to unravel the logic behind this new system and found myself enraptured in comparing it with my own, seeing this new puzzle through the prism of my innate language. Only against the backdrop of what was to me a truly alien culture did I begin to see language as a living, breathing, changing entity. A year later, Arabic drew me in and showed me, vis-à-vis Persian, how languages interact and influence each other. I began studying linguistics and saw what had once been only vaguely defined concepts take concrete form.

What had been an inexplicable interest through much of my life began to coalesce into new forms as connections began to appear where I had seen none before. Linguistic cognitive models resembled computer code, and drew my attention back to the mechanistic language of legal codes and the logical interpretations of courts. These I saw as the execution of a program, the

operation of a process within set parameters, structured by the words and phrases of the law. My odd hobbies of computer programming and constitutional law from my high school days seemed to have reached fruition in the most unexpected of ways.

The multifarious interactions of language in the Middle East with politics, religion, and society provided me with an endless complexity to plumb; whether in the incorporation of vocabulary or even syntactic elements from Arabic into Persian and Turkish because of the spread of Islam, the use of Hebrew script by Jews from Spain to the Caucasus to write their local languages, or the avoidance of Arabic vocabulary by Iranians as a form of political protest, the subtleties of language were apparent in every aspect of daily life.

The fascination of this new subject reinvigorated my inherited aspirations from my parents, professors both, to teach and educate. Frustrated by the lack of understanding of the Middle East among my fellow students, I founded the Emory chapter of Americans for Informed Democracy (AID), a non-partisan organization which promotes global dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. Through discussions, lectures, and international videoconferences, I came to see the genuine interest among Emory students in the rest of the world. What appeared to be indifference was largely the lack of an approachable introduction to new cultures and nations. Allowing them to communicate directly across continents highlighted the possibility of bridging cultural gaps which once seemed impossible. Working with AID both locally and nationally has only reconfirmed my impressions and encouraged me along this path. In addition to my work with AID, mentoring and living with first-year students in Residence Life, training new activists in the Young Democrats, and coaching beginners in the Fencing Club has only reaffirmed for me the draw of the educator's role.

Armed with my new understanding and approach, I began to re-examine many other fields: I saw in constitutional law new techniques for jurisprudential argument; in the copious product of speechwriters and bloggers a new source for understanding the contemporary political environment, new techniques to peel away layers of verbiage and expose thought in its raw form. My lifelong meanderings from one subject to another weren't a useless drift; rather, they drew connections which were only awaiting a shared element to be illuminated. And in the centrality of language, I saw sense where there had previously been none.

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To continue further my explorations of the interactions between language and society, I hope to study for two degrees in Britain. First, I intend to acquire a specialized set of skills at the University of Birmingham by studying for an M.A. in Applied Corpus Linguistics. Corpus linguistics is a methodology which relies on computers to analyze enormous amounts of linguistic data, thereby revealing latent patterns and connections which only mass analysis can elucidate. The purpose of my study at Birmingham is to learn techniques and methodology for future research in several areas, one of which is constitutional law. In that regard, there are several faculty members at Birmingham whose research interests align closely with my own: Michael Toolan, who specializes in the language of the law; Susan Hunston, whose application of corpus linguistics to academic discourse is uniquely appropriate for the study of constitutional law; and Wolfgang Teubert, who specializes in semantic change and discourse analysis. As Birmingham is the home of the Bank of English, the single largest corpus in the world, this combination of facilities and faculty makes the University uniquely suited to my planned studies. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, Birmingham offers the only master's programs in corpus linguistics in the world.

While law has long been of interest to me, the primary object of my studies is and will continue to be the Middle East. Towards that end, I wish to pursue an M.St. at the University of Oxford in Modern Middle Eastern Studies, with a focus on modern Iran. Contemporary Iranian political discourse operates under the strictures imposed by the Islamic Republic, and as such it cannot be analyzed solely on its surface; in this case, corpus linguistics allows us to explore the implications and assumptions of discourse by analyzing media en masse. Iran's blogosphere, Weblogestan, offers an unmediated source for analysis, one which will allow us to keep a finger on the pulse of Iranian politics. But in order to properly analyze and comprehend the context within which such a discourse occurs, a thorough understanding of Iranian politics, society, and social history is necessary. Among Oxford's scholars are Homa Katouzian and A.R. Sheikholeslami, with whom I hope to study Iran's political system and the social forces underlying its development and change. Additionally, Oxford's Internet Institute (OII) and its research on e-democracy dovetail with this topic - OII even offers a course on Social Research and the Internet. The synergistic effect of combining the techniques and methodology of Birmingham's program with the resources of OII and Oxford's Oriental Institute cannot be matched by any other program or combination of programs in the world, and will allow me to pursue a truly new and unique path.

These studies in Britain will enable me to return to the U.S. and undertake further graduate study, culminating in a J.D. and Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies. Ultimately, such an extensive course of study will allow me to teach and pursue new avenues of social and legal research.

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Since I graduated from \_\_\_\_\_ Public High School four years ago, my interests have taken me through Europe, the Middle East, and West Africa, leading me down an academic path and to career ambitions which, at the time of my graduation, I did not know existed. When I moved to Belgium to volunteer at a refugee center for a year between high school and college, I was immediately transported from a homogeneous high school to an eclectic jumble of refugees, each confronting me with a facet of global destabilization. My year spent in Belgium with immigrants and refugees kindled in me a desire to explore more of the world and to learn to live outside the narrow cultural norms of the West. This newfound aspiration led me to study Arabic intensively at \_\_\_\_\_ Summer Arabic School, a complete immersion program, the summer after my freshman year of college.

When I entered \_\_\_\_\_ my response to every question was "thank you" because it was the only Arabic word I knew. I did not envision the extent to which the study of Arabic would become the most defining academic endeavor of my college career. The almost mathematical grammatical structure immediately appealed to me; Arabic is an exquisitely designed, methodical language, and in this way, diverges sharply from the two languages I had previously studied (English and French). I left \_\_\_\_\_ mesmerized by the language, transfixed by the culture, and certain that I wanted to dedicate the rest of my professional life to the Arabic language, its people, and its problems. My fascination with Arabic grew upon my return to Emory, where I have had the opportunity to study with the United States' leading professors of Arabic education--I \_\_\_\_\_, and it deepened when I studied abroad in Egypt during my sophomore year.

My time spent in Egypt inspired me to once again study abroad in a developing country. This time I decided to immerse myself in my other language of study (French) in Senegal, where I lived in a polygamous household with the imam of the local mosque and one of his wives. It was in Senegal that I first developed my interest in NGOs and saw how they operate on the ground. Through academic work and an internship at a family planning clinic, I was able to both study and observe the role that NGOs were attempting to play in the country, and the barriers that obstructed them from accomplishing their goals. I saw in action the constant tension between tackling problems at a policy level and engaging local populations and addressing regional needs through grassroots work.

Before working in this and other internships, I had no desire to consider a career in law or policy, as I believed that these fields were dominated by bureaucracy and a lack of genuine compassion. In Senegal, for example, I saw how the family planning clinic where I interned suffered at the hands of a government which could not translate family planning policy into viable programs to address Senegal's overpopulation. Similarly, as Executive Student Coordinator of the \_\_\_\_\_, which facilitates medical evaluations for torture survivors seeking asylum in Atlanta, I was astounded by the seemingly arbitrary manner in which the US Government's Immigration and Naturalization Service makes rulings on asylum cases and the condescending attitude of court officials. As I have spent time working with \_\_\_\_\_



well-intentioned organizations being obstructed by legal barriers, I have come to realize that attempting to sidestep the law and policy that I viewed as unfair was ignoring both the root causes of the legal barriers that frustrated me, and the only realistic way to change them.

As I participated in my internship in Senegal and then my work with the [redacted], I came to realize that I was doing work to which I would like to dedicate my professional life. This self-revelation was reinforced when I began to intern this fall in the [redacted] program, which observes elections around the world and works with local governments to strengthen democratic institutions after election day. As an intern, I track and analyze local media and write political reports on countries in which the democracy program is engaged.

My internships abroad, combined with having been absorbed in local cultures, have provided me, as only firsthand experience can, with an understanding of Islam, Arab and African society, and both Arabic and French. My academic work at Emory, in which I have studied Arabic, French, Linguistics, and a broad array of social sciences, has built upon these personal experiences to give me a rounded perspective of the regions and their languages. I am thus able to draw from both direct familiarity and a more distanced academic knowledge when analyzing Arab or African politics, language, or culture.

My background abroad and my academic work will culminate in my honors thesis this spring, for which I hope to return to Senegal to conduct research on recent attempts by some Senegalese factions to orient the country further towards the Arab world through Arabic language education. Arabic schools, many of which are funded by Saudi donors, have been established throughout the country to prepare students to attend university in the Middle East or North Africa. These students are thus educated according to an Arab paradigm as opposed to the French model of Senegal's former colonizer. Through this project, I would like to explore whether Arabic language education plays a significant role in aligning non-Arab Muslim countries with the Arab world.

In my travels and experiences of the past four years, I have gradually turned a vague dream of "saving the world" into a relatively concrete plan of how I can actually have an impact on some of the problems I have seen while living and traveling internationally. Degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and International Studies, followed by a law degree and a Masters in Public Policy, will enable me to make a meaningful contribution.

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The combination of an M.St. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies and an M.Sc. in Global Governance and Diplomacy at Oxford, or a similar program at the School of Oriental and African Studies, will merge my experience and interest in the Arab world with the areas of human rights, refugee law and international relations. It will prepare me to pursue a joint law and Masters in Public Policy degree in the United States, after which I hope to work for an NGO or government agency in the field of democracy or human rights.

Pursuing an M.Sc. in Global Governance and Diplomacy with an M.St. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies will provide me with a solid background in international policy, as well as strong regional expertise. Studying abroad in both Egypt and Senegal gave me two wonderful experiences in cultural immersion, but neither program was designed to offer the academic rigor and deep level of analysis that I crave in a graduate program of study. While I want to return to the Arab world in the future, Oxford's program in Modern Middle Eastern Studies offers what attending school in the region itself cannot--a challenging academic program under the supervision of world renowned experts.

An M.St. in Modern Middle Eastern Studies will both advance my study of Arabic and give me a strong regional specialization in an area which, sadly, generates much of today's conflict and refugees. Oxford's faculty includes several experts in my areas of study. I specialize in Arab media and pop culture as a lens through which to view Arab society more generally. Because of my own extensive background in dance and theater, the larger cultural and political implications of the performing arts are areas of particular interest to me. Additionally, I specialize in Arabic linguistics, my primary focus during my undergraduate education. And the presence of a professor of Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies, will allow me to focus specifically on the region within the Arab world in which I hope to concentrate in the future, because the interplay between French and Arabic resulting from French colonization greatly interests me.

The M.Sc. in Global Governance and Diplomacy will enable me to expand upon a regional concentration through the study of global issues such as refugee and human rights law, international law, development, and international relations within the developing world. The degree will give me a broad knowledge of the policies which govern such global issues and institutionalized attempts to deal with them.

The combination of these two degrees will prepare me to enter law school and an MPP program equipped with both an expansive understanding of international relations and organizations and the regional expertise to specialize within this global framework. The program will allow me to embark on the study of law and public policy with a focus on the Arab world, acting as an essential step towards my ultimate goal of making an impact on today's ubiquitous problems of global destabilization.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_