Students - First Cohort

Mason Kizer:

Mason Kizer is a recent graduate of Sam Houston State with a master's in homeland security and a bachelor's in criminal justice.

- "I have a military background, and I am excited about this opportunity to learn more about Taiwan. I want to research Taiwan's development in addressing man-made and natural threats utilizing AI and mitigation. I am still deciding on the focus of the research, but I hope to get inspired during this event."

Wilson Lai:

Wilson Lai is an Arts and Technology graduate from the University of Texas at Dallas.

-"As a bilingual Asian American, I have been fascinated by the topic of bilingualism in Taiwan especially regarding it's bilingual 2030 policy. As such my proposed research would be on the topic of Bilingual Media and Signage in Taiwan. An example would be a street sign in both English and native Taiwanese language or a tv show that's dubbed in native Taiwanese with English subtitles."

Benjamin Karch:

"My name is Benjamin Noël Karch, I am from Germany and I am currently enrolled in the International Master's Program in International Studies (IMPIS) at the National Chengchi University in Taipei. Previously, I have completed my bachelor's degree in Sinology and Political Science at the University of Tübingen. The focus of my studies lies on security studies, China's role within the international order, as well as cross-strait relations, with my current research interests revolving around Taiwan's soft power and European perspectives of Taiwan."

Aimee Rhodes:

Aimee is a graduating senior at the University of Central Florida, where she is studying International and Global Studies with a minor in Asian Studies. Throughout her time at UCF, she has served as the Cultural and Community Director for the Multicultural Student Center, where she organized culturally focused events by conducting thorough cultural research to provide representation to the diverse communities in Central Florida. Aimee enjoys studying various languages and has been honored as a 2024 Boren Fellow to study Mandarin in Taiwan. In her internship with the US State Department, she developed her research skills when translating Chinese articles to inform US policymakers. Her research interests in Taiwan studies have led her to pursue the topic of understanding Taiwan's diplomacy tactics and utilize process tracing to understand international reception. After graduation, she plans to pursue her master's and pursue a career as an East Asian Policy Analyst where she can apply her research skills.

Nicholas Scheufler:

Nicholas Scheufler is a Bachelor of Science student at the University of Texas at Dallas studying biochemistry. Presently, Nick is on the pre-Law track and endeavors to specialize in patent law. Nick has studied the current state and history of policies surrounding execution, imprisonment, and wrongful conviction within both EU member states and the United States and further worked to construct methods to alleviate and address misinformation surrounding capital punishment under Dr. Denise Boots. Nick's advocacy work on behalf of the Innocence Project was in exposing dubious scientific evidence and/or incidents of unethical or unlawful police conduct. His time at the Innocence Project informs his current study at the Taiwan Research Academy: a sentiment analysis surrounding native Taiwanese views on reunification, as well as American interests on the same, since the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.
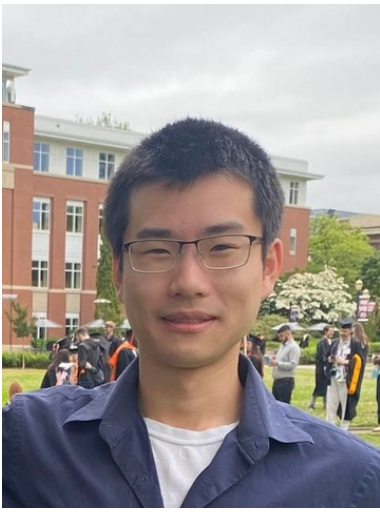
Ming Chung:

"I am a master's student at George Mason University, currently studying Speech Communication. In the past, I served as the spokesperson for Taiwanese legislator Lo Chih-chiang and later for ROC Chiayi County Mayor Candidate Wang Yu-Min during the 2022 election. My professional experience has predominantly been within Taiwan's political sphere, focusing on domestic issues. However, since coming to the United States for my studies, I've realized the significant role Taiwan plays in international relations, particularly in cross-strait relations, economic policies, and energy strategies.

My proposed research on Taiwan studies aims to explore Taiwan's future energy policies and how they are influenced by global political dynamics. I look forward to engaging with scholars and students to exchange insights on this critical topic."

Cecil Brooks:

Most recently obtaining his master's in policy management from Georgetown University, Cecil Brooks Jr. brings a wealth of experience from international development into the Taiwan Research Institute. He attended Colby College in Maine where he joined a choir and spent a year abroad in Latin America (Dominican Republic, Perú, Bolivia, Panama, and Ecuador). After college, he spent five years in public service – first with local government designing City Hall's economic policies before transitioning to federal government with Congressman Ritchie Torres. His in-house expertise on East Asian policy eventually supported the office's membership in the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party. Cecil's interest in Taiwan started through his experiences leading solidarity initiatives and speaking publicly about US-China relations. He has performed in bilingual theater productions exploring Taiwanese American identity and often consults with Asian entrepreneurs across the United States. Cecil is currently channeling his academic research on FinTech investments into capacity-building for political campaigns and digital crowdfunding platforms. He hopes to continue learning about the broader world beyond New York while taking a more active role in protecting national security. Cecil grew up in New York City to a multicultural Honduran family.In his spare time, he loves sharing music playlists and travel stories over happy hour!

Erik Chi:

I am a first-year political student at Texas A&M. Before returning to school, I was involved in non-profit and legislative advocacy work. I am interested in studying economic statecraft in Taiwan. As a frequent target of economic statecraft, Taiwan offers a rich environment to study what makes these policies effective as well as how states may defend themselves. I am particularly interested in how Taiwan's structure of labor organization has affected the country's resilience to economic statecraft.

Ethan Cheng:

"I am currently pursuing a Master of Science in Business Analytics at the College of William & Mary, with an expected graduation date of May 2025.

I completed my undergraduate studies in Public Administration. In my senior year, I developed a keen interest in the differences between the legal and political systems across the Taiwan Strait and studied the modern history of the Chinese Civil War. Currently enrolled in a master's program in Business Analytics, I have a strong understanding of data analysis. I hope to leverage data from China and Taiwan to explore cross-strait issues. In particular, I aim to use quantitative analysis to identify effective strategies for Taiwan to counter the Chinese Communist Party amidst an imbalance of national power.

In Washington, D.C., I am the current President of the Chinese Culture University Alumni Association, a committee member of the Chinese Nationalist Party's Student and Scholar Division, and am passionate about overseas Chinese affairs. I am also a photographer."

Ariel Wang:

Ariel Wang is starting her Ph.D. in political science at the University of Texas at Dallas. She is interested in Taiwan's democracy and the political cleavages, especially the ones surrounding Taiwan's identity and whether to unify or declare independence.

Jared Jeter:

My name is Jared Jeter. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in international relations at National Chengchi University in Taipei. I obtained a bachelor's degree in communication studies with a minor in Psychology at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. My research interest is the effect Taiwan's semiconductor monopoly has on American foreign policy.