

“Sometimes we only see how people are different. But if we look hard enough, you can see how much we’re all alike.” – Jasmine from Disney’s Aladdin

Country of Origin: Ukraine

Years of studying in Pavia: 2016-2018

Name of the previous degree: International Relations

Current occupation: Migration studies researcher at Central European University

a) Why exactly did you choose to study “World Politics and International Relations” at the University of Pavia?

During my bachelor’s degree, I went for an exchange to Krakow where for the first time, I experienced studying in a multicultural environment, being exposed to new pedagogical approaches and challenging assignments, making friends with people from all over the world, and learning from them. This was an amazing feeling that you can enrich yourself not only by preparing for seminars and attending lectures but by just being there, by going out with friends and talking about life, politics, philosophy, and favourite books. Such conversations made my semester in Krakow unforgettable, motivating me to look for a master’s programme that could offer a similar experience.

I found out about the World Politics and International Relations programme on the Internet and decided to apply. I very much wanted to be accepted because it was an international degree taught in English in a multicultural environment, and a degree offered by an Italian university that is home to many great professors. And, of course, one of the reasons for going there was my big dream of living in Italy. But probably the final convincing factor was an opportunity to receive a scholarship through EDISU, without which I would not have been able to finance my studies abroad.

b) What skills did you gain from the program that you utilize in your current profession?

I gained so much thanks to WPIR. Since I work in an English-speaking academic environment, most of the knowledge and skills I need were developed in Pavia. This is not only academic English but also research skills. During the master’s programme, we had to write quite a few papers each semester, which turned out to be extremely useful in training how to define puzzling issues, construct an argument, and make a coherent text. WPIR also helped to develop confidence in public speaking and learn how to appreciate what your colleagues bring to the discussion. I think that the University of Pavia made me love the pursuit of knowledge and research even more because of its inspirational environment.

c) Did your initial career plans change during your studies?

Before coming to Pavia, I had dreams of at least trying how it is to work for an international organisation. Frankly speaking, I was sceptical whether I could even get an internship at the UN or OSCE. But in the second year of the master’s degree, my dreams turned into concrete plans and numerous submitted applications. In the end, I did an internship at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw, with whom I still work as a part-time consultant every summer since then. As for my academic path, I have been always certain about applying for doctoral studies at some point after graduating from WPIR. And the studies in Pavia helped in making a decision to do a PhD at Central European University.

d) Why were you interested in International Relations in the first place?

International relations always interested me. But more than being fascinated by the roles of different states and international organisations in global or regional processes, I was trying to understand what it means to be a part of an international order defined by state borders, how it influences the lives and movement of people, and what can be done to make this order more just. That was also the reason for choosing to write my master's thesis on the topic of ethics and migration.

e) What do you remember the best from your studies? Particular subject or a conference?

I remember well the subject taught by my master's thesis supervisor Ian Carter. I was so impressed by the complex ethical dilemmas and the deep debates we had. International Law taught by Carola Ricci was also one of the most memorable subjects. In addition to exciting discussions of the court decisions, we had an opportunity to visit the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court in the Hague and see how international law works in practice.

f) What kind of career opportunities are available to graduates of this program?

I think that WPIR opens so many opportunities for working in politics, human rights advocacy, and the field of international relations both as a practitioner and a researcher. What I believe to be the biggest advantage of this master's programme is that we also learnt about many institutions and career opportunities during our lectures and seminars. And our dreams got bigger, as well as the motivation to pursue them.

g) Name three things that you find the most important to get the most out of studying on this faculty.

I would say that making friends with people from all over the world was the most enriching part of my study experience. I was excited to learn from my friends, understand their views, and share my opinions. These friendships made me see how much we have in common, especially our shared love for books, studying in the courtyard, and drinking delicious Italian coffee. It may sound trivial, but my piece of advice would be to truly appreciate your friends and colleagues, as well as the experiences that you make together.

Another important element of enjoying your studies is making a good choice of supervisor, finding a person who inspires you, and with whom it is pleasant to work. This person can become your mentor and support you during these two years. I was lucky to have such a supervisor, and I feel grateful for every single consultation and wise advice I received.

Finally, taking the most out of the master's programme while keeping a healthy work-rest balance is crucial. Pavia is a perfect place for this, being so close to the mountains and lakes. And if you have seen everything in Lombardy and around, apply for exchange programmes, learn more, meet new friends, broaden your perspective, and explore other beautiful places. You can even spend a semester in Sydney or San Francisco. As someone who had to overcome the fear of spiders to do an exchange in Australia, I am only grateful that WPIR provided me with such a unique opportunity. Challenge yourselves, travel, study, and do not forget to take a pause and appreciate the beautiful things around you.