

NEWS

Rohatyn Global Scholars program aims to connect first years to a global perspective



The RGS program began in October and has involved a group of 14 students in a range of events including lectures and discussions about global events. Photo by [Lucy Townsend](#) | The Middlebury Campus

By [Ryan Mcelroy](#)

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The Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs launched the Rohatyn Global Scholars (RGS) program this fall, aiming to connect first-year students to the global resources available through Middlebury programs.

The RGS program includes first-year students with different backgrounds, perspectives and interests. The current class of Global Scholars come from 12 first year seminar classes that range from “Reading Africa” to “Being a Public Scientist.” The program was intended for any Middlebury first-year student who wanted to learn more about the world without considering what they intend to study in college.

The program was created this year under the guidance of the program director, Professor Nadia Horning, and Rohatyn Center Director Mark Williams. They envisioned a program that would help these students access a global education at Middlebury from their first semester on campus.

“One of the basic goals of the program was to provide [students] with a broader global mindset that they can then take into whatever major they might ultimately declare,” Williams said. “Whether it is theater or in STEM, whether it’s in social sciences or the humanities, they will carry this experience with them.”

The RGS program began in October and includes a group of 14 students in a range of global events and discussions on campus. The students have been attending events including “How Democracies Die: Lessons from Turkey,” by Professor Sebnem Gumuscu, and “Vladimir Putin: Weak Strongman” by Columbia University Professor Tim Frye. Following these events, the students gather in discussions to connect with each other and develop potential solutions.

“Through the lectures we’ve had, I’ve been able to see issues from a different perspective,” Hinda Ibraahim ’25, one of the current Global Scholars, said. “If you feel like you don’t know anything about what’s happening, it’s a very good place to start. I felt like I knew everything, and then I joined and realized I have a lot to learn.”

At the beginning of the year, the Global Scholars brainstormed issues that interested them and skills they wanted to develop. Horning said those topics of interest help inform planning for the rest of the year.

Horning also said that the program focuses on empowering students to solve problems rather than just learn about them.

“We would present some issues and then show how we analyze these issues,” Horning said. “And I, as an educator, always felt slightly dissatisfied with leaving the conversation there for students and just wishing them well on commencement, like good luck, it’s a tough world out there. I’m grabbing this opportunity to offer a solutionist approach to the problems early on.”

Global Scholar Ciara Murphy ’25 said she values the lessons she has learned so far and anticipates the rest of the year will build off her experiences.

“The exposure to students from different backgrounds is the biggest gain from this program,” Murphy said. “It really emphasizes how global Middlebury is. I hope to learn ... from my classmates and how that can make me a better student, a better scientist and even a better person.”

Horning and Williams are still developing a plan for winter and spring terms. They discussed ideas for the future, like a student symposium or off-campus travel to Monterey or another location. They also envision the current class of Global Scholars returning to serve as mentors to the new students. Some students expressed their enthusiasm for this opportunity and look forward to guiding future students through the program.

“I do want to continue to be part of the Rohatyn Center in any way I can, through different programs and events,” Ibraahim said. “Even though I haven’t been a part of it for that long, I see myself continuing it.”

Horning and Williams are also looking forward to the rest of the year and building on their current work. They praised the school’s administration for their support for the creation and development of the program and anticipate its growth in the coming years.

“This is one of several new initiatives that the Rohatyn Center has launched,” Williams said. “I can see the [RGS] cohort expanding over time and envision the effects of what we do having a real impact on students’ experiences and lives in the college. And for me, that’s a very meaningful thing.”

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