The International Affairs Program is one of the largest majors in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at Northeastern University, which is located in the heart of Boston, MA, USA.
On Tuesday March 22nd, 2016, the College of Social Sciences and Humanities hosted its annual Undergraduate Research Forum, celebrating student research across the college. Among the fourteen students who participated in the forum were six International Affairs majors who joined to discuss their research during the second and third panels.

The second panel, *Framing Justice in International Contexts*, was moderated by Liza Weinstein, Associate Professor of Sociology. The first to present their research were Jeremia Whall (International Affairs and Political Science), Evan Bruning (International Affairs and Economics), and Jane Rudy (International Affairs and Political Science), presenting their co-authored paper “Justice Served? A Review and Reflection on the ICTY.” The fourth co-author, Mara Scallon, was unable to attend.

Addressing concerns that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was overly biased towards convicting Serbs above all other ethnic groups involved with the conflict, the students interviewed employees and interested parties of the ICTY to determine whether or not the institution was truly serving justice. Overall, they found while there was little to support institutional bias against any one ethnic group by the ICTY, there are extensive legal and foundational flaws in the organization that allow personal biases to be expressed. In particular, the students identified the lack of international legal standards for court and a lack of funding as concerning problems. Bruning highlighted the funding issue by comparing the budget of one hundred million dollars to U.S. defense spending – although that sounds like a lot of money for the ICTY, he explained, one hundred million dollars only funded eight hours of U.S. military activity during the war with Iraq. Whall, Bruning, Rudy, and Scallon received funds from the International Affairs Undergraduate Research Fund to present their paper at the Central and East European International Studies Association – International Studies Association joint conference in Slovenia in June 2016.

Also presenting in the second panel was International Affairs and Political Science major Maisam Alahmed, who discussed her paper “Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and their Legality in International Law.” Drawing allusions to the popular 1980’s film *The Terminator*, Alahmed discussed how many countries were developing, or close to developing, truly autonomous weapons systems that removed human oversight completely. Citing as precedent the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons, Alahmed called for a preemptive ban on autonomous weapons systems, arguing that attempts to make these weapons “safer” for civilians would be an unacceptable compromise, and that removing the human factor from these decisions would be a grave mistake.

The third panel, *Media Representations and Digital Methods*, was moderated by Amanda Rust, Assistant Director of the Digital Scholarship Group and Digital Humanities Librarian at Northeastern’s Snell Library. While International Affairs and Political Science major Ali Campbell was sick and unable to present her research “The Politics of Memory and Ethics of Representation in Post-Genocide Rwanda,” International Affairs and History major Taylor Holland was present and discussed her paper “Defining Transformation:
how the Rhodes Must Fall Movement is Shaping Social Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” Holland identified five different narratives surrounding the Rhodes Must Fall movement, which began in March 2015 on the University of Cape Town campus in South Africa, in order to evaluate national views on post-apartheid South Africa’s “current state of transformation.” Originally directed at removing a statue of Cecil Rhodes from the UCT campus, the movement was more broadly concerned with dismantling institutional racism at UCT and in education in general. Examining and sorting public Facebook posts and comments, Holland placed them within narratives with varying levels of acceptance for the Rhodes Must Fall movement. Ultimately, she determined that the broad variety in narratives indicates that there are powerful and conflicting views regarding racial equality in South Africa.

Over the course of the two panels, these students exhibited the range of academic interests and compelling projects of International Affairs majors. We applaud the hard work of these students, and hope that we can help support their research and the research of other International Affairs students in the future.