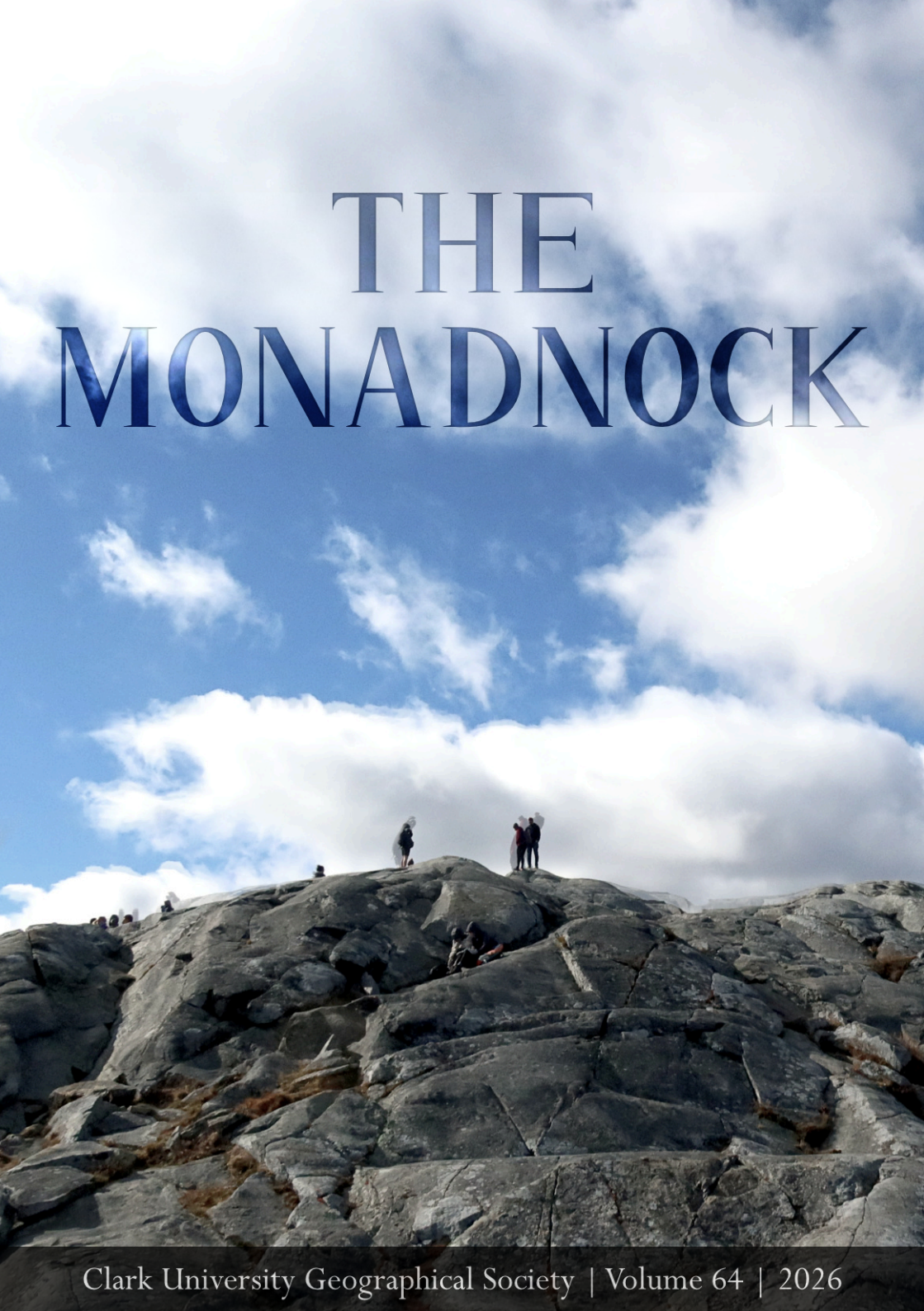


THE MONADNOCK



Clark University Geographical Society | Volume 64 | 2026

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Alumni and Friends of the Graduate School of Geography:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the latest and greatest edition of *The Monadnock* – the official magazine of the Clark University Geographical Society (aka CUGS). It has been two years since the last issue (2024) and it is wonderful to see this reboot thanks principally to the efforts of co-editors Arman Bajracharya and Sookyong Kim.

Throughout most of the century-plus history of the Graduate School of Geography (GSG), *The Monadnock* has served an important role in documenting the comings, goings, doings, and “achievements” of faculty, students, alumni, and staff. Moreover, it has provided an outlet for CUGS to offer reflections on their research projects, field experiences, and contemporary issues facing the world. This issue adds further to this range with CUGS colleagues reflecting on their general experiences this past year, and how they unwind and disconnect from the “gradual studies” grind. Having hobbies, activities, and outlets (e.g., squash, reading, dancing, photography, yoga) beyond the academy are so very important in that they help us to realize a better work-life balance, improve our mental and physical health, and enjoy and contribute to the diverse (extracurricular) communities we are part of.

Having extracurricular activities to relax, rejuvenate, focus, and strengthen us is so very important, especially in the world we live in today, one marked by far too much violence, hate, discrimination, conflict, and injustice. Being in higher education has only made the present moment more challenging as the US government continues its assault on universities, international students, DEI initiatives, and research funding. It has been a difficult storm to weather, one that has been exacerbated at Clark thanks to added-on fiscal headwinds stemming both from the Trump administration’s policies, and the general challenges facing higher education in the USA. We are adjusting and managing but it has been a difficult and sometimes painful process marked by cutbacks, layoffs, and disruptive restructuring initiatives as Clark reorganizes itself into Schools.

In spite of all this, there is much to be hopeful about and proud of, particularly in the GSG. We continue to be a globally recognized center for leading-edge, innovative scholarship led by an incredibly creative, productive, and dedicated community of faculty and students. Our positionality in a small research university serves as a major strength in this regard in that it helps us to be, and maintain, a tightly knit community that engages and collaborates with one another in ways

that generate novel and often interdisciplinary perspectives on complex problems; knowledge that not only advances science but contributes significantly to policy, practice, and public understandings of the drivers and consequences of environmental change, socioeconomic inequality, and other challenges facing our planet. In a word, its inspiring.

This year’s launch of Clark’s School for Climate, Environment, and Society (CES), wherein the GSG is a founding/foundational unit, offers additional hope that we can both continue to excel in the ways we always have, and develop interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and teaching initiatives within the School, at Clark, and through ties to new external partners, communities, and research sites. It is truly an exciting moment in our history with many new opportunities on the horizon that will only further strengthen and diversify the GSG’s impacts on campus and in the wider world.

All told, we are truly a special, unique community, something that *The Monadnock* has always reminded us of. Thank you for that!

Jim Murphy
Professor and Director
Graduate School of Geography

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS



Dear CUGS,

Welcome to the 64th edition of Monadnock magazine, which proudly carries 99 years of history!

One of us is just starting, and one is wrapping up our days on campus, but Monadnock nevertheless reminds both of us that there's always more to discover from you, CUGS.

In this issue, you will find stories about who's just started kickboxing, who's aiming for the number one spot in CUGS squash, the lesser-known stories behind the strike, the furry friends encountered during fieldwork, and the origin stories of our cherished CUGS sports clubs, along with many other gems. With the vibrant contributions from the CUGS community, we hope this issue can serve as a catalyst for new conversations and connections. And if you happen to agree that this is the most aesthetic Monadnock yet, please tell us, because we spent way too long staring at page margins and font faces.

We want to thank all the CUGS who took time during a crazy semester to share their stories. We would also like to thank Jim and Yaa who made this issue possible. We acknowledge the former editors, Chris Lamb and Sergio Carvajal, for gathering many of the materials included in this issue. With your support, we can continue the Monadnock not just as an old tradition, but as an identity that matters to the community.

Last but not least, thank you, the reader, especially for reading this note (which will probably only be read by future editors trying to write their own). It has truly been an honor to continue this tradition, and we hope you enjoy this issue as much as we did as editors.

Sookyeong Kim and Arman Bajracharya
Editors
The Monadnock Magazine

IN THIS ISSUE

Meet the Cohort 2024 & 2025
CUGS Fieldwork Sites
Reflections from the Field
CUGS Sports and Wellness
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MEET THE COHORT 2025



Cohort of 2025. (top row L to R) Zhiwen Zhu, Aida Mulugetta-Lopez, Deniz Mine Öztürk, Gregg Essuman (bottom row L to R) Luis Oliviera Jr, Robert Moore, Sarala Adhikari, Elisabeth Tappert, Sookyeong Kim.

The Monadnock Team (Monadnock):

Welcome to Clark, the GSG and CUGS, what are your impressions on your first year?

Sarala Adhikari: Being a PhD student in a new country and starting fresh is challenging yet rewarding. I found the CUGS community to be genuinely welcoming, supportive, and kind from the very first day. The field camp at the beginning of the semester was a wonderful experience that gave us all a great opportunity to learn about each other outside the classroom and build connections that already feel meaningful.

Elisabeth Tappert: The diversity of research disciplines among the faculty and PhD students in the GSG is very intellectually stimulating. I enjoy hearing of others' research that is outside of my field and finding connections between the two.

Deniz Öztürk: It was an intense but nourishing year! As someone without a background in geography, the first-year courses, Nature–Society

workshop, and the AAG gave me a deeper understanding of geography as a discipline, even though I still can't fully define it. Sometimes, it was challenging to live through both the extreme cold weather and the increasingly heated global atmosphere. In these difficult and uncertain times, the supportive and friendly environment among the CUGS and the Geography faculty was truly life-saving.

Gregory Essuman: My first year has been great due to a wonderful community of CUGS and the GSG. Everyone in the department is very supportive which made the transition from Ghana smooth. From camping events, hiking, advocating for fair compensation for grad workers and much more I have really felt a sense of belonging.

Monadnock: Outside of school and research, what do you do for fun?

Sarala: Outside of school and research, I love spending time with family and friends and being out

in nature. I enjoy capturing moments through photography and videography. I also love watching movies and listening to music. Recently, I have also found myself enjoying reading novels and other books outside of academia.

Elisabeth: I have joined both a rock climbing and kickboxing gym in Worcester. It has been a great way to experience the broader community of the city.

Deniz: I joined the CUGS squash club and am currently learning how to play. I also enjoy dancing at CUGS and friends' house parties and joining Wen Ting's weekly yoga sessions on the Campus Green or at Mezz. When the weather allows, I love being outdoors: walking to Coes Pond, hiking, and observing wildflowers in Worcester.

Gregg: I mostly stay indoors watching soccer leagues however when I am not indoors, I meet up with my friends in New York or hangout in bars and restaurants with fellow CUGS. I have also explored couple of places in Boston such as the MFA Museum and the Boston harbor.

Monadnock: What are you most looking forward

to in the next school year?

Sarala: I am looking forward to spending some time on sports and exercise, which I was not able to prioritize during my first year. I will be more focused on my research and searching for potential field research sites. I am also excited to explore more of New England and its beautiful landscapes and nature.

Elisabeth: Next year, I am excited to start working towards my milestones and nail down the scope of my dissertation. I plan to attend my first AGU conference and, hopefully, contribute by presenting on my summer RA work!

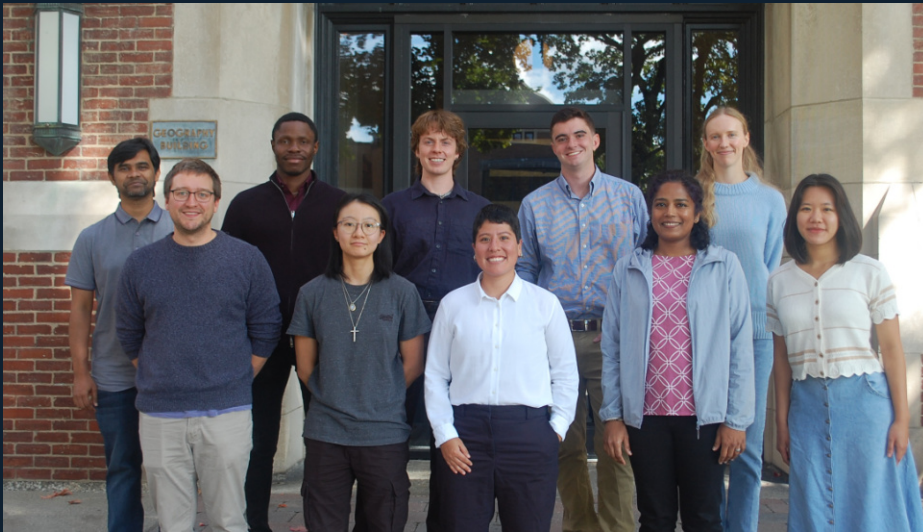
Deniz: I'm excited about approaching my milestones! I'm especially looking forward to refining my research questions and focusing more deeply on my own research.

Gregg: I am looking forward to a successful upcoming academic year filled with progress in PhD milestones, publishing papers and exploring the USA more. I am also looking forward to a stronger CUGS community and more collaborations.



Cohort of 2025 before ascending Mount Monadnock.

MEET THE COHORT 2024



Cohort of 2024. (top row L to R) Tanmoy Chakraborty, Rufai Balogun, Denys Godwin, Aidan Caron, Morgan Lehman
(bottom row L to R) Jimmy Buzzell, Hermione Zhou, Ana Lucia Araujo Raurau, Ann Raj, Wen Ting Ooi.

The Monadnock Team (Monadnock): How has your journey at Clark fared this year?

Ana Lucia Araujo Raurau: This year has been a bit less hectic than my first year, which was severely disrupted by the Trump administration's immigration policies. Still, you never have a quiet semester at Clark: in the Fall semester, we had the strike, and that was quite a political moment for CUGS and for me, particularly. On the other hand, we also had great initiatives taking place: the squash tournament, the movie club, and other peer activities that made my experience this year very fulfilling. Overall, after a rough first year, I think I am finally getting used to live in Worcester and in MA, and I feel grateful for all the friends I got to do.

Wen Ting Ooi: Things are moving so that's something to be grateful for. I am also glad that I can work on things of my interest and had plenty of opportunities to do work that speaks to me.

Denys Godwin: My journey at Clark is faring well this year! I enjoyed presenting a poster (and eating beignets) at the AGU 2025 in New Orleans, and I appreciated the chance to collaboratively workshop research proposals with classmates in a writing seminar.

Monadnock: Outside of school and research, what do you do for fun?

Ana: It is no secret. I play squash. It has become a huge part of my life, and what keeps me disciplined and motivated to achieve new goals in life. I also eat a lot of Asian food. I recently fell in love with Thai basil and any food that has Thai basil on it. I also enjoy the art of drag queens and transformism in general. I have been to some drag shows, and it has been very fun and impressive to watch.

Wen Ting: Yoga, dance, cooking, travelling to Boston and New York to meet friends. Ice skated a few times this winter which was nice! I also like to try out new crafts and attempt to pet my neighbourhood cats.

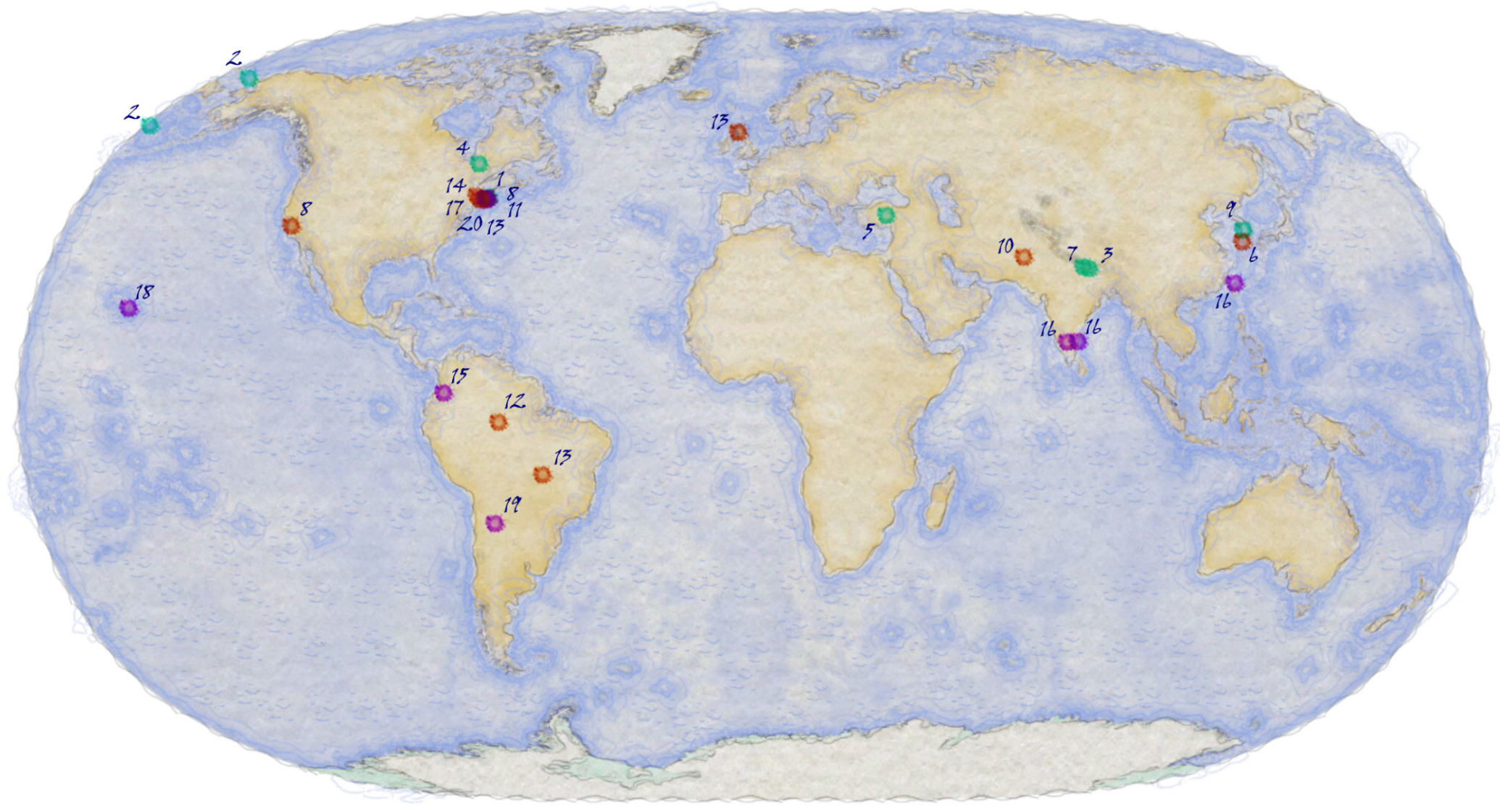
Denys: When it's warm, I enjoy biking on the Blackstone River Vally Bikeway and taking pictures. Over the winter I started Jiu Jitsu at Worcester MMA, and I love going out dancing in Boston when I get the chance.

Monadnock: What are you looking forward to, and what do you hope to achieve, next year?

Ana: I hope to achieve spot #1 in the CUGS squash team. So far, Chris is the top player, but I am training hard to improve my agility and endurance so I can beat him. I also want to be ABD (we are getting there). But mostly becoming a stronger squash player, that is the hardest and most rewarding thing.

Wen Ting: I look forward to more work-life balance, nourishing relationships, actually publishing some of the creative work I've done and publishing some academic work.

Denys: Next year, I'm looking forward to working through my reading lists and hitting the ground running on my dissertation. I'm hoping to build tools that help my classmates and colleagues get the most out of their time when using remote sensing data for their research. I'm also excited to see the total solar eclipse this summer!



1. **Aiyin Zhang:** Plum Island Ecosystems Site (PIE-LTER)

2. **Anna Zhu:** Bering Sea & Chukchi Sea

3. **Arman Bajracharya:** Sindhupalchok, Nepal

4. **Chris Lamb:** Waswanipi, Quebec

5. **Deniz M. Ozturk:** Turkey

6. **Eunyeong Song:** South Korea

7. **Hemant Raj Ghimire:** Nepal

8. **Hermione Zhou:** California & New England

9. **Jewon Ryu:** Jeju Island, South Korea

10. **Khadija Nisar:** Pakistan

11. **Kwabena Antwi:** Northeastern United States

12. **Luis Augusto Lima Oliveira Junior:** Amazon

13. **Ricardo Barbosa:** Boston, Brazil, & Scotland

14. **Robert Moore:** Chelsea, Holyoke, Leominster (MA)

15. **Sergio Carvajal Gallego:** Huila, Colombia

16. **Shan-yu Wang:** Taipei, Bengaluru, & Chennai

17. **Spandan Pandey:** Worcester, Massachusetts

18. **Sunita Phuyal:** Hawaiian Islands

19. **Vanchy Li:** San Pedro de Jujuy, Argentina

20. **Zhiwen Zhu:** Massachusetts

*Based on self-reported data from CUGS in 2024-2026
Land, water, and ice shelf polygons from **Natural Earth**
Watercolors borrowed from **John Nelson**
Map by **Arman Bajracharya***

LAND, LOSS, LIFE, SINDHUPALCHOK

Reflections from the field



Flood damage in the banks of Melamchi river in Helambu, Sindhupalchok.

Arman Bajracharya

The summer of 2023 marked my first journey to my field site—a landscape I had so often studied through the eyes of a satellite. Yet, seeing it through my own eyes revealed a reality that was strikingly different. No amount of time spent scratching my head and grinding my teeth at my desk in a Woo apartment, scrawling over disaster and climate resilience reports, could have prepared me for the experience of actually being there.

My dissertation focuses on how people adjust agricultural land use in response to disasters, specifically in Sindhupalchok district, Nepal, where communities have endured both the 2015 earthquake and the catastrophic 2021 Melamchi

floods. Nearly half the district's population lives below the poverty line, making the impacts of these disasters especially profound and long-lasting. As I traveled between Melamchi and Helambu - sometimes on foot, sometimes squeezed into a local bus, and occasionally hitching a ride on a school bus - I saw thousands of *ropanis* of riverbed strewn with rubble and the remains of what was once fertile, plentiful *khet*.

At first, I struggled to communicate, realizing that after living far from home and speaking mostly in English for the past eight years, my textbook Nepali needed to be reshaped into the local vernacular. I spent many hours walking around, seeking out

households willing to spare half an hour to recount their experiences of the devastating floods and the losses they endured. Many shared a sense of research fatigue, having answered questions from NGOs or government bodies before, with little to show for it. Yet, when I introduced myself as a doctoral student studying at an American university, they were unexpectedly open - perhaps out of novelty, or a shared hope that this time their voices might reach further.

Once I began connecting with families, I was met with remarkable hospitality. Some mornings, I found myself indulging in six cups of *dudh chiya* before noon and finishing off several bowls of

homemade *dahi*. I was especially touched by a family who refused to answer any of my questions until I agreed to join them for lunch.

In these surveys, families shared stories that ranged from relatively minor issues - like having to use mosquito nets earlier in the year - to devastating events that left them grieving loved ones. Some families were enduring massive debts left by the earthquake and floods; a few, with visible guilt, admitted they had been forced to sell ancestral land just to get by. They recalled that villages once full and lively now felt emptier, as younger generations set their sights on Kathmandu or abroad as soon as they were able. It has become common for



Life in Sindhupalchok can be found as scouring kittens, sleepy dogs, walking dogs, and a roosting rooster (Rorcester).

households to consist only of elderly couples, with their children and grandchildren living in more urban areas.

Now, as I wrap up my fieldwork in 2025 and begin the process of organizing and analyzing the insights I've gathered, I feel deeply grateful for the truly enriching time I spent with the families of Sindhupalchok. This experience has been more than just research - it has been a genuine collaboration that I feel privileged to have been part of. The connections I formed and the stories I heard will continue to shape my understanding and work long after I leave the field. As I move forward, I carry with me not only valuable data, but also a renewed sense of purpose and appreciation for the resilience and generosity of the communities who welcomed me.

Ropani: Traditional unit of land measurement used in Nepal.

1 Ropani = 508.72 m²

Khet: Cultivated field

Dudh Chiya: Milk tea

Dahi: Yogurt



Point of view - Hitching a ride on a local school bus.



Truck refuses to move forward.

LISTENING BEFORE PLANTING

Reflections from the field

Robert Moore

Urban forests are widely recognized for a myriad of ecosystem services they provide for people. However, in many cases urban forests are declining in abundance, coupled with increased urban populations. Nationally, areas with low tree canopy abundance are typically concentrated in disenfranchised or otherwise marginalized communities (e.g., low-income or high-minority populations). Management of urban forests through maintenance of existing trees coupled with tree planting is key to addressing declining trends and environmental justice-related inequities in tree canopy.

The budgets, staffing, policies, and governance of managing urban forests are highly variable between states, counties, cities, and neighborhoods. This presents a complex socioecological nexus of decisions and perceptions that result in different ecosystem service outcomes from urban forests. Enter HERO, an acronym often spoken in the halls of Clark that perhaps requires a bit of exposition. The Human Environmental Regional Observatory is a long-term research program aimed at better understanding urban forests and guiding their managers in New England and beyond. We work directly with a wide variety of urban forest stakeholders at the state and municipal levels, supporting their work with data-driven guidance using field-based tree surveys, interview analysis, remote sensing, and GIS.

The consistency of HERO's annual work has resulted in several long-term datasets that are truly unique, presenting many opportunities to disentangle the aforementioned socioecological nexus - the very same nexus that controls all tree benefits, including how much shade I get to enjoy on my strolls around Main South! In my opinion, these datasets rival those of many well-known long-term ecological research projects, while also incorporating forms of community engagement that are far less common in traditional ecological research. For example, our work has involved interviewing business owners along Main St. in Worcester, Massachusetts to better understand community perceptions of urban tree planting and how



Rob and Ali taking tree width measurements.



HERO people (L to R) Robert Moore, Jamie Young, Alicen Civilikas, Abigail Riseman, Aidan Humphreys, Julia Head, and Nate Kidd, Aidan Caron

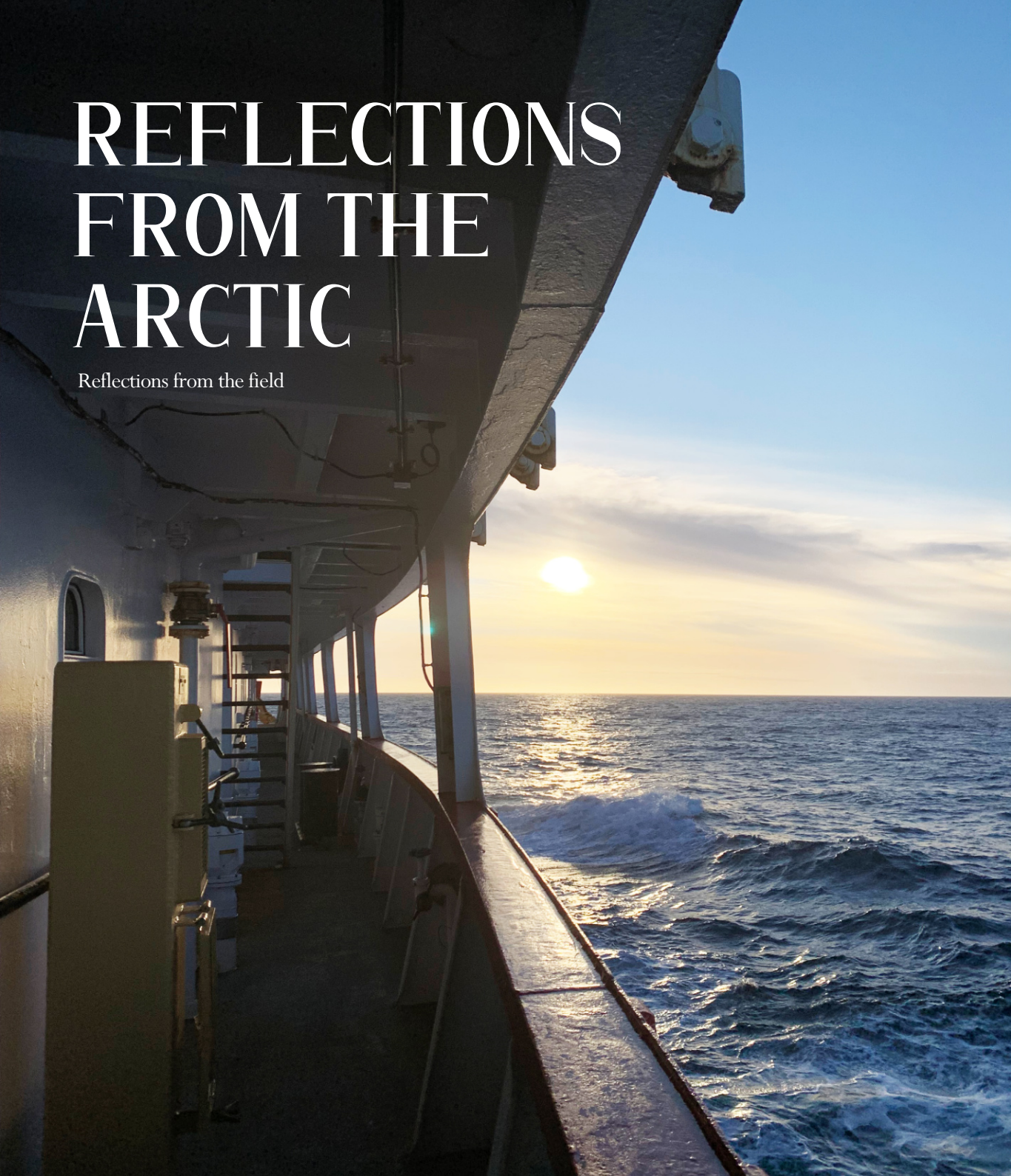
city greening strategies can more effectively serve local residents. Furthermore, Clark University Geography may be one of only a small handful of departments in the world with the expertise to simultaneously characterize urban forest governance structures, assess community perceptions, and produce high-resolution LiDAR-derived canopy cover maps within the same research program.

My first summer with HERO, we collaborated with the city of Worcester to better understand landlord and other property owners' perceptions surrounding tree planting in the city. My instinct was that contacting these individuals and recruiting enough participants for interviews would be challenging. As a matter of fact, it was very challenging. The effort required nearly six months of persistence to build a respectable collection of interviews for analysis. We canvassed neighborhoods door-to-door, attended neighborhood watch meetings and Christmas tree lighting events, and eventually reached the pinnacle of our snowball sampling efforts: a public landlord information conference. Through this process, I gained valuable insight into the opinions, motivations, and concerns that create barriers to urban tree planting efforts. In turn, these experiences have helped shape the direction of the research I hope to pursue here at Clark University.

For me, this is a valued experience in becoming familiar with my new home, Worcester. Urban forest research has consistently kept me working in my own backyard, as it is incredibly accessible and deeply shaped by local communities and context. I have grown to appreciate how the local nature of this research has thus far pushed me to explore neighborhoods and spaces I might otherwise never experience. Speaking with local residents was a grounding way to start my research experience at Clark as I truly want my own work to benefit these very communities.



Continue reading to explore Mount Monadnock!



REFLECTIONS FROM THE ARCTIC

Reflections from the field

Anna Zhu

In the last issue of *Monadnock*, Clare Gaffey and I reminisced about our summer field work experiences in the Arctic. Most of our Julys here at Clark have been spent floating in the Bering and Chukchi Seas on board the Canadian Coast Guard Ship *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*. We work day and night to collect seawater samples that allow us to monitor chromophoric dissolved organic matter, chlorophyll-a pigments, phytoplankton communities, and suspended particulate matter in the region. These observations combined with others collected by our research partners at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science contribute to an overall understanding of marine ecosystems at biological hotspots in the Bering and Chukchi Seas. This coming summer will be my fourth research cruise, with rising second-year Morgan Lehman joining me. I am extremely excited for the trip because even though we visit the same areas every year, there is never a dull moment with new experiences waiting for us.

When I am not in the field, most of my time is spent in the lab. One of the favorite parts of my work is my collaboration with my external's lab at Oregon State University (OSU) in Corvallis, Oregon. In her lab, I work on the Imaging Flow Cytobot, which is a machine that uses video technology as well as flow cytometry to image the microscopic phytoplankton and marine algae in my samples. I absolutely love the change of scenery and working with my external and her lab members. Corvallis is also exceptionally pretty and offers a nice respite from Worcester, with so much access to nature, whether that be the Willamette River, the nearby Pacific coast, the mountains, or the many trails located minutes from OSU's campus.

CUGS SPORTS AND WELLNESS

The Monadnock is an opportunity to reflect on long-standing and evolving CUGS traditions. In many ways, it is these traditions - field camp, conceptual potluck, the magazine itself - that make the graduate school of geography such a unique program. It is in carrying these forward, alongside our shared pursuit of research excellence and academic rigor, that we foster our relationships with each other and give life to the future of Clark Geography.

In this issue, we wanted to honor and highlight some emerging traditions in the GSG that are becoming integral to our grad student community. The CUGS sports & wellness column is an opportunity to share some of our extra-curricular activities with the GSG community and to reflect on some of our physical strengths!

Includes interviews conducted by Chris Lamb

CUGS+ after the 2025 CUGS Squash Tournament.



Q. How would you describe your role in CUGS yoga?

A. I'm just convening the time and space to share the practice! I've practiced yoga for the past 10 years and taught for the past 2, so it's been part of my life for awhile. Sharing with others is part of seva (selfless service in Sanskrit) and also one of the joyful aspects of this practice.

Q. How did you get into yoga?

A. I had a three-month sabbatical when I was 15 as part of my school's efforts for students to embark in self-directed, out of the classroom learning. Having danced from the age of 7, I wanted to explore adjacent movement practices outside of dance. Yoga was almost a convenient choice - the community centre in my neighborhood had a course that was of perfect duration (spanning 2.5 months) and it was very affordable. I found that the yoga practice was compatible with dance training and continued the practice, eventually enrolling in a yoga teaching training programme in India in 2022.

Q. I understand that this was the first year of CUGS yoga (as far as we know). What has this experience been like for you?

A. I have not really reflected much on this, so this question really made me think quite a bit - I appreciate it! It has been such a pleasure to share the practice and journey with other practitioners. People bring different body histories to the practice - I've taught classes with elderly, middle aged folks, dancers and every single person contributes to the space and learning in unique

YOGA
Wen Ting Ooi

ways. I also learnt to accept the ebb and flow of my teaching - some days I just can't seem to differentiate left from right, but that's alright! Lastly, since we cannot book spaces officially, we have tried practicing in different areas (e.g., in the Mezz) which I hope developed a different sense of place for those practicing but also for those who just popped by and witnessed the practice.

Q. Do you have any aspirations for the year ahead?

A. I hope everyone learns something new in every stage of their practice while recognizing that the practice is all part of the process! This is not so much an aspiration but more of an invitation. I recognize that there are gendered/ media-influenced notions of yoga and I hope to clarify these assumptions in productive conversations.

Q. Who was the most improved yogi of all CUGS?

A. The idea of improvement (by whose/what metric? It shouldn't be mine that's for sure haha) is antithetical to the practice so I wouldn't give a response to this! I am also not qualified enough to comment on yogi "advancement" having done only 200 hours of yoga teaching training (my instructors dedicate years to the philosophy and practice). So, I'll just end this spiel by saying that simply showing up and committing an hour (and more) to the practice is already something worth celebrating. We welcome all to yoga!

CUGS+ in the campus green participating in weekly yoga session.



SQUASH

Shan-Yu Wang

Shan-Yu: The CUGS Squash was founded by Mike Cecil in 2022 fall. He invited me to play against him, and it's super interesting! I used to play badminton in Taiwan, while Clark doesn't have a court for it. Squash is a very good alternative to badminton and tennis, especially since it is played indoors for the whole year without being interrupted by the weather. As Mike had his racket, I used to play with the racketball racket from the mezz. Later, Anna, Mike and I decided to buy the orange squash rackets for CUGS. This year, Chris, Ana, and I bought new blue rackets! Mike also encouraged me to get a pair of rubber-soled shoes and sent me some videos to enhance my techniques. He's definitely the founding father of CUGS squash.

I appreciate it if people think my sharing of skills is useful. Every year, I invite new CUGS to play squash, including Chris, Ana, Vanchy, Khadija, Fatemeh, Jewon, Sergio, Ricardo, and friends outside of CUGS like Estavan and Dhiraj. Now we play twice a week, usually Thursday and Saturday around 5 p.m. It's my honor to share the skills I learned from rules, balance and footwork, ball trajectories, hitting skills, and strategies. Most CUGS squash players have related racket sport experience, so they can convert to squash very easily. It's happy to see people enjoying this sport!

Our philosophy is to have fun without getting harmed. As you know, I always get to the court ten to fifteen minutes early to do some stretches. People don't like warm-up but just start swinging rackets, which is not good. As amateur players, safety is the first priority. Another philosophy is to play at people's level. When I play with CUGS, I will customize to the level of my opponents. It doesn't mean I look down on them, but I want to encourage them to have a nice game and improve step by step rather than being crushed. For example, I might return the ball to where it is far from people, so they need to move around and burn out all their energy. I'm really glad to see

Chris, Ana, and Vanchy are getting stronger, and forcing me to put on my tight glasses and use upper hand serves as secret weapons!

I really appreciate Ana for encouraging us to sign up for the Clark Squash Tournaments. Ana, Chris, and I joined the 2024 fall and 2025 Spring games. Thank you for CUGS coming to support us! I didn't play with people outside of CUGS, especially these skilled and energetic undergraduates. This pushes me to keep enhancing my skills and to make new friends. I didn't know a lot of them were taking Siobhan's Unfree labor with me...LOL. CUGS all survived the first round but lost to strong opponents in the second round. After the tournament, Ana invites some buddies from the Squash clubs to play with us, including Sophia, Theo, and Paul. In addition, Ana established an Instagram account for CUGS Squash and posts our photos, so cozy!

For next year, I hope to recruit more CUGS to play squash. CUGS squash is a great place for CUGS to hang out and network with each other. While the game itself is competitive, the CUGS can support each other and be happy to see their progress.



The winners of the advanced category in the CUGS Squash Tournament 2025: Chris (2), Shan-Yu (1), and Theo (3)

Ana Lucia Araujo Raurau

At the end of the 25th Fall semester we celebrated our first ever CUGS Squash tournament, and we invited our peers from the undergrad squash varsity team to participate. We ran two categories: beginners and advanced. It was absolutely fun. Our members were so eager to compete that they were training every day before the tournament. The winners of the beginners category were Luis (1), Josef (2) and Caitlin (3). The winners of the advanced category were Shan-Yu (1), Chris (2), and Theo (3). This semester, we also said goodbye to our dear coach Shan-Yu, who left to conduct fieldwork in Taiwan. We miss him a lot, but the squash continues strong, and we follow his advice on stretching *before every practice*.

Chris: We understand that Shan-yu is the head coach and you (Ana) are the manager for the CUGS squash team. Can you tell us about how you came to this position and what your training philosophy is?

Ana: I came to CUGS squash because I played tennis a lot, but I could not find anybody in Worcester. So CUGS squash became that thing to be passionate about besides work. In contrast to Shan-yu, I usually don't warm up.. My philosophy is: give your best, try to be intentional in each ball you hit and decipher your opponent. Overall, have fun, but take the challenge seriously. This is for me the clue of how we have evolved so much so fast, because the members get to feel and share this passion.



Celebration of the 2nd year anniversary of CUGS Squash



The winners of the beginners category in the CUGS Squash Tournament 2025: Caitlin (3), Luis (1), and Josef (2)

Chris: CUGS squash participated in the Clark squash tournament for the first time this year. What was this experience like for you? What were some highlights?

Ana: Adding to Shan-yu, best highlight for me was the support from CUGS. So amazing to see our friends coming and watching our games, and cheering us. For real, what a nice community.

Chris: What are your aspirations for the year ahead, and how will you prepare?

Ana: We need to work harder next semester to deliver better results to CUGS. I always think age might be a limit for us, but then you meet rivals like Jeff and Wayne who are much older but can crush your butt easily. I foresee three areas in where we can work: 1) improve our physical fitness (me and Chris especially), 2) change our practice towards skills instead of just matches, and 3) keep bringing external invitees to remain competitive. We will take a rest in the summer, and we will come back with a plan for this. By now...what an incredible season CUGS squash!

WEIGHT TRAINING

Sitian Xiong
Shan-Yu Wang

Sitian: The origin was that Shan-yu and I started weight training around late 2023. For me, it's about keeping fit, improving posture, and managing stress. It's a relatively loose team with no obligation to join. We do basic weightlifting three times a week, typically upper body and leg exercises like bench press, squats, etc. We communicate about skills and training plans form during sessions.

Some often-joining members are Tanmoy and Wen Ting. Mike Cecil used to join when he was here, and Jewon, Mwangi, Chris, Spandan, and Ana also joined before. Other people visited once or twice. Since this academic year, Hermione manages a concurrent session in the morning or at noon.

I would say Hermione is more professional, and each of us seems to be better at different aspects. I'm better at bench press, while Shanyu is better at squats and abs.

For me, I'm trying to hit a 100kg bench press, but I may not be able to do it. I also want to build more muscle on my back and shoulders to look more balanced.

Overall, we gradually formed a clearer and more scientific training plan, and we've done a pretty good job avoiding injuries. We also got the chance to talk about schoolwork or things in life, which makes good use of the time, especially when we're usually busy. Going to Trader Joe's together after Friday training has also become a routine.

Shan-Yu: We started weight training in the 2023 fall semester. One day, when I was heading to the gym, I met Sitian and told him, and he said Why don't we do it together? I didn't know he was a master until we went! Sitian started his training a few years ago, and I asked him some questions about lifting. We do training three times a week at 5:30 p.m., usually on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. The weekly schedule rotates from one day for the chest, one for the back, and the other for legs. As a beginner, I really appreciate that Sitian shares his knowledge with me and spots me. I would say Sitian is my master haha.

Our training is based on the machines in the gym, which are safer than free weightlifting (Hermione is the expert on this). I found regular workouts are very useful to burn calories, maintain a good shape, manage stress, and socialize with CUGS! It's a commitment not just to myself but also to the CUGS weight training community. It's easy to get lazy and quit training, but it's encouraged to do it with people. I found that my upper body is relatively weaker than that of normal people, especially since I have shoulder blade winging, which could lead to shoulder pain or a hunchback. It is great to know how my body functions and have the chance to fix it.

During the past two years, I've made some progress in my upper body. For example, 90 pounds was my maximum in chest press, now I can do six to eight on 130 pounds in one set. My personal goal is to achieve the body weight in chest press and do more training on cores. I will try to add more programs on cores, combining some free weightlifting or cardio. Another goal is to recruit more people to

join the weight training sessions. I know some CUGS might feel weight training is boring or horrifying. That's not true! I want to encourage people that weight training is a very efficient way to work out, based on your tempo!

The CUGS weight training community is an inclusive and supportive group open to anyone. Besides Sitian and me, Hermione also trains around noon every day in the Clark gym. Mike Cecil is one of the original members of CUGS weight training, along with Mwangi, Kwabena, Tanmoy, Wen Ting, Ana, Rufai, Spandan, and Anna. CUGS weight training community isn't limited to those who do weight training at Clark but is defined as **doing training with CUGS**. I know Jewon and Eunyeong go to another gym to do weight training in the very early mornings, respect! Through the weight training, we get stronger with each other, we listen to each other. CUGS weight training is not just exercise, but a spirit and community-building movement!

The superhero is yourself! Of course, it's inevitable to compare our performance with people during training. I can't forget we met one guy who tried to mansplain to Wen Ting..LOL, very toxic. I know Sitian and Hermione are amazing, considering they're lighter but lift way heavier than I do, crazy! The spirit is that we respect that people have different paces on their trajectories. We are happy to support each other and see people making progress. This not only exists in weight training but also in academia. No jealousy but appreciation. This is the best lesson I learned from CUGS weight training.

FUTSAL

Arman Bajracharya

In October, Caitlin and I set out on a quest to gather enough bodies to facilitate a futsal session. With a few messages around the CUGS group chat and networking endeavors beyond CUGS, we gathered enough willing feet to kick off the first-ever Graduate Futsal Club at Clark*.

Since then, we have aimed to play at the Dolan Field House every week, with our group ranging anywhere from 4 to 16 willing participants. Although the major highlight of our futsal group has been the all-around good vibes and constant improvement, our journey was not without setbacks. We had to sit outside the indoor fields waiting for our play time, only to get sabotaged by the Clark lacrosse and softball teams, and borrow field equipment to make makeshift goals, among other things.

Once upon a time, we applied to form an official extracurricular graduate student organization to represent the futsal people. Since this has not seen any movement from Clark Student Life (we must riot), we are not the first-ever official Graduate Futsal Club at Clark, but that's trivial, right? For what it's worth, we participated in the futsal tournament organized by Clark WAGS in collaboration with the Brazilian Student Association and Clark University Club Soccer under a newly branded identity: Futsox. The team name was chosen through an open, democratic voting process. Members put forward their nominations for a proper futsal club name, followed by voting for the title that they felt aligned best with our values, eventually ending up with Futsox (term coined by Sookyeong).

The Futsox registered a total of one (1) win out of an undisclosed number of games under Caitlin's captaincy.

Considering we gathered so many willing people, some of whom we had to coerce out of the mighty squash community, it has been a huge achievement to maintain our Futsox identity as we head into the upcoming years. Oh, while you're here: honorable mentions to the folks who have been active in our group chats and showing up to our sessions—Ana, Annan, Antonio, Caitlin, Chris, Eric, Fatemeh, Jewon, Katie, Khadija, Kwabena, Luis, Mili, Reynaldo, Sergio, and Sookyeong.

We are always looking for more people to build a more vibrant futsal community within and beyond CUGS!

**Not verified*



Top: Futsox before their first ever tournament
Bottom: Futsox after their first ever tournament

UNION REFLECTIONS

Mikayla Schappert

Teamsters began negotiations in early Spring 2025 with the hope that, by the expiration of the contract in Fall 2025, we would have signed a new agreement and the transition would be smooth. However, we were met with consistent and blatant disregard for our concerns and proposals from Clark's negotiation committee.

We attempted to secure a childcare stipend, dental insurance, meal plan, and higher pay to reduce the increasing financial burden that domestic workers, and especially our international workers face. We also advocated for additional protections for our international brothers and sisters, which were especially needed given the current realities of life in the United States. We worked hard to close contract language loopholes and address gaps that Clark was using to avoid contract obligations that were inconvenient for them.

Without much movement from Clark's negotiation committee, our contract soon expired, and we held a strike vote, which resulted in a "Yes." Negotiations continued to stall, and we began preparing for a strike. We mobilized extremely quickly, delegated responsibilities, and began organizing within a matter of days. CUGWU workers truly stepped up, and strong bonds were quickly formed on and off the strike line. The bravery of our fellow international workers to show up and support the strike emphasized just how important this fight was. This was about helping improve the lives of graduate workers. Undergraduate students, local groups, and

municipal leaders also showed up in support.

However, this strike line was different from the first. Our morale was low due to a culmination of external current events, Clark's response to our demands, and a breakdown in communication and support from Teamsters. Our momentum, cohesiveness, and morale began to decline, and we were soon faced with a difficult decision: accept Clark's final offer or continue the strike. The offer included 20 meals per semester, prorated health insurance, important language updates including guidelines surrounding international workers, and a marginal pay increase.

While voting to accept the final offer was not the outcome anyone wanted, I took a few weeks to personally reflect on both the positives and negatives of this experience. To walk side by side with workers from across campus in the hope of building a better future for graduate workers demonstrated the power that a small group of people can have when united by a common goal and committed to fighting for an outcome that benefits everyone. Looking to the future, while we were beaten down, I remain hopeful for the new generation of graduate workers stepping in to "steer the ship back on course". I believe they can return stronger, more prepared, and more cohesive when the next round of negotiations begins.

In solidarity,
Mikayla Schappert
Geography Steward and Negotiation Committee Member

Deniz Mine Öztürk

It was a process full of mixed emotions. We experienced fear, courage, hope, disappointment, solidarity, friendship, strength, and many other feelings all at once.

Before coming to Clark, I had heard about the Clark Graduate Workers Union's strong reputation, and I was impressed by it. During orientation, learning about the history of graduate unionization at Clark and the current organizing process, and seeing so many graduate workers decide to join the union on the very first day, made an even stronger impression on me.

When the semester started in August, we, first-year PhD students, began our teaching/research assistantships (TA/RA) under a contract that had already been significantly improved through previous strikes and unionization efforts. However, we were told that negotiations with the university were not going as expected and that a strike was becoming a real possibility.

We attended countless meetings, both organized by the union and informally within CUGS. To keep each other motivated, we organized many activities throughout the semester. We gathered on the Campus Green to make banners and signs with our own slogans, handed out flyers during Clark Parents Day to explain the situation of the union and our contracts, and displayed banners at a university event celebrating teaching assistants to remind everyone that TA/RAs deserved a better contract. Alongside the tremendous efforts of our negotiation committee, much of this organizing was carried out voluntarily by graduate workers themselves.

Personally, one of my biggest sources of motivation, beyond believing that we deserved a better contract, was a conversation with a friend who works as a graduate worker at another U.S. university. They told me, "If you win, maybe it will give us hope here too." I also kept thinking about future graduate workers and wanted them to begin their studies under better conditions than we had.

In the end, our contract expired without Clark presenting the offer we had hoped for, and at midnight on October 31, Halloween night(!), we went on strike. Some of us joined the picket line wearing Halloween costumes, making it one of the most unforgettable Halloweens. Despite all the uncertainty and the increasingly aggressive political climate, seeing so many international students on the picket line alongside everyone else gave us a tremendous sense of courage and collective strength. People brought songs, chants, games, and dancing to the picket line, creating moments of joy even during a difficult time. At the same time, it was remarkable to see the extent to which CUGS showed up to support the strike, both physically on the picket line and in many other ways.

Unfortunately, that energy did not last long. As we approached the 48 hours on the picket line, morale declined, and another vote was called to decide whether to continue the strike. The membership ultimately voted to end it and accept the contract that had previously been offered. Many factors contributed to this outcome: the broader financial uncertainty affecting higher education, disagreements over timing, the mismatch between our working hours and the hours expected on the picket line, and the feeling that, despite the extraordinary efforts of our stewards, the Teamsters had not been equally supportive. For many of us, the result brought deep disappointment.

Although we did not achieve what we hoped, I believe there are important lessons to carry forward. Fighting for workers' rights and defending them is always a long-term process. Walking together with people we had barely had the chance to meet and get to know each other better during our busy academic lives created new friendships and stronger connections. We learned not only how to organize, but also how to disagree with one another and still keep moving together.

I am especially grateful that Monadnock editors are making space for this experience to be remembered and reflected upon. Looking ahead to the next contract negotiations in three years, I genuinely believe we will be much stronger because of what we learned this time.

DEGREES AND MILESTONES

Degrees Conferred

Doctoral

Clare Gaffey (August 2024)

Julia Wagner (August 2024)

William Westgard-Cruice (August 2024)

Maria Jose Guillen-Araya (December 2024)

Emily Holloway (December 2024)

Gisselle Vila Benites (December 2024)

Mwangi Chege (May 2025)

Maddy Kroot (May 2025)

Sarah Lerman-Sinkoff (May 2025)

Pilar Delpino Marimon (August 2025)

Sitian Xiong (August 2025)

Jason Michael Athay (May 2026)

Andrea Cabrera Roa (May 2026)

MA en route to PhD

Vanchy Li (August 2025)

Spandan Pandey (August 2025)

Rahebeh Abedi (May 2026)

Antonio Galvao da Fonseca (May 2026)

Hemant Ghimire (May 2026)

Anna Zhu (May 2026)

Progress-to-Degree Milestones

Dissertation Defense

4/10/2024 - Julia Wagner

5/17/2024 - Gisselle Vila Benites

6/21/2024 - William Westgard-Cruice

6/18/2024 - Clare Gaffey

9/16/2024 - Emily Holloway

9/19/2024 - Maria Jose Guillen-Araya

12/12/2024 - Mwangi Chege

3/13/2025 - Maddy Kroot

5/9/2025 - Pilar Delpino Marimon

5/23/2025 - Sitian Xiong

11/12/2025 - Jason Michael Athay

2/2/2026 - Andrea Cabrera Roa

Doctoral Exams (orals)

27/09/24 - Rahebeh Abedi

22/11/24 - Fatemeh Kordi

04/12/24 - Kwabena Antwi

21/03/25 - Shan-yu Wang

06/06/25 - Vanchy Li

10/06/25 - Jewon Ryu

21/08/25 - Eunyeong Song

19/11/25 - Hemant Ghimire

11/12/25 - Morgan Lehman

05/02/26 - Aidan Caron

24/02/26 - Sunita Phuyal

21/03/26 - Shan-yu Wang

13/04/26 - Antonio Galvao da Fonseca

20/04/26 - Ana Lucia Araujo Raurau

01/05/26 - Winona Poulsen

06/05/26 - Tanmoy Chakraborty

Dissertation Proposal Defenses

16/12/24 - Rahebeh Abedi

31/03/25 - Hemant Ghimire

03/03/25 - Fatemeh Kordi

17/03/25 - Jewon Ryu

25/04/25 - Vanchy Li

22/04/25 - Spandan Pandey

07/02/26 - Winona Poulsen

09/02/26 - Shan-yu Wang

09/03/26 - Chris Lamb

05/05/26 - Morgan Lehman

11/05/26 - Kwabena Antwi

13/05/26 - Zhiwen Zhu

20/05/26 - Mikayla Schappert

21/05/26 - Anna Zhu

21/05/26 - Sunita Phuyal

ABD Status

Arman Bajracharya (Spring 2024)

Aiyin Zhang (Spring 2024)

Rahebeh Abedi (Fall 2024)

Fatemeh Kordi (Spring 2025)

Vanchy Li (Summer 2025)

Spandan Pandey (Summer 2025)

Jewon Ryu (Summer 2025)

Hemant Ghimire (Fall 2025)

Antonio Galvao da Fonseca (Spring 2026)

Shan-yu Wang (Spring 2026)

Winona Poulsen (Spring 2026)

Kwabena Antwi (Summer 2026)

Morgan Lehman (Summer 2026)

Sunita Phuyal (Summer 2026)



CUGS inadvertently reach the peak of Mount Monadnock while searching for a research gap in their field.





CUGS on their annual Monadnock hike in 2024 (top) and 2025 (bottom).





Coronation of Dr. Maddy Kroot.



Clark Geography representation at the NESTVAL 2025 at Bridgewater State University.



Game Nights at the Mezz.



Where there is food there is a way.



Squashin' it! (Find more @cugs_squash!)







First years set out to find the meaning of PhD.



2025 Halloween at Casa CUGS.



CUGS in their natural habitat.





CUGS sharing their wisdom in the Conceptual Potluck of 2026.

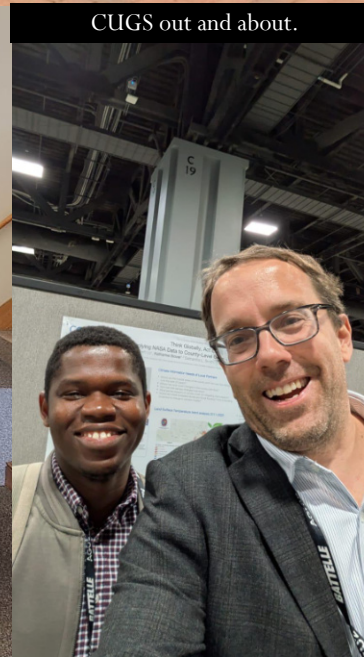




Friendsgiving 2025 bidding farewell to Ricardo

feat. Vanchy's controversial standup and Antonio's goodbye speech





The Monadnock

Edited By:
Sookyeong Kim
Arman Bajracharya

