

Austin Serio

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Gallatin School of Individualized Study

IAPC

I choose Gallatin because I've always been an independent and strong minded individual who likes to be involved in the decision-making process, rather than to have my plan dictated me. As a result, I thought Gallatin's progressive approach to education to be the best way to blend my two lifelong loves of technology and politics. My educational goals initially were to become a programmer with a background in politics, potentially to run for office one day. My educational goals have both changed and matured during my time at Gallatin. I am now focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of the structure of the contemporary Global political economy, its power dynamics, and the role of technology and public policy in said context. The classes which informed the basis of much of my understanding of these issues has come from my Gallatin Community learning classes (literacy in action, and insistence and possibility), as well as any of my prior classes which historicized the global political economy. My computer science and design classes given me an intimate front to back understanding of technology, an understanding I use to parse history.

As I learned more about the history of the global political economy, I became increasingly fascinated by the history of income inequality's relationship to technology and power. Growing up, I was feed the mantra that America was number one across-

the-board. When I read history, I was shocked and dismayed to find out not only were we not number one, but that there's a clear moment in time when America began her decline. When I read history, I cheered on my ancestors as they organized time, and time again to defeat their oppressors and push for forever greater prosperity. When this country began to reverse its previous gains, I wanted to know how it was happening, why it was happening, how to permanently reverse it, and who is responsible. I have never been, nor will ever be an ideologue. However, what I found is both deeply worrisome and rather shocking. If America was truly number one at any point in history, I wanted to truly understand what precisely it was that we did to make ourselves great while others failed. More specifically, I don't find the simplistic explanation that the magic recipe for prosperity is liberal democracy and capitalism to be sufficient.

From my classes, I've spawned many ideas. One such idea is forming a private public partnership to build a Hyperloop from New York City to Boston via Hartford as  to revitalize the state of Connecticut. However, the more exciting idea I've come up with (which I'm writing about for the Roosevelt Institute's 10 Ideas Symposium) is subsidizing recovered, worker owned semipublic factories with a progressive tax on FDI (foreign direct investment). By understanding the global flow of capital, the actors (as well as their power dynamics and motivations), and the history of American manufacturing, I feel as though I am now empowered to understand the interdisciplinary relationship between power Capital and technology that has produced our contemporary reality. The central theme behind my concentration is the relationship between capital and inequality, and how factors such as technology and power dynamics shape such a relationship.

I plan on furthering my study of the relationship between capital and inequality by taking classes that focus on global political economy, pursuing political and tech internships, and taking classes related to the gig economy. I choose to frontload my first two years with skills oriented classes (such as coding) to get hands on experience. As my time at NYU progresses, I have focused increasingly on more theoretical classes involving philosophy to better contextualize my hands on technical experience. Moving forward, I intent to continue this approach by continuing to take more philosophy & political economy classes.

I have found my course of study to be invaluable because it helps me to contextualize quotidian life within the bigger picture. In other words, when someone like Trump wins, it's not enough to know something bad has happened; one must understand the context so that we can understand how to best work with our new reality. My course of study has allowed me to better understand leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and problem solving because I have embarked on an analytical study of power and its relationships. The skills I believe my concentration to be allowing me to to develop are universally applicable to today's highly collaborative global environment.