Valery Tabraj-Huaccachi

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador
Cuba, 2023

"The Gilman Program had a huge impact on me through its Inside U.S. Foreign Policy virtual seminars that covered international relations issues, which fostered my interests. The Gilman Program also allowed me to study in Cuba, which not many get to go to due to strained relationships. Studying abroad piqued my interest in seeking more opportunities abroad and made me eager to learn about other cultures."

Valery studied abroad as a Gilman scholar during the spring of 2023 through the University of Maryland, College Park Education Abroad program Critical Cultures in Contemporary Cuba in Havana, Cuba. Her time in Cuba showed her that people-to-people exchanges make a difference in expanding one's views of others. She also learned to be open-minded and listen actively to different perspectives while maintaining her values. Her perspectives about the relationship between the United States and Cuba changed as she learned about the history, culture, and people of Cuba. She realized the relationship between the two governments was more complicated than she had previously understood and that the governments did not represent every single citizen.

Valery credits her Gilman Program experience for helping her appreciate the resources she had access to as a student in the United States and developing a newfound perspective on the differences between living in a country and vacationing there. She also realized that she would like to travel to connect with people, explore, and learn more about other people's cultures. She lived with a host family during her time in Cuba and enjoyed using her Spanish language skills to discuss relations between their two countries and their hopes for the future.

Valery is an operations research and systems analysis trainee at the U.S. Army Center for Army Analysis, where she locates, collects, and compiles information from open-source documents to create a visitor's workbook of military equipment across the branches of the military as a resource for those participating in future wargames. She also is an intelligence analyst in the U.S. Army Reserves. Valery is excited to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador and spark students' interest in study abroad. She also wants to help underrepresented communities realize that studying abroad is possible through opportunities like the Gilman Scholarship.

- Hometown: Silver Spring, Maryland

- Earned a Bachelor of Arts in government and politics with a concentration in international relations from the University of Maryland, College Park

- Operations research and systems analysis trainee at the U.S. Army Center for Army Analysis

- Intelligence analyst in the U.S. Army Reserves