

## INTRO

**Stephanie Jackson:** Now That's INTAresting. This podcast is about the Georgia Tech Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, its graduates, their careers, and how the Nunn School has helped to shape their future. Take a listen.

**Stephanie Jackson:** This season, we're speaking with alumni who received both BS and MS degrees from the Nunn School. Qualifying students can apply to the five-year BS/MS program after completing 45 semester credit hours at Georgia Tech. Students are also eligible to take up to six credit hours that will apply to both the undergraduate and graduate degrees. A GPA of 3.5 is required to stay in the program. Contact Vince Pedicino for more information.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Welcome back to Now That's INTAresting. I'm Stephanie Jackson, and today we are continuing our conversations about the five-year BS/MS program from the Nunn School. Today we would like to welcome Elizabeth Osman, who received both a BS and MS in International Affairs and a Minor in German. Currently, Elizabeth is pursuing a PhD in Political Science from The Ohio State University. So, thank you for joining us today, Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Very excited to be here.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Good. I wanted to start with a few questions about your academic career at the Nunn School. So, tell us about your decision to participate in the BS/MS program at the Nunn School.

**Elizabeth Osman:** It's actually kind of a funny story because I had thought for the first two years of my undergraduate experience there that I was going to law school. And then, I was studying abroad in Poland in the Spring of 2018, and I had already talked to Susan Belmonte—who, at the time, was the Pre-Law Advisor, and I believe now she's moved over to the Pre-Grad School Advising portion, um, at C2D2—or I believe it's actually called something else now. I don't know. I've been away from Georgia Tech for a minute.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yes.

**Elizabeth Osman:** But, um, yeah. So, I was studying abroad, had a crisis of sorts, you know, as I feel like most people do when they're studying abroad. You know, like, they get to think more about themselves. They get to, you know, think through what they want their future to look like without, you know, a bunch of other opinions, because you're essentially alone. And so, I was speaking to her, and I was like, you know, 'I think that I want to do the BS/MS program. Like, I think I need more time to decide if I would rather do law school or if I would rather get a PhD.' And she said 'Well, this opportunity is only going to be here while you're in your BS. Like, you can never come back and...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...do the same program. Like, once you graduate, it's no longer an option.' You know, I was already working as an RA with the Center for European and Transatlantic Studies, and they had essentially told me, you know, 'If you want to stay, we would love for you to stay.' And I was like 'Okay. Awesome.' Or, I guess, at that, I was working for them in the Fall—not in the Spring of 2018—when I

decided this. But, you know, I got that job, and it was genuinely like the best thing that ever happened to me at the Sam Nunn School. And it was a great opportunity, and to like think about getting to be with them for another year, you know, continuing to grow my research and stuff, it made a lot of sense. And with that, I could have a tuition waiver. I could get my stipend. You know, all of these things. And, like I said, like I didn't have to take the GRE. Like it was a great opportunity.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right.

**Elizabeth Osman:** And at that point, I didn't see a reason to not do it.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right.

**Elizabeth Osman:** I guess.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right. Exactly.

**Elizabeth Osman:** So.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Okay. So, you also received a Minor in German, while you were part of the undergraduate program at least. So, what impact has that minor had on your academic or career choices?

**Elizabeth Osman:** So, I ended up doing, um, the German LBAT—actually I only did the second half of it. My older sister was graduating from college that summer. Um, and so, I was only in Weimar and Berlin, which are both in former East Germany. And that's, the central nation Europe is my main, you know, focus area, especially while I was in my undergrad and my MS. And so, it like really helped me understand what I wanted to do, and once you get into, you know, the upper-level Germany classes, they're just content classes, right. And so, I was getting to learn all of this information and see it through, you know, the native language that it's spoken in to not have to deal with everything that...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...gets translated. You know, it doesn't capture what is actually being said.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** And so, you know, I've continued studying other languages. I'm learning Polish and Portuguese right now for my own research...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Good.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...so that I can work in archives...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...um, later in the dissertation process. And so, I, I like just love learning languages to be honest.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** And German really helped me understand that I need these tools, and, you know, there's no other way for me to do the research I want to without learning these languages.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right. So, you have mentioned that you did the study abroad program at, in Poland and you did the, the German LBAT. So...

**Elizabeth Osman:** Yes ma'am.

**Stephanie Jackson:** And, and some of the, you've mentioned some of the learning experiences from these programs. What advice would you give to people interested in studying abroad?

**Elizabeth Osman:** I mean, obviously, with COVID right now, I'm sure it's very difficult to...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...you know, figure that out and figure out when its going to be available for students next. But my advice is certainly just do it. You know, my tuition, like HOPE paid me somehow when I was studying abroad in Poland.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Okay.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Like, uh, it was way, way cheaper than being in Atlanta. You know, I'm getting to meet all new faculty members with different experiences. A lot of them had been teaching since, um, the communist period...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Oh wow.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...and, you know, lived through the Round Table Negotiations and all of that stuff. And so, it's just a whole new perspective on the things that I'm interested in. You know, obviously, we have a lot of great faculty, and we have faculty that are from Central and Eastern Europe in the Sam Nunn School. But it's just, you know, more and more people, more and more perspectives that really, uh, that's what made me want to go to grad school. Yeah.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah. Okay. Alright, so let's switch gears a little bit. We want to talk about some of your research experiences. Um, so you were part of the VIP project—Vertically Integrated Projects. Could you tell us a little bit more or describe that research that you conducted as a part of that program?

**Elizabeth Osman:** Yeah. So, that was the first time that I really got to like delve into something really deeply. I believe that was the fall of my third year, um, and then, in the spring, I went to Poland. And so, I was like 'I need to learn all of these things. You know, I want to make sure that I'm getting the most out of, you know, my study abroad. And so, I want to delve really deep into this.' Energy research, so looking at, uh, how liquified natural gas is, you know, used as a tool—it's manipulated essentially—for political use in that area. And so, you know, just normal fun things. But, um, yeah. And it as really great, and to be honest, at the time, I really didn't know what I was doing.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Oh, yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Like, even now, I look back at that project and I'm like 'I learned a lot, but like, it's not, it's never going to be published. It's not going anywhere.' But just getting to work with Dr. Kosal who was in charge of the group at the time and then, the people who were in like my smaller group that, you know, we would meet with and read, you know, each other's works in progress—all of that stuff, it really helped me to understand, you know, what academic research looks like, or how it should look.

And, you know, where to start data sets, where to start data sets, where to start finding, you know, all the literature I need. And yeah. It definitely helped me a lot.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Because then I came to the capstone project, uh, my senior year, and I was like 'Oh. I kind of already know what I'm doing.'

**Stephanie Jackson:** That's right.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Whereas a lot of students before that don't have a lot of experience, um, with research.

**Sydney Piwonka:** Elizabeth has told us how the VIP program helped her understand what academic research looked like. Here she shares things she wished she had paid better attention to before delving into research.

**Stephanie Jackson:** So, uh, kind of in, in that vein, what do you wish you had known when you had started working with the VIP program or started conducting research?

**Elizabeth Osman:** I guess you, I don't know why, but I feel like every class I have, or had at Georgia Tech, we had someone from the library visit us and be like 'This is how you find things.' You know, 'You can always come to us for things.' And I never, I guess, really listened. Like I, I had it so many times like 'Oh. Whatever. Okay.' I wish, yeah, I had actually taken it seriously before...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...I got to the VIP program because yeah. It's like hard and weird to like look through journals, know which journals to look at, um, you know, to figure out what types of books you're looking at—if they, you know, were made more as textbooks, if they're someone's dissertation. You know, all of that stuff.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Knowing what to look at, I think, and knowing the, I guess, the context that it was produced in...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...is very important a lot of the time.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah. Okay. So, you mentioned earlier that your Research Assistantship at the Center for European and Transatlantic Studies was a great opportunity for you. Um, so, tell us about that research. And, and also, how did both undergraduate and graduate research impact your career path?

**Elizabeth Osman:** Yes ma'am. So, I started there the fall of 2018. I remember I had actually like just gotten engaged, and it was like a very exciting time.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Those were two big events.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Um, but yeah. Uh, Dr. Claire Greenstein was there at the time. She's no longer, um, like she's no longer at Georgia Tech. Her time ended, and now she's at, um, UAB, I believe. Uh, and then, Dr. Young is also in charge of that, and he was the one that was, uh, like the main person for me—especially as a grad student, or the main faculty that I was working under. But while I was an undergraduate, I was mostly with Dr. Greenstein, and her work focuses on transitional justice, mostly through reparations. And that was my first introduction to the topic ever, and now that's the basis of my research.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Wow.

**Elizabeth Osman:** And so, seeing how she had created, you know, her data collection documents, how she was doing it, where she was getting, um, you know, these data points from, how she was collecting all of this information—because a lot of it was qualitative information that was then being moved into quantitative forms for statistical analysis. Like that's what I do now. Like that's...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah. Oh wow.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...all I do now. And so, just learning those skills of what should your, you know, Excel documents, what should your CSV, you know, documents all look like, it makes sense. Like I had just never seen it...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...from someone else.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** And so, that really changed a lot for how I now think about my research, and I've seen people in my PhD program in our first-year struggle to figure out, you know, how all of that should look, whereas I already had that experience. You know, I already had someone showing me 'Oh. Well, you know, maybe the row should be this instead of this. Or you need to include this extra variable in here because you're going to find that you need to differentiate it later.' And so, just that whole process was very, very enlightening. Um, and then when I was a grad student, uh, that year, I was mostly working with Dr. Young on getting the 8<sup>th</sup> Edition of *Policymaking in the EU* to, to press. And so, like to see that whole process and work with, um, the other authors for their chapters and just, you know, getting to see something like genuinely pulled together and being created in an academic setting—it was eye-opening, you know. So, now I kind of know like what, what to do, I guess. Yeah.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Right. Right. So, speaking a little bit more about your current research area of, or focus, you're now pursuing this PhD in Political Science at Ohio State. So, when did you decide to pursue that actual doctoral degree?

**Elizabeth Osman:** I remember it very specifically, actually. I was on a bus, reading my, Dr., Dr. Monika Nalepa's...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Very specific.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Oh yeah. This is the only way I remember it happening. All the smells, you know, how I felt. Oh yeah. And so, I was on a bus, and I was reading Dr. Monika Nalepa's *Skeletons in the Closet*—uh, her first book, published in 2009. I was reading it for my, um, capstone research, and I open it, and like—I don't know if you've ever read her work. I actually like got to meet with her yesterday. She's like my like idol—my research idol. And seeing how she was pulling together such like—it's infallible, almost. Like there's the theoretical portions, there's the quantitative portions, mixed in with, you know, interview data, and it's like a beautiful work of art—if you want to think about political science research as art.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** And I was like 'This is, I didn't know that this was something that I could ever do.' Like that this was what research could look like. And so, yeah. I feel like everyone kind of has that like turning point, where they're like 'This? I could do this? I could get paid to do this?'

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** You know, so that's really what made me go—at that point, I had already been accepted to the BS/MS program. I already knew that I was going to be getting my masters, um, and that was when I was like 'Yes.' Like 'I'm going to apply to PhD programs in the fall. This is what I want to do.'

**Stephanie Jackson:** Okay.

**Sydney Piwonka:** Connections. Mentorship. Find out what Elizabeth thinks are key aspects of both the BS and MS programs that have influenced her study of international affairs.

**Stephanie Jackson:** So, just to, to wrap up our conversation around looking back at the BS/MS program, um, and how it's influenced your academic and career path, has it changed your perspectives in any way on international affairs?

**Elizabeth Osman:** Well, certainly coming into it, you know, being an undergraduate student, I had no language, no frame of reference for communicating what I thought or, you know, to the academic community as a whole because there certainly is jargon. And so, learning that in like the first year of the BS was, you know, very important, obviously, and then, getting to work so closely with faculty in my masters, that, you know, their all experts in something, right. And then...

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** ...even when they don't know, they're still pushing you to figure it out, and they're still giving you tools. And genuinely, the faculty in the Sam Nunn School are above and beyond. It's a lot of tough love, but like it's there, you know. Like they really, really do care about you, and like, everyone wants to see you succeed. And I will say like, I guess, obviously the education was great.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Yeah.

**Elizabeth Osman:** But like, that's the biggest thing for me from the BS/MS experience is those connections, that mentorship, you know, just getting to be in an environment with such great faculty members.

**Stephanie Jackson:** Okay. One last question. Advice that you have for current undergraduate students who might be thinking about the BS/MS program?

**Elizabeth Osman:** Well, as I said, it financially makes sense. You'll never get this opportunity again. Like I don't see a reason, unless like you know what you want to do—like you know you want to go to law school like whatever—but, you know, if you're ever on the ropes about what you want to do, what your next step is, it's a very good opportunity to create a parallel path for yourself and your career choices. So, you know, once you get an MS you can still, you know, go to law school. You can still go into the military. You know, you can go into the private, public sector. Like it's going to be a good option, no matter how you look at it. And—especially if you're a GTA or a GRA—like you shouldn't have that much debt afterwards. And so, yeah. Like, to me, it felt like a no-brainer once I was like 'Oh. Yeah.' Like 'This is a really great option.'

**Stephanie Jackson:** Okay. Well, that's all I have for you today, Elizabeth. Thank you for joining us.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Yes ma'am.

**Stephanie Jackson:** It's been...

**Elizabeth Osman:** Thank you for having me.

**Stephanie Jackson:** ...great to hear about your experiences. We want to wish you your, the very best in all of your academic and career pursuits. And we look forward to hearing about your success in the future.

**Elizabeth Osman:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

## **OUTRO**

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