



## Governance Alumni Interview

### Interview with Marilena Stegbauer (UCF 2012 cohort)

*Conducted by Monika Zalakeviciute*

#### ***What are you doing at the moment?***

I am part of an international legal team working on the *Stanišić and Simatović* re-trial, which is one of the last cases at the UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ("IRMCT") in The Hague. My main task is to provide legal and factual research, analysis, and writing assistance to prepare the case of the defence relating to international criminal law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. The case is currently on-going, which means that right now is a particularly exciting and intensive time at court. Stanišić was the head of the state security service of the ministry of internal affairs of the republic of Serbia during the collapse of Yugoslavia and thus represents the highest echelon of Serbian criminal accountability for the committed atrocities, which is still alive today.

Next to working on the Stanišić defence team, I am involved in an accountability project for mass starvation with special focus on the current situations in Yemen and Syria. The project tries to identify how international law may be used to advance the prevention, prohibition and accountability for mass starvation. The principal objective of the project is to promote understanding and implementation of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2417 ("UNSC 2417") which highlights that "*starvation of civilians as a method of warfare may constitute a war crime.*" The project therefore promotes an interdisciplinary dialogue on the prevention of starvation and supports UNSC 2417 in its mission to deliver more than pure political



Marilena in The Hague

aspiration in this much neglected field.

Finally, I am in the process of publishing my LL.M. thesis. It's a legal feminist critique discussing the investigation and prosecution of the sexual and gender-based crimes of rape and sexual violence before international criminal courts. Sexual and gender-based crimes have historically suffered and still suffer from prosecutorial negligence, thus I am delighted to be given the opportunity to contribute towards the already existing legal (niche) scholarship in this field.

***Would you recommend others to do an internship after LAS at UCF and why?***



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The Peace Palace, seat of the International Court of Justice, at The Hague. Photo by Jeroen Bouman

Yes, I would. When choosing an internship, I recommend to reflect on the courses you did during your studies and try to identify the courses which came easy to you in a way that it was more your personal interest which guided you through the course, rather than any external or internal pressure that you had to secure a good grade for your major or the “final grade” of your degree. An internship will enable you to gain direct insights, establish first contacts with professionals and will ultimately lead to your knowledge being reflected in the work you’ll produce. You’ll learn to get your tasks done within an assigned time-frame and will most likely be provided with regular feedback on your work upon which you then can make further career plans.

***Looking back at your time at UCF, how did your LAS experience influence who you are and where you are today?***

I believe that LAS taught me to leverage my educational background augmented by my other skills to excel on my own path, if that makes any sense...I think LAS taught me to think outside the box which helped me to identify unique roles that may not solidly be in the legal profession. This skill is especially useful right now as I am taking my first steps in “the real world,” and because I am aiming to work at the intersection of international law, policy and advocacy in the long run. In other words, I am guided by the interdisciplinary focus of LAS when making career choices today.





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Architecture of The Hague. Photo by Paul van de Velde

### ***What advice would you give your freshman self?***

Leave some room in your schedule to take classes that seem interesting but might be outside your comfort zone or not seem particularly relevant to your major. This might be the last time you get to spend a significant amount of time learning about random, but fascinating topics and you should take advantage of it. In a nutshell my advice would be to make full use of the LAS course catalogue! Plus, you never know what kind of experiences and knowledge will end up being helpful later in your career. Also, take these language classes a bit more seriously even though they seem to be the last thing on your mind after an intense study week at UCF.

*On a more informal note, don't be a stranger when you happen to be in The Hague! Please feel free to get in touch anytime. For those of you who don't know me but would like to reach out, the Governance Alumni Newsletter team has my contact details and can provide them upon request.*

### ***What are your short-term plans for 2019?***

Right now, I am really going from day to day, that is, I am giving my best at work and try to learn from the feedback I receive from my supervisors. At the same time, I am trying to expand my professional network as much as possible and I am also keeping an eye out for other opportunities that may arise. Right now, I am only certain that I want to expand my expertise in human rights advocacy focusing on sexual violence in armed conflict and gender justice.

***Have a nice day!***