The program outlined in this document is subject to change according to practical realities within Indonesia as well as the particular interests of participants. This flexibility allows the Bridge Year cohort to move at its own pace, to be responsive to personal and group interests, and to take advantage of the learning opportunities that result from unexpected events.
Novogratz Bridge Year Program in Indonesia

in partnership with Where There Be Dragons

Participants of the Novogratz Bridge Year Program in Indonesia engage in service assignments throughout the Special Region of Yogyakarta, located on the island of Java. Populated with over half of Indonesia’s 250 million citizens, Java is the political, economic, and cultural center of an archipelago that spans over 17,000 islands, boasts some of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world, and is home to over 300 ethnic groups. Yogyakarta (“Jogja” for short) embodies the living layers of the region’s unique history from its foundations in Buddhist and Hindu empires to centuries of Dutch colonial rule to its current syncretic blend of Islam and indigenous Javanese traditions. With the highest density of universities in Indonesia, including the oldest institution and the premiere art institute of Southeast Asia, Jogja has attracted progressive thinkers and organizations, making it a prime location for examining some of the challenges of living within one of the most diverse and rapidly developing countries on the planet. From the program base in Jogja, participants explore issues of urban and rural poverty in a modernizing state, the influence of Islam in the largest majority-Muslim democracy, and the complexities of environmental and cultural conservation amidst a diverse and delicate ecological and human geography.

Arrival and Orientation

Upon arrival in Jogja, Bridge Year participants head to the village of Pakem located in the north of the district. Situated under Mt. Merapi and surrounded by snake-fruit plantations, participants learn about cultural and safety norms, while co-creating a healthy group foundation for navigating the experiences to come. Mixed in with orientation sessions are activities that include hiking to nearby waterfalls, getting hands dirty in the rice paddies, and learning the basics of Javanese gamelan music. From Pakem, participants hop on bicycles—still one of the most popular modes of transport in the area—for three days of mild pedaling through beautiful Javanese landscapes of verdant rice paddies and lush limestone cliffs. Students reside with families in rural villages along the way while learning about traditional agricultural practices, local cultural and religious traditions, and the mixture of rural and urban communities surrounding Jogja.
Cultural and Service Learning

Following orientation activities, the Bridge Year group heads east on a multi-day journey on trains and planes from Java to the island of Flores for a ten-day rural homestay experience. Settling in with new families in the mountain village of Langa, participants begin introductory Indonesian language lessons, experience the rhythms of family life in a Bajawan community, learn how to harvest and roast coffee, and take excursions to the surrounding hot springs, craters, and volcanoes that comprise the famed “ring of fire.” Unlike in Java, the majority of people in Flores are Christian, owing to colonial Portuguese influence and the group is exposed to more of Indonesia’s cultural, linguistic, and ecological diversity. Langa is also the site of the first group service project. Partnering with the local trekking community, participants support community-based initiatives to promote eco-tourism in the area. From helping local guides improve their language skills and gain confidence speaking English to setting up a community center for the Langa Trekking Community, the Bridge Year group works alongside community members to advance ongoing income-generation and sustainability initiatives. In the process, participants learn about traditional and modern Bajawan religious beliefs, traditional arts like ikat weaving, issues of sustainability, the impacts of eco and cultural tourism, and identity in ethnic minority communities.

Arrival in Yogyakarta

In late September, Bridge Year participants travel from Flores to the historical and cultural heart of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, settling near the Sultan’s keraton palace complex in the south of the city. During the struggle for colonial independence, the capital of the budding nation was moved to Jogja under the protection of the revered Sultanate. For their bravery and commitment to the nation, Jogja was awarded the semi-autonomous “special region” status that continues under the Sultan till this day. Jogja’s reputation as a thriving center of art and learning has evolved out of the Sultanate’s long-standing sponsorship of shadow puppetry, batik making, gamelan orchestra, and other distinctly Javanese cultural traditions, as well as a strong embrace of a uniquely Javanese form of Islam that has contributed to Jogja’s reputation as the “city of tolerance.” During the first week in Jogja, students orient themselves to the city’s colorful side streets and markets, continue intensive language classes, and build the practical skills needed to confidently navigate local society.
**Homestay**

Bridge Year participants live with families in the close-knit neighborhoods surrounding the Sultan’s keraton. Even though Jogja has around 500,000 inhabitants, the city has evolved as a network of interconnected villages with no high-rise buildings or centralized downtown. This organic community structure means that although part of a large city, homestays are all located in small neighborhoods that maintain the familiarity and intimacy of rural village life. Students become accustomed to the laughter of kids playing in alleyways dotted with birds, the distinct voices of pushcart food vendors selling their goods, and the ubiquitous call to prayer echoing out from the mosques that also double as community centers. Each participant lives individually with a family and can expect a comfortable, but modest private room. Participants become familiar with home-cooked Javanese cuisine. Jogja is known for its broad pallet of sweet, savory, and spicy foods, almost always accompanied by rice. Students can also expect to develop an understanding of their family’s religious beliefs and practices as religion is central to community life. Family is the nucleus of Javanese life, which means the homestay experience provides students the opportunity to experience local culture in a truly meaningful way.

**Language Instruction**

From October to December, Bridge Year participants receive eight to ten hours of intensive Indonesian language classes per week. Students are placed in small groups for more individualized instructions from teachers who are professionally trained. Language learning is viewed as a doorway to cross-cultural exchange, which means classes are interactive and dynamic with frequent excursions into the city for hands-on practice. From December through March, language classes continue but with fewer required class hours.
While language study might be initially challenging for participants, Indonesian is known as one of the most accessible languages in Asia. It is common for participants to develop a basic conversational competence of the language within weeks of arrival, and students who are committed to practice can anticipate a high degree of proficiency by the end of the program. For those students who are interested, classes are available in Javanese, another local language widely spoken on the island of Java.

**Community Service Placements**

Participants spend four to seven hours per day, five days per week, at their service site placement. Travel to and from the service site depends on the assignment, but can range from a 15-minute walk or bike ride to an hour-long bus ride. Staff orient students to their respective assignments and provide continuous support throughout the program.

Below is a list of potential host organizations and service assignments in and around Yogyakarta. This list is not comprehensive, but provides examples of the types of service placements into which participants may be placed.

**Project Child** ([http://volunteer.projectchild.ngo/projects/](http://volunteer.projectchild.ngo/projects/)) is a locally run, community-based NGO, working to alleviate poverty in coastal and riverside communities in Indonesia. These communities are the most vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters and increasing pollution. The vision of Project Child is for every child in Indonesia to have the opportunity to learn, to have a healthy start to life, and to feel supported by a clean environment. Project Child is driven by honesty, accountability, and community participation. Project Child employs experiential and creative learning techniques to teach important life and sustainability skills to students. Primarily supported by international donors, Project Child operates several learning centers around Jogja. Volunteer opportunities may include teaching, web development, business consulting, and volunteer coordination.

**PKBI** ([http://pkbi-diary.info/](http://pkbi-diary.info/)) is an NGO founded in 1957 with support of then President Soekarno’s personal physician. Originally developed to address the alarming rates of maternal and child mortality, the organization has since expanded its focus to a wide-range of health advocacy concerns such as family planning, and outreach to at-risk populations. PKBI currently champions health advocacy in a variety of populations and settings throughout Indonesia. Volunteer opportunities may include health education, translations, technology support, and administrative work.
UCP Wheels for Humanity (http://www.ucpwheels.org/) was established in 2009 with the support of USAID and domestic human rights organizations to address the urgent need to support people with disabilities. An estimated 24 million Indonesians have a disability—2.4 million of whom need a wheelchair. Many of those in need cannot afford a wheelchair and, in some cases, are resigned to crawling, being carried, or staying at home. UCP is the first organization of its kind in Indonesia to provide appropriately fitted wheelchairs for children and adults and capacity-building training for local wheelchair practitioners. The organization also facilitates a variety of empowerment and advocacy programs for the disabled population throughout Indonesia. Volunteer opportunities may include outreach and training with disabled populations, wheelchair research and design, and technology and administrative support.

Sentra Advokasi Perempuan, Difabel dan Anak (SAPDA) (https://www.facebook.com/sapdajogja/) works to increase the inclusion of women and individuals with disabilities in areas of society where they are often excluded. SAPDA engages with a variety of stakeholders to promote policies that aim to increase access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities for these traditionally marginalized populations. In addition to advocacy work, SAPDA runs a crisis center for women, individuals with disabilities, and children. Volunteer opportunities may include supporting research projects to advance policy advocacy, working at the SAPDA crisis center, or supporting administrative needs.

The Dreamhouse (http://www.thedreamhouse.org) is a non-profit organization that works with street children to provide education, extracurricular activities, and creative opportunities for underprivileged children. The organization operates a variety of shelters and mobile classrooms. They seek to bring greater awareness to the issue of homelessness while equipping children with skills needed to more successfully navigate society. Volunteer opportunities with the Dreamhouse might include teaching, community outreach, organizing events, and publicity.

Rifka Annisa (http://www.rifka-annisa.org/) works toward a gender-just society that does not tolerate violence against women. Rifka Annisa organizes women and communities to mobilize against gender-based violence and injustice. The organization has a mission of increasing community awareness and participation through critical education that strengthens justice-minded networks. Volunteer opportunities may include material creation, translation, outreach, event planning, and clerical support.
International Program of Government Affairs and Administration (IGOV) - Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (http://igov.umy.ac.id) is an international department at one of the premier Islamic universities in Yogyakarta (UMY). Students from all around the world and Indonesia study at IGOV, where all classes are instructed in English. Volunteer opportunities may include teaching English, creating cross-cultural communication curriculum, event organization, and blog writing. The volunteer may also have the chance to work with other departments and clubs in the university, such as the American Corner, and is encouraged to creatively engage their peers to help students increase their cultural learning and educational opportunities.

Program House

Program participants have access to the Novogratz Bridge Year Program House, a centrally located building that serves as a meeting place and “home” to the student group throughout their stay. Here, participants can find a place to relax, meet with on-site staff, cook or share meals, and host guest speakers and performances. The program house has a classroom, kitchen, library, lounge area, and an office with a laptop and Internet access for participant use.

Cultural Enrichment Activities

The following activities are available to Bridge Year participants to add context to both their service work and their overall cultural experience in Indonesia.

Guest Speakers: Over the course of the program, guest lecturers and local experts are invited to discuss an array of topics including Indonesia’s history, religious and spiritual traditions, geography, philosophy, gender issues, urbanization, the arts, the environment, politics, and modern development.

Independent Enrichment Activities: Bridge Year participants have the opportunity to engage in one-on-one mentorships in music, art, dance or other subjects of interest. The activity may directly enrich the service assignment, or may simply serve to enhance understanding and appreciation of Indonesia and Indonesian culture.

Examples of enrichment topics include: Indonesian cuisine and cooking, Jamu and traditional medicine, gamelan orchestra music, Javanese dance, wayang kulit shadow puppetry, graffiti and
street art, pencak silat martial arts, silver-smithing and jewelry making, batik cloth painting, wood and stone carving, and the study of Islam and religious traditions.

Program Excursions: Bridge Year participants also partake in at least two program-sponsored excursions outside of the Yogyakarta region. Excursion destinations depend on many factors including weather, time constraints, student interest, and relevance to the overall program, but several options are available. These include a multi-day trek through the jungles of Sumatra to search for orangutans and tropical bird species, extended community stays in the Wakatobi region of Sulawesi to live with the sea-faring Bajau people while exploring the richest marine diversity in the world, learning about unique perspectives on life and death while attending funeral celebrations in the highlands of Tana Toraja, venturing to the “spice islands” of Maluku to see the origins of the spice trade, or overland travel to the picturesque volcanoes of Bromo and the Eastern side of Java. To the greatest extent possible, ownership of the excursions is given to participants, empowering them to work with on-site staff to research, plan, and manage the logistics for these group expeditions.

Student-led Spring Excursion and Service Work

In early May, participants work as a group to plan, organize, and facilitate their final excursion. Students build an itinerary that includes rural homestays, service work, and the exploration of Java’s immense ecological and cultural diversity. The final excursion introduces students to aspects of Javanese life distinct from what is experienced during the months spent in and around Jogja. This experience invites students to broaden their perspectives on service learning, development topics, and environmental issues, as well as further explore Indonesia’s rich cultural, spiritual, and linguistic dynamism. With the support of on-site staff, students
work together to plan and manage the excursion, further developing communication and leadership abilities.

Program Wrap-up

During the final week of the program, participants travel to the ocean-side town of Parangtritis for their closing transference activities. Connected to the Javanese spiritual axis of power running North-to-South from Mt. Merapi to the Sultan’s palace and terminating in the southern ocean, Parangtritis is the home of the mythical queen Ratu Kidul and still a pilgrimage site for thousands of Javanese, including the Sultan. In this setting, participants work individually and as a group to identify, examine, and assimilate the lessons learned from their extensive experiences in Indonesia. They also reflect on their transition home, goals for the future, and the ways in which they can best integrate their experience into daily life at Princeton.