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Laurier graduate student and postdoctoral fellow win prestigious Vanier Scholarship and Banting Fellowship

WATERLOO – A doctoral student and a postdoctoral fellow from Wilfrid Laurier University, both of whom examine environmental issues from a human point of view, have respectively won two of Canada’s most prestigious awards for studies at their levels.

Bianca Dreyer has been named a **Vanier Scholar** and **Scott Hamilton** has been appointed a **Banting Postdoctoral Fellow**. Dreyer is a PhD student in [community psychology](#) who started her doctorate in September 2016. Hamilton will start in September as a postdoctoral fellow in [political science](#), jointly appointed to the [Bailsille School of International Affairs](#).

Both awards are administered by the Government of Canada. A Banting Fellowship is worth \$70,000 a year for two years. A Vanier Scholarship is worth \$50,000 a year for three years. Both Dreyer and Hamilton are receiving their funding through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Dreyer, an international student from Germany who also did a [master’s in social psychology](#) at Laurier, focuses her research on making buildings healthier and more sustainable both from a social and environmental point of view. In particular, she is working closely with an organization building a sustainable office building in Waterloo.

“We’re very much focused on conducting research that leads to actionable knowledge,” said Dreyer. “We think that psychology has a lot to add to questions of sustainability because environmental concerns and issues of social justice and equity are so inherently tied together.”

Dreyer focuses on buildings because they are major emitters of greenhouse gases as well as where people in our society spend the majority of their time.

“Most buildings aren’t really designed to contribute to our well-being or human thriving, or the thriving of the environment they’re built within,” said Dreyer. “What we’re trying to do is work closely with the developers of green buildings to think about how they can become net positive and also how they might contribute to the health, well-being and equity of those who are in the space.”

“Bianca is a future leading scholar and her research is of great relevance to current societal needs and priorities,” said Associate Professor [Manuel Riemer](#), Dreyer’s supervisor. “Already we are being approached by local governments and industry associations for advice on how to best engage the occupants in their office buildings in a culture of sustainability.”

Hamilton, who grew up in Tottenham, Ontario, just completed his PhD in international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK. He will be focusing his research at Laurier on how scientific models and concepts shape our thinking about global politics and environmental policy.

“I want to examine how the concept of circularity – the idea that natural elements such as water are continually cycled through different parts of the environment – has shaped our understanding of the global environment and global governance in undetected but important ways,” said Hamilton. “The global cycles of carbon and water that we all assume today are natural are actually dependent on the recent invention and use of this subtle and under-researched concept.”

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Hamilton has found that the technologies underlying climate models are based on the study of nuclear weapons and radioactive fallout after the Second World War. His goal is to highlight the shortcomings and possibilities of policies, particularly climate governance policies, that are based on circularity and other scientific concepts.

"My hypothesis is that many deadlocks experienced in policymaking may rely on outdated or inaccurate concepts of circulation," he said. "If we trace the history of how these concepts actually emerged, how they were shaped and by whom, as well as the effects they had politically, we should then have the potential to think about global crises and their potential solutions in new ways."

"We're very excited that Scott will be joining us at the Balsillie School as a Banting Fellow," said Associate Professor [Audra Mitchell](#), who will be Hamilton's supervisor. "His cutting-edge research on the images of climate, nuclear energy and water as frameworks for global governance will bring new insight into issues that affect us here in Canada and around the world."

Both Dreyer and Hamilton say they're grateful for their awards and excited to be pursuing their studies at Laurier, particularly because of the interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches of their respective programs.

"Being able to work with colleagues from other areas and institutions and with community organizations has allowed me to gain a very rich perspective," said Dreyer. "I could not have wished for a better place to do this type of research."

"Audra Mitchell is a leader in international relations theory and critical perspectives on global environmental governance, so having the opportunity to work with her is a rare and excellent opportunity," said Hamilton. "I'm very excited to engage a wide network of interdisciplinary researchers to explore the crises of global governance our world is now experiencing."

Several Laurier students have held Vanier scholarships or Banting fellowships in the past. One, [Liam Riley](#), is a current Banting fellow.