Tips on getting outside during finals season

by Maleena Muzio | ASSOCIATE LIFE EDITOR | she/her/hers | maleena.muzio@uconn.edu

After getting a taste of summer weather last week, you may be finding yourself wishing for the sun to come back out. It can be difficult to balance school, especially with finals season approaching, while trying to get outside. Although the temperature may have slightly cooled down, here are my best tips to incorporate outside time into a busy day.

Spending time outside can improve mental and physical health, reduce stress and therefore, improve cognitive ability and promote sleep, according to the American Psychology Association. As the last weeks of the semester wind down at the University of Connecticut and exams and assignments pick up, it is incredibly important to prioritize all of these things. Going outside doesn't have to mean sacrificing hours of your day, however.



UConn students enjoy the sunny day in Storrs, Conn. on Sept. 3, 2025. The perfect weather allowed students to spend time outside throughout the day.

PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Walk to your destinations

Although it may seem obvious, walking just may be the most practical and easiest way to get your daily dose of vitamin D. Whether that be walking to your classes or going for a light stroll with friends before dinner, you will be improving your health in more ways than one. Skip the bus route for a change (for reasonable distances and if your body permits) and put one foot in front of the other.

Study outside

Reading textbooks or writing essays outside is the perfect way to experience the sun while also making sure your tasks get done. Now, I am not necessarily saying you need to kick off your shoes and lay in the grass to do so (but if you wish, go for it!), there are plenty of tables and benches located around campus and most outdoor public spaces that can provide you with the perfect combination of structure in the outdoors.

Have a picnic

What's better on a warm spring day than a picnic? These can be as fancy or as casual as you'd like and do not require spending too much money. Whether you and your friends throw on your nicest outfits and take pictures, or simply just enjoy each other's company over sandwiches, picnics are sure to be a great time. This can also be a solo activity; there is nothing wrong with grabbing some food from the Student Union and eating it on the lawn and enjoying your own version of the traditional event without plaid tablecloths or wicker baskets. There are no rules for a proper picnic except for being outside!

Outdoor workouts

Ditch the Rec Center or your local gym, lay a yoga mat outside your dorm and get to working out! Try following a YouTube at-home workout video or do some simple stretching. Or grab a group of friends and go for a run. There are several clubs on campus that offer outdoor workout opportunities, like UConn Running Club or Outing Club, which goes on many off-campus adventures.

You don't have to be an all-star athlete to enjoy some exercise outside either. A simple, non-competitive (or all-stakes game if you'd prefer) of volleyball, cornhole, soccer or any sport played with friends can be a good way to get out, be social and avoiding sitting outside doing nothing. But if laying out and tanning is your thing, go for it!

DOING GOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF WHITE SUPREMACY

by Ayyan Tamjeed
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
art24001@uconn.edu

Students and professors gathered in the conference room at the University of Connecticut's Dodd Center for Human Rights to listen to Rhea Rahman, an assistant professor of anthropology at Brooklyn College, discuss her new book "Racializing the Ummah."

The book contains her ethnography on the Islamic charity organization Islamic Relief (IR) and discusses how racial capitalism permeates the work of IR and other humanitarian organizations.

Rahman's introduction to IR was at a 2009 fundraising dinner held in Bay Ridge, N.Y. There she saw how IR used religion in their fundraising appeals. Rahman noted that one fundraiser said, "Sadaqah is the proof of one's Iman." Sadaqah being the voluntary act of charity, and Iman about one's faith in Islam. IR also talks about Zakat — a pillar of Islam centered around charity — when fundraising to gain credibility among Muslim donors.

The dinner was held to raise money for those affected by the 2008 Gaza massacre; Rahman said this is because "Palestine is conceived by many Muslims as part of a global Islamic struggle." Rahman added that not working with Palestine could discredit IR's reputation as an Islamic charity organization.

However, this relationship has its consequences, she said. IR and other Islamic NGOs working in western nations have been subject to intense scrutiny and surveillance based on Islamophobia and racial discrimination, Rahman said. Based in the U.K., IR must constantly prove to the government that they are not "political Muslims," she said. Despite this, IR continues to fund aid across the world, as they give donors what they believe is a chance to counter Islamophobia through donations.

Nonetheless, Rahman said that by operating as an international aid agency, they contribute to structures that instill inequality and racial discrimination.

"[IR] reinscribes racial capitalist geographies of inequality and white supremacist humanitarian frameworks that privilege some at the cost of others," she said.

Rahman visited IR field sites across multiple nations to research this claim further and to see how "Muslim-ness is racialized with and between distinct racial geography." Rahman first visited Mali and overlapped with a group of fundraisers from Britain, who were there to gather information and ask how to help the situation in North Mali. Here, she realized that the reason behind IR's success lay in how they translated complex historical, social, economic and geographical solutions into a list of deliverables.

"Reducing multifaceted problems to ones that can be managed in terms of deliverables is indicative of development in the age of neoliberalism," Rahman said.

Although Mali is considered one of IR's more successful field sites, Mali has received international aid for 60 years and are still one of the poorest countries in the world. It is here where Rahman makes the claim that the international development industry maintains African poverty through economic exploitation.

"Capitalism cannot be a solution to the problem of the racial capitalist exploitation of Africa," Rahman said.

Despite this conundrum, she found examples in her research that challenged "pervasive frames of white supremacy" in Africa. She framed these examples as part of the Islamic black radical tradition.

In South Africa, Rahman met an IR volunteer, Abdullah, who stood out to her due to his background and beliefs. Abdullah is involved in community-based work rather than charity, according to Rahman, teaching people about HIV, AIDS and gender-based violence. Rahman shared a quote from an interview with Abdullah explaining his mantra on community work. "When one goes into the community with the intention of changing others, one has to realize it's others who change you," Abdullah said to Rahman.



Rhea Rahman, an assistant professor of anthropology at Brooklyn College, discusses her new book "Racializing the Ummah." The talk was held at The Dodd Center in Storrs, Conn. which hosts many events dealing with contemporary problems.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Another IR worker, Dawoud, stood out to Rahman for his work on building community within marginalized groups in South Africa, since its legacy of apartheid fostered divisions prohibited forms of solidarity among these communities, Rahman said.

Rahman called these two examples "attempts at restructuring and reimagining Muslim aid," and she likened them to a grassroots effort which emphasized the importance of community, not individual empowerment. Nevertheless, Rahman said these efforts were not as effective as they could be since they still worked within the existing "racial capitalist state."

It is through this lens that Rahman viewed the work IR did. She shared that if IR is in the international aid industry, it reduces its chance to do effective work, and it was those who eschewed this structure who could make changes.

"[IR provides] an Islamic cover for the western aid industry's racial capitalist interest in projects abroad," Rahman said. "It was those working at the margins of institutional regulation that I found imaginings of doing good otherwise."

Abdullah Abrar, an eighth-semester mechanical engineering major, appreciated learning more about how IR was structured.

"I had very few interactions with them as an organization before," Abrar said. "[It was] very helpful in terms of trying to understand how Islamic belief organizations in general also have similar flaws or similar strengths as well, especially in the context of the capitalist society we live in."

Abrar thought this talk is relevant for those who want to go into charity work in the future

"The information we got from that talk today is going to be especially relevant or those of us who are looking to go charity work," he said. "Understanding where the shortcoming of an organization will be means that we now have the opportunity to go in and try to fix it from the inside and have a propagating positive effect that compounds continuously with each generation."