Craig Pratsch ’19 applies what he learned at GPS to explore themes of unintended — and sometimes dire — consequences of policy

“If you could stop crime with a pill, would you?”

This is the question Craig Pratsch ’19 asks in his debut dystopian science fiction novel, “The Treatment.” The novel explores a world where, instead of receiving prison sentences for crimes, those convicted receive years of state-mandated medication.

Pratsch, a graduate of the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs (MAS-IA) program, was raised in Alexandria, Virginia — just across the river from Washington, D.C. — which fueled his lifelong interest in government.

“I majored in engineering, and my interest in foreign policy started when I lived in Japan for a year supporting the U.S. Navy as a contractor,” Pratsch said. “I went to GPS because I was considering a switch to policy. I ultimately decided to stay in engineering, but the program gave me some fantastic knowledge.”
And that knowledge he gained at GPS helped him to construct some of the major themes of his book, which focuses on unintended negative consequences governmental policies can have.

“I’m not sure how I came up with the plot exactly. I love science fiction because it’s the lie that tells the truth, so I was trying to think of an interesting and exciting way to tell a story about a criminal justice system,” Pratsch said. “Learning about public policy at GPS definitely drove home the point that policy, even when created with good intentions, may not ultimately be good for society.”

Pratsch described the writing process as a “slow-burn passion,” writing the book between 2013 and 2022. A sequel is already in the works, he added.

“I hope to finish in less than 5 years this time,” Pratsch said.

Pratsch recently took part in the San Diego Public Library’s 57th Annual Local Author Showcase, along with close to 200 other local writers.

“We were able to stand up and say a few words about our books and hear about each other’s stories,” Pratsch said.

The authors’ books were displayed in cases in the Central Library for the month of February, and in March, the books will become available for public check-out for one year. “The Treatment’ is also available on Amazon for purchase or for free on Kindle Unlimited.