

EXL 300
Cross Cultural Learning: Theory and Practice
Professor Ishita Sinha-Roy



Quick Flashback: A selection of thought provoking, funny, and insightful posts from Allegheny College students in the Spring 2010 Study Abroad/Study Away programs.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:

PERSONAL MAPPING: What have you noticed about people around you in your new “home”? Tell us a story drawing from some point of difference that has made you aware of ‘seeing’ yourself differently in your new surroundings.

CULTURE TRADE: Having spent some time in your surroundings, what have you introduced your hosts to as part of your unique “home” culture? In exchange, what have you learned that is non-touristy, and involves deeper interactions with people who live in the place you are visiting?

REFLECTING ON EXPERIENCE: As you settle into your new home-away-from-home, what are some of the cultural rules or what non-verbal forms of communication strike you as different?

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: What dining customs or food in your new culture reflects insights about the culture you are in?

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: Describe one cultural feast or tradition that you have been introduced to. What is the myth or story behind this celebration? How has it evolved and been influenced by globalization and/or technology?

YOUTHSCAPES: Select a media example or a cultural artifact that you can share with us visually, and discuss why you selected it as being of particular interest in representing the popular culture of your host site.

PROFESSOR QUESTIONS CONTINUED:

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: Please describe and reflect on how your experiences are shaping your understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the world, and not just your own country.

COMING HOME: As you prepare to leave your host site/country, can you reflect on how you have fulfilled the role of either Allegheny College ambassador, or American ambassador, or both? What did this entail, and what were some of the challenges of fulfilling this role.

PERSONAL MAPPING:

I am definitely not just another face in the crowd in Ecuador. Here I am a blue-eyed gringo who speaks broken Spanish and goes to a beautiful, brand-new school in the middle of a crumbling neighborhood. I have never felt so unusual. There are some American tourists here, but in the neighborhood where I live and go to school it seems very unusual for the residents to see an American. My school just opened this semester, so people I passed on the street seemed really surprised to see a group of young white Americans in this part of town. second shift at work until about 9 PM.

Even though I feel so foreign when I am outside, I feel wonderfully at home with my Ecuadorian host family. From what I have seen so far, Ecuadorians are very affectionate and open. My host mom started calling me mi hijita, my daughter, the day after I arrived in Ecuador. I am only going to be a part of their family for

two months, but they welcomed me with open arms. Talking to my host family in Spanish is not always easy, but I am learning how to communicate effectively. In my experience, it takes lots of patience and a healthy sense of humor on both sides of the conversation. I hope to continue to improve my Spanish and feel more comfortable in the city.

Courtney Columbus – Ecuador

Ana Clara, my host sister, is twenty-nine years old, works as an elementary school teacher specializing in special education, and lives with her mother in Sevilla, Spain. Though the Spanish clothes, language, and the food differ greatly from that of America, the greatest contrast is in the Spanish way of life. Ana Clara has a boyfriend, Valdi, of thirty

The two have a home in Malaga where they usually spend the weekend together. Although Ana and Valdi have plans to be married, Ana says, "we can't be married until our home (in Malaga) is furnished!" Appropriately, Ana intends to live with her mother until then.

I was surprised that, at 29 with a full-time job, Ana would continue to share an apartment with her mother. Ana explained that, in Spain, couples tend to marry later in life, at around 30-35 years old and rarely move in together until then. When I mentioned that Americans usually marry right out of college, around 24 or 25, Ana replied, "Well, it's no wonder so many divorce!" Unlike Americans who condemn matured children living in their parents' house and value independence, the Europeans encompass an emphatic appreciation for family. Ana thought she had misunderstood my Spanish when I told her

that my university is an 18-hour drive from my family home in Minnesota and that I return only twice a year. Though in each culture, my and Ana's situation are, more or less, conventional, this tiny variation in our standard customs change the entire structure and direction of our lives.

Wenonah Echeland –
Spain

When I first arrived in Australia, the first thing I noticed was how friendly and relaxed Australians were. I didn't always have to be the first one to say hello, and I never ate a meal alone. Even if I began eating a meal alone, I would end the meal with surrounded by a table full of people. I was sitting alone at breakfast one day eating some cereal and fruit. I had a banana and some peanut butter on my plate. An Australian boy



came up and sat next to me. We were introducing ourselves and just making small talk. When he asked me where I was from, I informed him I was from the States. He said, "well yeah, I knew that." I just assumed he knew because of the way I talked. He asked me if I wanted to know how he knew I was American, and I said yes. He said he could tell immediately because of the big slab of peanut butter on my plate. "Americans love their peanut butter," he said. I just laughed, but it really made me think about how Australians view Americans. Before coming to Australia, I had heard about a few ways in which Australians could distinguish Americans from themselves. I obviously knew they had they had a different accent and probably ate

some different foods, but I never imagined they would be able to identify me by the food I ate. I never thought something as simple as the peanut butter on my plate would enable an Australian to immediately label me as an American. I usually can't tell the Australians apart from Americans upon first glance; it's not until they start talking that I know for sure. For the Australians on the other hand, they can tell me apart by more ways than I am even aware of. They are accustomed to living with Americans, which allows them to easily pick up the subtle differences between us. Every semester they get a large number of American study abroad students. I can't even count the number of American students I have met here so far. For Americans, we aren't as familiar with Australians; I have never met an Australian while living in America. I am not used to being around them, so I can't pick up the subtle differences like they can. I hope that I can improve on this difficult task as I spend

more time here learning about the Australians and their culture.

Ashley Klingensmith –
Australia

One of the most distinct cultural differences I have noticed since I have arrived in Costa Rica is the powerful sense of community. While Allegheny is a small school, it is easy to get wrapped up in activities that leave you secluded from your surroundings and neighbors. I remember that while driving from the airport in San Jose to my new home in Atenas, Costa Rica I was intrigued to see how many people were outside their homes working or socializing. Whenever I ride in a cab between my school and my destinations, I am always amazed at how the taxi driver waves at almost every single person he drives by. On some weekdays we travel to a local park and every night there are groups of kids and families playing a variety

of sports. I am overwhelmed by the closeness of the Costa Rican people. The town of Atenas is very much like Allegheny in that it is a smaller more close knit community, however sometimes at school I still feel disconnected from the people around me. Most of this is probably due to cell phones, computers, television, and cars, all technologies that invade our lives and can keep one secluded. I would naturally assume that I would feel like a stranger in Atenas, however I feel extremely accepted and included in the culture and community of the Costa Rican people. I hope that when I return to school I can continue to practice these social customs that these people hold so highly in importance and in turn feel more connected to those around me.

Emma Helverson – Costa
Rica

CULTURE TRADE:

My Spanish mother, Antonia, has had students for 13 years so she is very familiar with the United States and it's culture. Even if she did not have students all of those years, American customs can be seen through movies, TV programs and news broadcasts. Whenever I tell Antonia about something in the U.S. she has usually already seen it on the TV. The only problem I've had with communicating my culture has been breakfast, which are very small here. I'm used to having eggs or something warm for breakfast. In Spain, on the other hand, cereal and toast are the norm. Eggs are eaten for dinner. I'm starting to get used to the small breakfast but it's definitely different. As for my regional culture, I haven't told Antonia much about my family but she will meet my mom and grandma in a month. I think as time goes on I will let her

know a little more about myself and where I live. Antonia, on the other hand, has told me a lot about her childhood, kids, and her life in general. Her stories are very interesting and give me a distinct look into the life of a 'sevillana'. I have learned so much about my new home that is non-touristy. Most of what I have learned comes with the language. My school teaches many colloquial sayings to try to let us get an inside look at Spain. I've started to communicate a little better with Spaniards, which is a good sign. Daily contact for the past couple weeks as allowed me more interaction with Spaniards and has allowed me to improve my hearing of the language. Also, living in a different culture brings many changes to my daily routine. Many tourists would live in a hotel and eat at their normal times; however, my day has changed immensely. Showers are now shorter because of a lack of energy in Andalucía. My meal times and food are different, as I've said. I've tried to embrace all of the



changes but it's hard because I'm not used to this lifestyle. I know that it will take some time to fully feel at home in this new culture but after my first couple weeks of getting lost, I'm starting learn more about Spain and it's culture.

Derek McMahan – Spain

Everyone knows about the French Revolution, but what everyone doesn't know is how much revolutionary acts have shaped the French psyche. It is remarkable how much I hear about the French Revolution, not even just in my literature class, where we studied Victor Hugo, but also in passing, and also to provide cultural background in other classes. There have

been numerous revolts since the Revolution, and the French know them well and seem proud of them. Most relevant to our generation would be the uprising of May 1968, a nation-wide demonstration started by students hoping to achieve co-ed housing that swept the entirety of French society into an enormous political act. The revolt spread to workers of all classes and ended up shutting down the entire country--no electricity, no gasoline at the gas pump, no restaurants. People took to the streets and, according to a lecture we were just given by a professor specializing in the revolt, it was a great equalizing time in French history. Although there has not been a revolt of those proportions since then, the French like to strike, and what was once for me a cultural joke--"Don't take the RER, those workers strike all the time!"--now

has deeper cultural significance. The French seem to see striking and revolting as both an effective change-making tool and also part of their heritage, their responsibility as French citizens. Demonstrating is, to them, as significant to their national identity as I guess voting would be to us. Not everyone does it, but when they do it's a widely-accepted and even proud act.

As for what I've shown the French about American culture during my 6-week stay here, apparently I've highlighted our patriotism. I don't know that patriotism is a hallmark of all Americans everywhere, but I think Americans are some of the most patriotic people in the world, and vocal about it too. I never thought of myself as being particularly patriotic until a French friend commented on it. He said that he noticed I loved my country and he wished more French were like that too. His comment was spurred, I think, just by my mention of appreciating different parts of the USA.

Perhaps this was simply his point of view; perhaps the French have a strange misconception that Americans don't like America. Whatever the case, I was glad to impress him with my love of my country, something that I never thought of as noteworthy before.

Alexandra Jaffe – France

The recent presidential elections in Costa Rica were a great opportunity to share with my host culture some of the characteristics of American politics. This is something I had not been able to compare as well before experiencing first hand the election hype here. It was very interesting to communicate with the locals here that elections in the US, while certainly a big deal, do not always have the same rampant enthusiasm. Everyone here was eager to talk about the election to complete strangers, while in the US, I've only had

deep political conversations with people I am familiar with. The flag waving, car horn beeping, and other merriment was normal for my host culture, and they were a bit surprised to hear that that would be considered completely obnoxious in most parts of the States! Besides experiencing the elections, living on "tico" time has given me a greater understanding of my host culture. Though SFS is a very structured program, it is run by native Costa Ricans: we are consistently ten to thirty minutes behind schedule! Traditionally, ticos take their time about things. When they want to do something, they do it. If not, they can put things off. It is normal to be late for social engagements, and rushing is not something they do! It is really interesting to interact with the professors to see how their tico time management plays against the program's nature of "hurry-up-and-go". For instance, when

taking a rest stop on one of our trips, we will sometimes be given fifteen minutes to be back on the bus. In practice, this means we get back promptly, then loaf around outside until the directors actually decide to leave. Many of our stops have no time limit at all. It's a very leisurely pace that has taken some time to adjust to.

Ali Trunzo – Costa Rica

As I've probably said before, I live in a flat with all English students. This makes me the minority with the funny accent. In the beginning I didn't believe I was giving them any sort of American culture until I got a "yo" in a text message. I felt like I had accomplished something great. The changes are small and pretty hard to detect on most occasions. It comes in the subtleties of language and behavior. Like, for example, the word "cheeky." I could



probably write an entire entry on that word. But, to be fair, the more time I spend around my flatmates, the more things I realize we have in common. We all enjoy the freedom of being away from home. We all love a great night out, but at the same time treasure a quiet night in with a film. We all stay up late eating oven bake-able hashbrowns on random tuesday nights and we've all started the occasional (and cheeky) water fight. And most importantly of all, we all love Harry Potter. Because we're no longer drawn to each other by our differences, but by what makes us similar. Our fascination for each other has worn off a bit, because, well to put it simply, we're all friends now.

Isabel Abrams – England

**REFLECTING ON
EXPERIENCE:**

One experience I find myself frequently looking back on occurred in the classroom. It was actually something that I learned in class. In my Australian Politics and Public Policy class, we learned about some of the history of Australia. Before I proceed to tell what I learned, know that this recap is by no means exactly accurate. I did not look up exact dates or anything for this blog; I am just going by what really stuck out in my mind. I learned that in the early 1900s, Australia adopted a policy called "White Australia." This policy was aimed at creating a united nation. The government at the time believed in order to be a united nation, Australia must also be a united race.

Consequently, they restricted the access of immigrants into the country and sought to displace the Aboriginal Peoples. To put it simply, Australia became a racist nation that wanted to

get rid of everyone that wasn't white. It took until about the mid-1900s for this policy to collapse and for Australians to accept diversity and multiculturalism. I will not say that they embraced diversity; they merely accepted it. Even today, for the short time I have been here, I can still sense an undertone of racism and discrimination based on comments I hear from some white Australians. This learning experience made me realize that I live in my own "bubble" in the United States. In just the 2 hours that I sat in a classroom learning about Australian history, I realized how oblivious and unknowledgeable I am about the rest of the world. Racism in Australia? A government seeking to rid the country of all but white people? This period of racism and discrimination against the Aboriginals reminds me of the U.S. conflict between both blacks and whites and Native Americans and white colonists. I already knew all about racism in the United



States, but I never thought that it happened anywhere else. I'm not sure if I naively thought racism only occurred in America, but I never considered the possibility of it happening anywhere else. It makes sense that this kind of thing happens around the world, but I had just never thought about it. This learning experience was a "wow" moment for me in which I realized how little I know about anything (culture, history, etc.) outside of the U.S. It invoked in me a strong desire to learn more about other countries and to pay more attention to what's going on outside of "my world." I now find myself asking tons of questions to anyone I meet here from other parts of the world. Even then, there is so much more that I want to learn. I remember a quote I heard once that really hit home for me after this experience:

"The more you know, the more you know you don't know and the more you know that you don't know." –David Byrne

Ashley Klingensmith –
Australia

Walking with my host family in Atenas was very different than the many times I had been there with my fellow "gringos". That time, I saw everything differently, as if I was seeing through their eyes. With them, it was like I was walking through a town I had known my whole life; I knew the traffic patterns, the shortest walking distance between points A and B, where to cross without getting mauled by traffic, and where to find the most delicious food in the market. Following my host family's example, I developed the confidence to say a quick "hola" or "buenas" to passers-by. The outcome of this experience is that though



a large language barrier remains, I feel as if I am beginning to belong here. More than a casual visitor, I am more comfortable with my town, the people, and the cultural do's and don'ts. I have realized that three months is far too short a time for this amazing place that I now call home. I have bonded with the town and the people more than I would have thought possible. I am not sure if I would call it patriotism, but I know that over the past month I have developed a loyalty to Costa Rica and Atenas specifically. My identity as an "adopted tica" makes me sure that I will return in the future.

Ali Trunzo – Costa Rica

Getting groceries here can be quite annoying. First, there is the five minute

walk to the bus stop. Then there is the waiting at the bus stop. Then there is the paying for the bus (four US dollars!) unless I can catch the free bus that runs one day a week and is always over-crowded. After that I have to walk to the grocery store and spend a lot of money for food, even when I buy the economy versions of everything. And finally comes the worst part: carrying all the groceries home by walking, busing, and then walking some more.

I use to dread this weekly endeavor, but as each week goes by I learn to respect it a bit more. In the States, we are pretty pampered. I drive my own car to Wal-mart bi-weekly to get groceries and the most effort I have to expend is putting the goods in the car and unloading them at home. In the UK, public transportation replaces private vehicles for many which is beneficial for so many reasons, the greatest of which being the environment. And all that

walking, that is definitely good for me. Sure, it takes longer and seems to be less efficient, but overall the system they have here is so much better than in the US. I hope that I learn to love my shopping trips by the end of my time here and take these habits back with me to the States.

Kirsten Ohmer – England

As part of my microfinance class here in Ecuador, I traveled recently south of Quito to the Cotopaxi region, which is one of the poorest in the country. The goal of our trip was to visit different microfinance cooperatives and communities and to see how the theories we had been learning in class were being implemented successfully. We visited two different communities: Pastocalle and Cusubamba. Both communities were pretty amazing because in each case, the people of the community organized

themselves around a common goal in order to take out a microloan which would enable them to reach a certain level of self-sustainability and food security. In the case of Pastocalle, the community members used their loan to build a large reservoir that would enable them to maintain their farming and cultivation despite variations in rainfall, and thus cultivate a diverse variety of crops and raise livestock so successfully that they no longer rely on outside sources of food. In Cusubamba, the community organized and took out a loan in order to buy an hacienda from the owner for whom they had been working as hacienda laborers, and were able to establish themselves as specialists in growing potatoes and other grains to be sold on the market. This was an important experience for me not simply because I was able to see in practice what I had been learning in class, but also because it made me realize the true goals of development. As an



American studying development it's easy to hope that underdeveloped countries can one day live as comfortably as the US. But the US is an unrealistic goal for many developing countries mainly because of the un-sustainability of its lifestyle, but also because, let's face it, some countries have got a long way to go. In the short term, development shouldn't focus on giving everyone in the world a car, or an iPod – turning the world into money-driven consumers; it should focus on solving the concrete challenges that not only make life rigorous, but that affect the possibility of a viable future.

David DeMicheli – Ecuador

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:

I would be crazy not to pick 'La Giralda' as my object that is unique to Seville. 'La Giralda' is the bell tower of the third largest church in Europe and the largest gothic church in the world. It got its name from the weathervane that sits on the top of the tower. The weathervane is still functional today and there is an identical model of it at the entrance of the cathedral. This picture is taken from inside a courtyard of the cathedral that was previously a Moorish courtyard. It is one of the only remnants of the old Mosque that was in Seville during the XV century. In general, this tower symbolizes the Catholic/Christian nature of the town and the importance of the past, especially the 'Reconquista' in 1492. To me, Seville is the perfect example of a mixture of old and new. For instance, there is 'La Giralda' but outside of the cathedral



there is a tram that runs during the day. Most of the streets here are crooked and are made of cobblestone but at the same time there is a new metro and there are highways in and out of Seville. The siesta is still celebrated in this town where the majority of stores close around 1 p.m. and reopen around 5 p.m. Others prefer a newer approach and stay open. This picture obviously represents the past in Spain, but the new is becoming ever more important. Finally and most importantly, 'la Giralda' unites the town and is on the main street, La Giralda' unites the town and is on the main street, La Avenida de Constitución. If you climb it you can see all around the city and the view is unbelievable.

Unfortunately, the day I climbed the tower it was raining (note the overcast in the picture) but regardless its incredible. I get to walk by this church every day on my way to school and it will always be the first thing I think about when I remember Seville.

Derek McMahan – Spain

Throughout history, France, and Paris in particular has been a global icon. It has served as the symbol of revolution, of Bohemia, and of love. One cannot look back on the era of "Parisian Bohemia" without the words "Moulin Rouge" coming to mind. Although it appears to be just another cabaret-style sexual attraction amongst many others in the Montmartre area of Paris, there is more to the Moulin Rouge than meets the eye. Inextricably intertwined with the bohemian ideals of truth, beauty, freedom and love, the "Red Mill" once drew youth from all over



the world to Paris for adventure. Today, like so many of the celebrated locations in Paris, the physical building of the Moulin Rouge draws busy tourists instead of searching souls. However, the ideas of the Moulin Rouge, the hazy dreams of love and adventure lived and relived in the minds of people around the world, have survived the years. Although the "time of the Moulin Rouge" is over, its legend and legacy will always be a part of Paris, and a part of the world.

Katie Austin – France

What thought first comes to mind when you hear the word "Australia?" For most Americans, one of the first things that comes to mind is kangaroos. We don't have kangaroos in America, and most Americans are

hopping marsupials. I will admit that before I came to Australia, kangaroos were one of the things I was most excited to see. There is a road sign on the main road through our campus that shows a picture of a kangaroo with the words "next 500 m" underneath. Unfortunately, I don't see many kangaroos while living on a college campus; actually, I have not seen one out in the wild yet. Apparently they are not commonly spotted on campus, which makes sense because there are people everywhere. One weekend, I finally got to see one when I went to the Billabong Sanctuary, an animal sanctuary just outside of Townsville. They were roaming around everywhere, and they were just as cute as I had always imagined. So what's the big deal with kangaroos? To make an analogy, kangaroos are to Australia as deer are to the United States. Kangaroos are wild animals that are the equivalent of deer in America. I'm not sure if people are allowed to hunt them, but I do know they



popular meat dish at barbeques. Just like deer, they can be a nuisance to people and are often found on the side of the road after being hit by a car. Despite their seemingly unimportance in Australian culture, the kangaroo is a national symbol of Australia. From an outsider's perspective, Australia is known for its kangaroos. Australia is the only continent and country where kangaroos can be found, which makes kangaroos all the more intriguing. People associate Australia with kangaroos and kangaroos with Australia. Although Australians may not view kangaroos as important, they are a national icon.

Ashley Klingensmith – Australia



This is *la Chilintosa*. It is a large rock that is one of the remnants of the most recent eruption of Cotopaxi, the world's tallest active volcano located in the Cotopaxi province of Ecuador where I just moved for my internship. My host family told me that Cotopaxi "threw" it to where it sits now (which is pretty far), but I don't know if that means it simply is cooled lava or if it was a preexisting rock that was actually thrown; I am not a geologist. My host family also told me that the ground the rock currently sits on is actually volcanic rock that covers an old village.

So according to legend, when one ventures to the rock at night, music and celebrations can be heard coming from dead spirits/souls/zombies. I don't know if I believe all that – in fact I don't – but Ecuadorians never fail to amaze me with the interest they invest in their natural surroundings. Granted, living in the Andes gives them much beauty to be admired, but there is a definite obsession here. I was not surprised when my host family in Latacunga told me they wanted to take me to see the rock. Even my host family in Quito was obsessed with all things

Cotopaxi, which, even though is located two hours south of Quito on the pan-American highway, can be seen from the city itself. Every Ecuadorian I've met has asked me if I've been to Cotopaxi yet, and is sad when tell him/her that I have not; but none fails to tell me how awesome it is both culturally and historically – since the strong indigenous presence in Ecuador is still linked to the past – as well as visually. I've definitely come to appreciate Andean life and Ecuador's geographic and global location for, if nothing else, its anti-Meadville winter climate.

David DeMicheli – Ecuador

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS:

I'm currently living in an indigenous community in the Amazon, and there are about a million different communication styles that I am still getting accustomed to. First of all, I've noticed that people in this

community, who spend a lot of time working outside and working in their houses, point with their lips instead of their hands. I almost laughed the first time I noticed my host mom point with her lips, but I think that would be really insensitive. It's sometimes difficult to tell what they're pointing to. For example, my host mom will ask me to hand her something (I'm lucky if I know what the "something" is...I only know about 20 words in Kichwa. Luckily, most people also speak Spanish) and purse her lips. It's an interesting form of communication that I'm still getting used to. So far, I've learned that following a person's eyes is easier than their lips. My best guess is that this form of communication developed because people in the community often have their hands full with a task. Pointing with their lips avoids using a hand. From living in this community, I've also learned that decisions that affect the community are

made in groups. When me and the two other students who are currently doing internships here arrived, we were met with a welcoming reception to discuss our projects, how they would impact the community, and what the community would do to help us. Although it takes more time to discuss everything in large groups, it seems like a true democracy. Everyone has an equal voice.

Courtney Columbus –
Ecuador

For my one of my classes, Cultural Realities of Spain, we were assigned to find an inconspicuous location and, for a half an hour, observe a conversation or interaction between Spaniards. As I sat in a café for my half an hour, I observed two businessmen enjoying their afternoon coffee break. They stood at the bar, facing each other, conversing and maintained almost constant eye contact. As one of the men recounted a story, he



continued to touch the other man's arm or shoulder for emphasis. I was surprised to see how close the men were to each other, not only physically, but as they maintained eye contact and continued to touch one another, I couldn't help but notice the minimal personal space between these men. I have also personally experienced new communication styles. Upon my arrival to Spain, I was intimidated and often startled by the unfamiliar physical contact I received from Spaniards. For instance, every time I met someone for the first time or encountered a friend, I would have to give him or her two "besos" or kisses on the cheek. Likewise, I often felt uncomfortable when my professors would maintain eye contact in class longer than I was accustomed to or,

once, when a male friend would put his arm around my shoulder as we walked together under my umbrella. Though initially, I was startled by the diminished personal space, I have become more accustomed to the frequent physical contact and minimized, or often completely popped, personal bubble. Spain, a country with a substantial population with restricted territorial expansion, has and continues to confront spatial matters. Clearly, the Spanish culture values personal space much less than our culture in the United States. Through my many observations of eye contact, kisses, and physical contact of the Spaniards, it is evident that the Spain values and tolerates much more intimate styles of communication.

Wenonah Echeland –
Spain

I am uncertain if it has anything to do with the attitude of the south or being on an island with such a miniscule population where everybody knows one another, but communication is more focused on personal communication rather than electronic. People here always want to engage in a one-on-one conversation rather than through e-mail or telephone. None of my professors ever respond when I send e-mails, but if I go in to see them, they are always willing to sit down and talk right then and there. It seems as if very few of my professors here even check e-mail and the only way to communicate with them is to just go meet with them. Many of the people here seem to have an old-fashioned, one-on-one sense of communication with one another and never seem to engage in any real form of electrical communication. It just



shows the importance of personal connections which these people share. I learned a completely new style of communication while I was studying leatherback sea turtles in Trinidad. Working on the beaches in the middle of the night working with half ton turtles meant that there was limited verbal communication which could occur. We could not communicate verbally for fear of startling turtles and had to be very cautious with how we used our headlamps. As a result, communication was made mostly through flashes of red light from the headlamps, which the turtles do not react strongly to. As a result, that's the way we passed along messages and data to one another without having to walk up next to the person.

It was truly a unique and new style of communicating; and one which was necessary to ensure no disturbances of the large animals we were studying.

Mark Kirk – Trinidad

Australia is very similar to the states but there are subtle differences. One difference I have noticed is the general attitude of Australians as a whole. Instead of saying, "sorry," it is always, "you're alright mate," or, "no worries." To me this suggests that there is not such a need to apologize and that people do not get offended as easily. I am constantly hearing "no worries" all day. It makes it seem like a much more laid back lifestyle where no one really has a chip on their shoulder. The culture is relaxed and laid back, it is not nearly as uptight as people are in the states. Most people are extremely friendly and speak to total strangers as if they were friends. "Mate" a common word for friend, is used all

the time even to address a stranger.

The other difference that seemed to jump out at me is the "man love" as they call it.

The guys here are a close group and do many things only with the guys where truly no girls are invited. "Man dates" are a common occurrence. Many of their actions (like always hugging one another) would come off as a 'homosexual action' to many other men at home. Even the other American guys studying at this Uni were a little put off by it at first. The men here seem more comfortable with their emotions and masculinity. Short shorts are not just worn by the females. To them, its nothing odd or different. Going to the gym to "get big" is not a priority to the men here. They do not see a need to be really masculine or hide all their feelings, most of them really just dont care. My favorite thing about Australia (that I hope I never lose) is there no worries attitude and laid back lifestyle while still managing to get everything done here work hard without killing themselves. There seems to be more joy and less tension.

Jennifer Lonnen – Australia

Everyone at The Center for Cross Cultural Study (CC-CS) is required to take a 'cultural realities' class where we discuss many cultural differences between Spain and the United States. In this class, we have already talked about the differences in communication. In general, the manner of verbal communication is the same. Spaniards are direct and don't beat around the bush. They are not super formal and talk in a normal tone, although at times more exaggerated. Actually speaking Spanish, however, is the new communication style I have had to learn. Although I'm speaking with more fluidity today, I still mess up conjugating verbs and word placement. I have learned tons of new words and slang that is more colloquial. My emphasis on words has gotten better and my style of talking is

As for non-verbal communication, I have picked up many forms that Spaniards use. At Allegheny College it is common to smile at people as you walk around campus. In Seville on the other hand, a random smile can be considered an invitation to advance in a sexual manner and is viewed as creepy. Also, the distance between Spaniards while talking is a lot closer together and they hold direct eye contact longer. There is much more physical contact too while talking with Spaniards. Often while they talk they touch your arm to get your attention or put emphasis on something. Along with the increase in touching, Spaniards often greet each other with a kiss on each cheek. All of these were awkward for me at first but I have gotten used to it and today it doesn't bother me at all. These communication styles have taught me that in my new culture closeness to friends and family is very important. It has also

taught me that it is important for Spaniards to be direct with each other but at the same time still respect the feelings of one another. Finally, it has showed me that Spaniards value their acquaintances a lot and that they don't hesitate to treat them as family.

Derek McMahan – Spain

YOUTHSCAPES:

The first thing I would like to say is that studying abroad has been one of the greatest experiences in my life, and I highly urge every student to take advantage of any opportunity to study abroad! From this experience, I am taking back 6 months of real world experience in another country. Before coming to Australia I spoke with a few students who had studied abroad the previous semester. They gave me advice on everything from which hall to live in to the best places to travel. My "Q&A"



sessions with them were extremely helpful to me. Now that I am in Australia, I hope to use my experience to give advice to other students. I would tell them some "DOs and DON'Ts" I learned about Australian culture. I would explain how the school system differs from that in America. I would explain some of the cultural differences. I would tell them about the "must-dos" and "must-sees." Overall, I would give them general information and advice that I feel they need to know or might want to know before traveling abroad. I would tell them the things I didn't know that I wish I would have known before I came. I would want to answer any questions they have and try to ease any feelings of

Studying abroad has been extremely beneficial to my educational experience, and any interested students should take advantage of such an opportunity should it arise. I could go on and on about why students should study abroad, but I will try to stick to a few main points. Not many people can say they had the chance to live in another country for 6 months. When you study abroad, you become more than just a tourist—you become a member of the community. This experience has helped me grow and mature as both a student and an adult. When you travel out of your home country, you are forced to live on your own—away from family, friends, and everything familiar. I moved way out of my comfort zone. I went from feeling at home and comfortable in a familiar culture to feeling clueless and lost in a new, unfamiliar culture. This trip has given me invaluable life experience, from both a student's and adult's perspective. Studying abroad has

opened my eyes to the world beyond the limited scope I grew up in.

I have always felt that it is important to have an open mind towards people and cultures that are different from my own. This experience has allowed me to learn about a different society and culture; it enabled me to broaden my horizons. In addition, it removed me from my home culture and allowed me to view my own culture from an outsider's perspective. This experience has taught me more about Australian culture, American culture, and myself than I could have ever imagined. It has been highly rewarding, and I highly recommend it to other students.

Ashley Klingensmith –
Australia

SOCIAL CHANGE:

Coming to Mexico has allowed me to meet and interact with some amazing people.

One of these amazing people is another international student named Allison who is about as dedicated to social change as a person can get. When I met Allison she had just started a non-paid internship at a public middle-school and throughout the semester she has led and created several opportunities for others to get involved as well. She started a one-on-one mentoring program that connected middle-school students with university students with the purpose of giving them a positive role model and friend. She also organized two after-school English classes that meet once a week. And most recently she connected with a student group at the university to create a book drive for the middle-school's library which currently consists of one small box of books. Allison and all of the many volunteers who work with her are an excellent example of youth in action and have

spread awareness in what can be done to improve and increase the educational opportunities in Mexico.

Jasper Harris – Mexico

The 2010 general election for Great Britain was held yesterday. So far, it looks like the conservatives are going to take the house and the Prime Minister-ship, but it is too close to call. The election is a perfect example of young British people taking action to create change. For the last week, I could not go anywhere on campus without seeing a sign or poster or t-shirt that was urging one to vote for one of the many political parties that Britain hosts. People were always standing on the sidewalk handing out fliers, and several tables were set up to explain what different parties stood for. On election day, I was asked at least five times if I had remembered to vote by different

volunteers. This election reminded me of US elections, and it was awesome to see so many of Lancaster's students involved in creating the change that they wanted to see in the world.

Kirsten Ohmer – England

We had the chance to work with a group of scouts from the town where I was living in Costa Rica. These scouts did many activities in the community such as picking up trash or just learning about the local forests and streams. The scouts then made an effort to spread the knowledge they learned to their parents and others in the community. Though they were only taking on small projects, it was inspiring to see the youth of the community taking action to make their town a better place.

Emma Helverson – Costa Rica



COMING HOME:

Throughout the semester, I feel I fulfilled the role of an American ambassador rather than an Allegheny ambassador, because there is such a strong US influence in Latin America. It was nearly impossible to serve as anything but a personal American representative to all of the Ecuadorians I knew. To most of them, the US was a source of culture, political guidance (or turmoil, depending on who was asked), and wealth. But by sharing experiences and perspectives, I think I was able to convey that the US is complex, and more than just a country full of rich, fat, selfish elites. Money was always a topic of discussion when talking with Ecuadorians, and how could it not be?

When two people, one from one of the world's richest countries and the other from one of the poorest, have a conversation, it's bound to come up. But what I found most important and consistent throughout all of those conversations was not the multitude of cultural and/or economic differences between our countries, but rather the similarities we shared as individuals. One of the most difficult (and frustrating) conversations I had in Ecuador was one in which I tried explaining to my host-uncle that the immigration issue was so contentious in the US not because Americans simply "hate" Mexicans because they are Latino — though that may sometimes be the case — but rather for the same reasons Ecuadorians harbor bias toward the Colombians and Peruvians in their country: because of economic disadvantage and hardship. That is just one example, but I think it shows how two countries can be so radically different yet somehow be



the same. It's easy as a foreigner to generalize an entire country based on the country's international relations or the leader's unitary actions: associating Americans with George W. Bush or Iranians with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But most importantly, a country's politics or exportable culture is not a proper reflection of the individual; people everywhere are just people. That's certainly what I learned, and I hope Ecuador agrees.

David DeMicheli – Ecuador

"How much does college cost?" "Does America really look like it does in the movies?" "Is anyone poor there?" "Do you have a computer, cell phone, camera?" "Why don't you fix your own country's problems?"

These and other awkward and tough-to-answer questions popped up during my semester in Ecuador. They are questions that highlight the real and perceived differences between Ecuador, a developing country full of problems, and America, an economically powerful country full of its own set of problems. When asked these questions, I tried to

explain these differences and at the same time draw attention to similarities between our countries.

Courtney Columbus – Ecuador



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