

EXL 300

Cross Cultural Learning: Theory and Practice

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Quick Flashback: A selection of thought provoking, funny, and insightful posts from Allegheny College students in the Fall 2008 Study Abroad/Study Away programs.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY: What are some of the cultural expectations (positive and negative) about your host site that you are carrying with you?

NEW FACES: What have you noticed about people around you in your new "home?" Tell us a story drawing from some point of difference (e.g. mode of communication, non-verbal expressions, physical appearance, language, age, etc.) that has made you aware of "watching" your self 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 (could be national culture or regional culture)? In exchange, what have you learnt that is non-touristy, and involves deeper interactions with people who live in the place you are visiting?

DEFINING DIVERSITY: What are some of the unique ways that you have observed people in your host country / city engage in to (a) address environmental issues, and (b) promote civic responsibility?

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: In this blog entry, please take a picture of an object that is unique to the place you are in, and explain what it signifies that is unique to that culture. It could be a material object, or something from popular culture, or even a building, or a local "character."

STUDY APPROACHES: What are some of the "lessons" that you have learned about yourself, and about experiential learning as well, through your study abroad / away semester? Please provide specific examples that take the reader beyond abstract general statements.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS (Contd.):

YOUTHSCAPES: As you prepare to leave your host site/country, can you reflect on what you, as a young person, would take from this experience to inform the perspectives of other young people back home? Why should (and should they?) students travel to sites other than their own college, for an educational experience?

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. Again, specific examples are always an interesting read.

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY:

Hey guys, so I heard about this place called France and I decided to check it out! There's cigarette smoke and CRAZY-fast trains and naked beaches, so who wouldn't want to go there? So, cultural expectations...well, I expect to encounter those things, which I read about in the "yourmissionshouldyouchooset oacceptit" briefing pamphlet, like turning off lights if you leave a room for more than five seconds, using water and utilities sparingly, and eating dinner at a snail's pace over three hours. Important nuances

of culture that will be fun to fit in to if I do them right and irritating if I mess up. Going to France, I also expect...less drug culture, more moustaches, fewer jeans, tons of smokers, and the terrible foe that is the language barrier -- a horrifying beast that I cannot hope to conquer in only three months, though I expect that I shall make progress. I'm really pretty excited! (*J. Paul Hendrickson, France*)

WOW!!! So in about four days, I'll be on a plane on my way to Kenya! No words can describe the excitement and fears rolling



through my body. I've had a whole summer to let my future adventure soak in and it finally has, in the past few weeks. I find myself clueless when it comes to preparing for this trip. I've got the shots, the passport, visa, and the suitcase of clothes, but I still feel a void.

...I expect to experience and see the beauty of Africa and the African culture. The way men and women interact, how family relationships are and function, and the way society communicates are just a few of the many things I look forward to learning. Most characteristics that I've been taught to associate with Africa are negative. The continent is poor, rampant with AIDS, and developmentally behind the United States. So when I go, I want to see beyond the stereotypes and westernized perception and embrace Kenya for all its strengths and weaknesses. In these next eight months, I can only imagine what lies ahead and how much will change. I can be nothing but grateful for this amazing opportunity! KENYA HERE I COME!!!! (*Ashley Teal, Kenya*)

I expect that once I get to Lancaster University I will set up in my dorm and have some problem setting up my

computer and Internet or my bed or something, which never fail to happen at Allegheny. It is pretty much bound to happen again. Once I get settled it will be strange to have a week of orientation activities with forums and informational meetings and class choosing, because that hasn't happened since freshman year. I expect it to be just as it's supposed to be, informative and that I will feel as though I fit in a little bit more after. I expect to enjoy the surroundings of the university and the large tree that occupies the front lawn of my dormitory. I know I will be seeing a couple familiar faces, because I know some friends of mine will be at Lancaster. But, I really expect to meet many English folk, who I can travel with and get to know the culture through the people I am with. It worked out quite



nicely that I just met a handful of Englishmen at the YMCA camp that I worked at this summer in Connecticut. None of them attend Lancaster University, but I think having met them and making tentative arrangements to meet up while there has lowered my feelings of anxiousness upon arrival. I know my parents aren't fond of the idea of me traveling by myself, so I think it is a step in the right direction. (*Carla Morabito, England*)

Okay so! I'm leaving in about three or four hours for France! Well not quite...I'm leaving to go spend the night at a friend's house while my family goes off and parties in Minnesota. Ah well. Anyway, getting to this point has been quite an adventure. From "you need to go where to get your visa?!?" to "are you sure you're not going to pack this?" it's been kind of stressful. As such, I suppose I haven't given too much thought to what exactly I'll be encountering in France. I keep thinking "I've been there twice, no big deal," but then...this is totally different. I'm not a tourist anymore. I'm as close to being a citizen of France as I will probably ever get. So what do I expect? Pretty much anything. I've of course heard about the French love affair with wine, which I'm pretty

sure I'm okay with (except for this whole having wine with lunch thing, since lunch is apparently the biggest meal of the day). I'm expecting France to be pretty westernized. But if they're not, I think I'm going to be in for a surprise. And of course, I'm expecting fantastic food. *(Erica Belden, France)*



I can't believe that in 15 minutes my family, my friend, and I will leave my house and head to the airport. It seems like just yesterday I was thinking about how much time I had to get ready and get everything together that I need to take. I was very wrong. I mean, even today we had to run to Kohl's to get me some new tennis shoes because I

realized the ones I wanted to wear were very worn out...eek! But otherwise, I think I'm pretty prepared and I'm ready to take on Europe. *(Brittany Lanahan, France)*

So I've been living in Germany for about three weeks now. I definitely had some preconceived expectations before I got here, some of which have turned out to be true, and some have not. First, I kept hearing about how unfriendly the Germans are. I figured I would be snubbed and treated rudely in public. While Germans may not be as openly friendly as Americans are, they are still very friendly. If one has a question or needs help all he or she has to do is ask, and any German is most willing to help. Also, my host family is even friendlier than some American families I

...know. Second, I thought I would not care for German cuisine because it is typically very heavy. The more traditional German food is heavy, but I have not had too much of it. My host family cooks very international dishes. They are usually different than dishes I would have in America, but they are very good. So I have liked almost all of the food I have eaten in Germany to the present. Lastly, I figured I would be viewed as a wasteful American because Germans are typically very environmentally aware. While no one has said anything to me, I have become aware of every single thing that I use. So Germans may or may not view me as wasteful, but I have at least learned for myself how much I waste. (*Jennifer Brooks, Germany*)

Honestly, prior coming to Beaufort, N.C., I thought that my days would consist of lying around on the beach playing with seashells and counting grains of sand. I also thought that students from Duke would be pompous and standoffish. Honestly, I had mixed expectations and didn't know exactly what to expect of the Duke Marine Lab. I found shortly after my arrival that my original ideas about both the work atmosphere and the people here were incorrect. As soon as I stepped into my dorm complex, four students greeted me. After lobbing my suitcase into my room, a couple of my dorm mates and myself headed for the beach. What a way to spend my first day. Upon returning to the dorm, I was introduced to my roommate, who is perhaps one of the nicest people I know. As for the work atmosphere, I don't

spend my days lounging on the beach, but I do spend most of them dealing hands on with the organisms that I'm studying in my textbook. The work that I'm doing in my classes is not easy but it is manageable, and I spend my free time outdoors, which I love. Beaufort is a beautiful little town full of quaint people who are very friendly. I have experienced none of the stereotypical southern hatred, which many people think still lingers from the civil war era. Everything is copacetic and I couldn't expect anything more from this experience. (*Andrew Burton, Duke Marine Lab*)





NEW FACES:

Upon first arriving in England, I noticed that the people here looked different, but at the same time, the same. In fact, it seems that whenever I go some place other than my home or place that I'm used to, such as my college, the people around me seem to remind me of people I already know. I mentioned this to some new flat mates of mine and we got into a discussion about it. One girl said how she has heard a theory that your brain can recognize about 6 traits in faces. So when you start to see

more and more people you categorize it into the classifications that you already know from people you have previously known. When this was mentioned, I realized that it sounded familiar to what I learned last year in my sensation and perception psychology course. Perception is the process of using the senses to acquire information about the surrounding environment or situation. I remember when I first heard "perception," I had heard it as an art term as perceiving something differently or similarly to others. *(Carla Morabito, England)*

Just as it is easy to become accustomed to being another face in the crowd at Allegheny, I also sometimes find it easy to blend in here in Australia as well. I'm living on-campus in dorms at a university surrounded by other students my age. Also, there are many international students, especially students from America. So although I've met and formed close ties with many Australians, most of my closest friends are other Americans. Unfortunately, some Australians are hesitant to become too close to students studying abroad because they are so used to so many international students constantly coming and going. But in terms of the Australians that I know at the university, I have noticed a few differences, but not all that many. But one difference that I have become very conscious of is the mode



of communication. Although Australia is an English-speaking country, there are key differences in their English as compared to English as we know it. As many people know, there is a substantial amount of Australian slang. On the day I arrived in Australia, I called a cab to take me from the airport to the university. Immediately upon hearing my American accent, my cab driver took pity on me. He explained many different words that would be perfectly acceptable in the United States, but that could potentially mean something very different here. So from that moment on, I've been very

careful to learn the slang and watch what I say so that I don't unintentionally offend someone. However, there are some very unique cultures present in Australia. Among them, I find the Australian Aborigines to be the most interesting. I would love to learn more about the great history of these people, which dates back to the original occupants of this continent. *(Christina Zanic, Australia)*

Americans are nice. We say "sorry" when we accidentally bump into someone. We smile when we pass someone on the street. We are patient when someone is confused. Greeks not so much. I go shopping about once a week at a local grocery store. One day, some friends wanted to try a much larger store, which was a bus trip away, so I went with them. We had a grand time looking

...around a Wal-Mart type store, searching for ketchup and tin foil and taco sauce. I picked out some grapes to buy, but forgot to get them weighed. In the U.S., you just take the produce to the cash register and they have a built-in scale right there. But here, you must take produce to the scales in the department and get a sticker there, which the cashier reads. (*Christine Heagy, Greece*)

I board a train in Germany. Perhaps I find a seat, perhaps I don't. Nevertheless, I turn on my MP3 player and zone out until it is time to get off. The other people on board, however, do not go into their own "special places" like myself. Instead...they stare. That's right, they full on gaze at me. Even as I look up to acknowledge their stare, their eyes don't stray. They continue



to look at me as if I'm the most interesting thing they've ever seen. Why are they staring at me? Is there something on my face? Is my hair too frizzy? I quickly look away, because I feel uncomfortable with their penetrating gaze. I look up again, and they aren't staring at me anymore. Now they are looking at someone else, or out the window, or reading a book. The point of this story is that Germans like to stare people down. Especially on trains. It seems that it's just part of their culture. It's not considered rude to stare as it might be in America, it's just how they observe. So, unless it's a creepy person finding their next

victim to beg from, there's no trouble in receiving a stare from a German. (*Kristy Snyder, Germany*)

CULTURE TRADE:

My cultural trade in Costa Rica has mostly been a one-way street. I don't think that I have brought that much American culture to CR. The person I have learned the most from and taught the most to however, is my home stay brother. He has been to the United States before as part of an exchange program though so before my arrival he was already aware of some of the differences between CR and the United States. Other than my housewarming gifts (maple syrup and homemade jelly from wild grapes) I have only introduced Ticos to the different opinions on certain things. In Costa Rica, P.D.A. is SUPER O.K. Everyone makes

...out in the park constantly and families are much more open with matters of love. I mentioned to my home stay mom that, I probably wouldn't do that back home and she quickly corrected my judgment. In Costa Rica, doctors tell families that it is important for their children to see love whether it be between mother and father, or parents and children, they want their kids to understand love and affection early on. Once I heard that I realized that it actually makes a lot of sense. After all who wouldn't want their children to grow up in a positive environment. (*Abby Conroy, Costa Rica*)



My roommate and I went to a local restaurant in Beaufort to get dinner. It was the type of restaurant in which you seat yourself and then the waitress comes to wait on you. So, we sat in one of empty booths and ordered a couple drinks while we decided what we were going to order. Across the room, my roommate noticed an African American family talking amongst one another. We placed our orders and twenty minutes later we received our orders. As we started eating, we looked over and noticed that not only has the family across from us not received their orders, but also they don't even have drinks. About ten minutes later the family gets up and walks out. I would like to think that I bring a fresh perspective to Beaufort, a sense of culture that is slightly more accepting and

tolerant of diversity and race. I'm not saying that racism and discrimination doesn't exist in Pittsburgh, I just believe that in the small town of Beaufort there is an unspoken cultural stigma about race. On the other hand, I have learned that family is a vital component of small town life. Beaufort consists of a small population of people whom interact very closely. Large family gatherings are very common and the value of family is omnipresent. You really begin to comprehend the meaning of the phrase "small town charm." Everyone knows everyone, Extended family is much less important in the family dynamic as cultural norm relative to Beaufort. Beaufort is a place where relationships are close knit and people care for one another. (*Andrew Burton, Duke Marine Lab*)

Now that I've been in Kenya for almost two months, I would have to say the most "unique home" cultural aspect I've introduced them to has to do with food. In Kenya, they have amazing produce! Everything is fresh and delicious especially their avocados. The avocados are huge, but after a couple weeks, I realized they only used them minimally. Coming from Yuma, Arizona, which is close to the border, I'm a guacamole consumer and was shocked to find out they had not utilized them in such a way nor had anything close to it. They have all the ingredients but had never combined them. So one day I gathered all the necessities; onion, tomato, cilantro, lime, salt and some pepper powder and went to work. After slowly tasting their first bite my whole family greatly

enjoyed the dish and had fun trying to pronounce "Guacamole." I'm happy to say now it has become a common dish in my house that everyone gladly adds to his or her plate. They have also introduced me to many new aspects of Kenyan culture. My favorite would have to be the way family is constructed. I have come to realize that a Kenyan family doesn't just involve your blood relatives but everyone you care for. In my neighborhood, I'm considered a "daughter" in at least three homes. From one house to another, the treatment is the same and I'm introduced as part of the family to visitors and always greeted on the street with a warm embrace. The mothers of the home care for me like I'm one of their own, the brothers watch out for me, and the sisters confide

in me. I couldn't have asked for a better culture to be assimilated into. They are some of the warmest and kindest people and I've become deeply attached. I often think of foreigners in the United States and wonder if they would be able to receive the same treatment as I have. In my opinion they wouldn't and I think it's because everyone is very guarded in the U.S. and while they might be welcoming to a guest they wouldn't as freely accept them as one of the family. (*Ashley Teal, Kenya*)





While the culture in Washington does not vary greatly from that of Pittsburgh, it does have a few differences. While in Washington, I have noticed that politics is all around. It is watched on television, read about in newspapers and magazines and listened to on the local radio stations. It seems that most individuals have some sort of an interest in politics, both domestic and international. As a political science major, this is one of my favorite parts of Washington. I love the culture that is present. There is so much to do and see and in such a short amount of time. The location of Washington D.C. allows you to travel to New York City, Baltimore, and Virginia in a matter of hours. One example comes to mind that you

would not see often in downtown Pittsburgh and Meadville is that all of the students that attend the Washington Semester have to participate in an internship that you attend twice a week. In order to get to your internship or anywhere in the city, your prime mode of transportation is the metro. While on the metro any time of the day, you will notice is that there are people all around you that are reading books, magazines and newspapers. In Washington, unlike other cities or towns that I have been to, there is a large academic curiosity. Individuals are constantly reading and keeping themselves informed on what is going on in the world. (*Ines Smajic, Washington D.C.*)

DEFINING DIVERSITY:

When thinking seriously about any environmental or civic issues, I immediately knew that my focus for this entry would be environmental. Australians are well aware of the overwhelming natural beauty of their home and will do whatever it takes to protect it. I recently obtained my SCUBA diving license and as a result have developed a strong sense of appreciation for the whole other world that lives beneath the ocean surface. But also, through taking these classes to become a certified open water diver, I learned of the growing need for coral reef conservation. Australia is home to not only Queensland's Great Barrier Reef, but also many more of the most beautiful and diverse coral reefs in the world. Unfortunately, the reefs are suffering due to both human activity and climate change. In



order to protect these natural wonders, the first goal of Australians is to educate the general public. But also, many volunteer divers are working to study and repair damaged reefs while universities are continuing with their extensive research projects already underway. Sadly, I haven't experienced much in the way of civic initiatives. Since I spend the majority of my time on-campus at the university, all I've really seen are small fundraisers held by students to profit charitable organizations. But in terms of politics, I know very little about any Australian issues. Lately, all of the focus/news coverage has been on the upcoming U.S.

presidential election. (*Christina Zanic, Australia*)

Aside from utilizing the transportation infrastructure, Germans conserve more materials by sorting their trash much more than we Americans do. Everyone separates his or her plastics, paper, "Verpackungs" (packaging materials), and glass bottles. Bottle can be returned at the nearest supermarket for more money than they can be in America (15-50 cents). Many people also compost. They've been recycling for 30 years now, and the system is so easy that it has really become a part of the culture. There are even 4-way cans in public places like train stations with places for...plastic, Verpackungs, paper and Restmüll, which is everything that doesn't fit into the aforementioned categories. (*Didem Uca, Germany*)

Being in Australia, I have picked up on a few different ways that people engage in environmental issues and civic responsibility. One of the biggest things I have noticed in regards to making the environment a better place is that the people who have cars, often own small cars. Of course, there are SUVs, but they are much less abundant than in the United States. To go along with that, many people ride on the buses and I also see tons of students riding bikes around campus. Another way people in Australia engage in aiding environmental issues is by picking up after themselves. When I visited Sydney, it was one of the cleanest cities I have ever seen. When I go to Boston or New York, there is garbage all over the sidewalks. That was not the case in Sydney.

I have noticed civic responsibility in the dorm I am living in. The head of our dorm as well as well as fliers around the dorm are constantly promoting individual responsibility, which in turn leads to a better community. Little things such as cleaning up after yourself and not littering make a difference. It is highly stressed that individual people need to take responsibility for their actions.

(Emily Hoar, Australia)



When I think about environmental issues in Greece, the first event I think about is the forest fires that happened in the Peloponnesian Peninsula a few years ago, which left the countryside

littered with blackened trees. But then my thoughts turn to how the city of Athens responds to such issues. The public garbage system works through thousands of small metal dumpsters on the street into which residents throw their trash. Some dumpsters have blue lids, and some have green. The green ones are for the recycling. A more cultural thing is that in the winter, houses and apartments are heated only in the mornings and evening to conserve energy, a sad fact to warmth-loving North Americans. But it isn't too cold yet here, so I think we'll make it. But a few weeks ago, there was a several weeklong event, where





...people from all over Athens and even the country thought about environmental awareness. There was a display in Syntagma (Constitution) Square where different designers created clothing, which reflected a reusing or recycling attitude. I saw the exhibit, and it included everything from gauzy dresses to cute shoes, all made from non-traditional materials. The event concluded with a concert of local artists in the Marble Stadium, right outside of my school. As for civic awareness it used to be that if a citizen didn't vote, they were not allowed certain privileges. Only recently has voting

become optional. I think that part of this is because of the unstable political past of the country. There was a dictatorship from 1968 until 1973 and since then, the parliament has been made up of factions, sort of like in the US, but with very vocal and influential minorities. I like Greece. I have not even begun to understand its views either on the environment or on politics and civic responsibility, and I imagine they are all as complicated as America's. So I listen and learn and absorb everything I can to try to understand just a little more. (*Christine Heagy, Greece*)

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:



To some, this may not seem that important. So, they don't call the tasty chips Ranch Doritos? Who really cares? The truth is, however, that the consequences of this tiny printing error reach far beyond that of a snack. The name change of one of America's favorite style of chip signifies a complete lack of vocabulary on Germany's part. The reason they don't call them Ranch Doritos is very simply...

because they don't have a word for ranch. Or rather, they just don't have ranch period. Ranch dressing is unheard of here in Germany. It doesn't come with salads, isn't available on a McDonald's chicken sandwich, it can't be used as a dip for vegetables. It is just, plain and simply, not a part of the German culture. This small sign of ranch life was perhaps the only one I have seen this entire trip so far, no other signs of it exist anywhere. Instead of mourning the loss of such a wonderful and tasty invention, the Germans have found other ways to satisfy their intensive hunger.

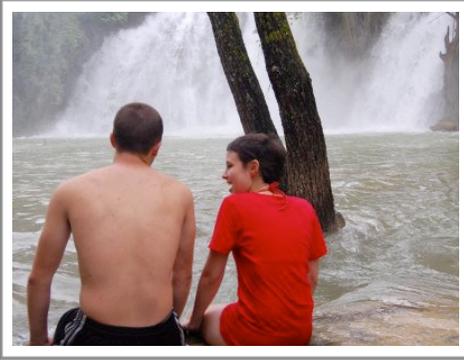
(Kristy Snyder, Germany)



Not only is the Sydney Opera House unique to Australia, but also is unique in the scope of the entire world. The Opera House is considered to be one of the most famous performing arts venues and its modern expressionist design truly makes it a feat of architecture. Planning for its construction began in the 1940s and its doors were finally opened in 1973. It was designed to look like the sails of boats billowing in the wind. The Opera House is still

used regularly for concerts, theatrical productions and other performances. I made a weekend trip with a few of my friends to Sydney because I knew I couldn't have left Australia without being able to say that I saw the Opera House. Also, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, another icon of Australia, is extremely close by. The city of Sydney is beautiful and it was by far one of my favorite trips since I've been here.

(Christina Zanic, Australia)



Throughout these brief travels, I have found myself thinking numerous times that the sights we've seen can't be captured by a picture. So in my opinion, a picture is only worth a 1,000 words to the one who took it or who was a part of the experience, because all of those words come along with the memories that were made when the picture was taken. For example, a picture of a beautiful waterfall brings back a lot of great memories, but a picture of that same waterfall with you and a friend in it brings back even more! (*Troy Speicher, Australia*)

The Ampelmännchen are a symbol of Berlin. Especially in East Berlin. The Ampelmännchen are shown on traffic lights at pedestrian crosswalks. The symbol first

became a topic of discussion when reunification of Germany occurred. When West and East Berlin were reunified, there were attempts to standardize the traffic lights into the West Berlin version. There were protests, however, from people who wanted to preserve some of East Berlin. Thus, the symbols became famous for East Berlin. Finally, all of Berlin adopted the Ampelmännchen and now the Ampelmännchen symbolize not only the East, but all of Berlin. They are very popular today and souvenirs are everywhere with Ampelmännchen on them. So,



when crossing the street in Berlin, look at the Ampelmännchen to show you when to cross! (*Jennifer Brooks, Germany*)

I'm staying in Kisumu Town for my attachment in Kenya. It is on the western coast of Kenya and is home to the Luos. They are one of the 42 ethnic groups in Kenya and this is one of their signature means of transport. THE BODA BODA! You can't walk anywhere without being passed by a boda boda driver or a group of boda boda drivers offering to take you somewhere. It is a wonderful way to travel around the



...small city of Kisumu and probably the cheapest. Most rides will cost you only 20 shillings. It is crazy how strong some of these guys must be because they'll be carrying a mother and her two children on the back of their bikes trekking up large hills. It is definitely a must if you ever get the chance to ride on one. I've sometimes wondered if this kind of transportation would work in the states, but laws and regulation would probably stop it from being possible. I

think we are definitely missing out. It is also a great way for the many people experiencing economic hardship in the area to make a little cash in a reasonable manner. This is something this area definitely needs more of. (*Ashley Teal, Kenya*)



I took this picture a few months ago from the top of La Giralda, a beautiful baroque style tower, which is part of the Cathedral. Enjoy the picture, because I walked up 32 ramps and one flight of stairs to get it. I think that this picture represents a few aspects of Sevillian culture. The general city life is there, as are outside tables and a cafe. No matter what time of day it is, there is always time to stop at a cafe with some friends for a cerveza or a

copa de vino. Probably the most telling part of the culture is all of the rooftop accessories, for lack of a better word. They have pools, lounge chairs, awnings for shade, you name it. Sevilla is pretty much the hottest part of Spain, close enough to the coast to get all the sun, and far enough from the water to avoid the true cold at night. My room here doesn't get too much natural sunlight, and every time my senora or her husband sees me cold during the daytime, they always tell me to go up to the roof and spend some time in the sun. It's not to say that people don't work here, but they certainly put a greater emphasis on relaxation and comfort than we do at home. (*Arielle Kanner, Spain*)



This picture was taken on the campus of Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Service, across the street from where I intern.

What is it? A large chunk of cement with graffiti? No. That would be a piece of the Berlin Wall. My NGO works with SAIS, so sometimes I have to run errands in the building, which this is in front of. I never really noticed it before, until one day when I was walking past with a bunch of pamphlets I had to drop off. I just stopped and stared. I mean, here parts of the Berlin Wall are in

museums all over D.C. and the world behind velvet ropes, and here's this piece just hanging out in a courtyard, exposed to the elements and the whims of the people. I even got to touch it! (*Elizabeth Tuttle, Washington D.C.*)

STUDY APPROACHES:



With experimental learning, it is difficult to see, at first, what you have learned. Only when you go back to those who know you or you really think about it, can you see the differences. I have learned, though, that I can make it alone in the world. Well not quite alone, but I have learned that I do not always need my friends and family by my side. Talking to them from time to time is enough to pull

me through. Meeting friendly people along the way has definitely also helped. I know, though, that I can make it alone, at least for a while. I also learned that I am good at adapting to new places and customs. I am quite grateful for this because it made my transition to my host-family very smooth. It was an enjoyable time for all of us because I would try everything that they liked. I was never difficult to appease. This is good to know for future reference if I travel more. With this came the knowledge that I do not need everything that I crave at home. I crave things at home like peanut butter for example. Here, though, I have gone almost the whole time without peanut butter and I do not even crave it because it just is not around. So I have learned that even if I do crave something, I do not actually

...need it. I am starting to ignore my cravings, which is a very good thing. It makes me a stronger person if I do not give into all my cravings. I have also learned why the world thinks Americans are stupid. I have seen many American tourists here, and almost all of them have been stupid, ignorant, disrespectful, or all three. Every time I see them, I do not want to associate myself with them. I realized that when one travels and visits foreign places, one must always be respectful. One does not need to know everything, but one must at least respect other people's cultures. I believe American tourists stick out more in public than other tourists because we are loud. So if American tourists learned to be quieter and learned to be respectful of foreign cultures, then maybe the world would

not think that American tourists are stupid. (*Jennifer Brooks, Germany*)

On this trip, I've learned that experiential learning is a mighty useful tool. Every career, language, or break-dancing move can be performed infinitely smoother when you've already done it, at least in part. Life is not a classroom. I've learned a ridiculous amount of practical, everyday French, as well as when to use it or not, by seeing people speak and react in the streets. As for learning more about myself, I suppose I learned that you can totally wear clothes for more than one day without it being that nasty. (*J Paul Hendrickson, France*)

When I first arrived in Washington D.C., there were clear differences between the

city and Meadville. I had a lot of anxieties about how I would get around, how I would fit in and whom I would meet. After spending about a week at American University, it all made sense. The metro system began to make sense, I was able to get on at one stop and get off at the other and not get lost. After a couple of weeks, I began to feel like a local and would give others advice on how to get from one station to the other, or what direction what train is traveling towards. The biggest surprise came, when after about a month I could take the metro without even thinking about it too much, the need to look at a map was non-existent at that point. When it comes to making friends and fitting in the Washington culture, those anxieties went away as soon as I met the people on my floor.

...It was apparent that we were all in the same position, none of us had a full understanding of what he had gotten ourselves into, but with that came the opportunity for us to bond while we explored the city, classes, professors and fellow students. While at American University, I have been taking classes that deal with Peace and Conflict Resolution. We have focused on numerous conflicts such as Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland and many more. While on our three-week field study in Bosnia, I learned that individuals from all over the world have many things in common. No matter where you are from or what your life has been like, we can all learn from one another and share our experience. (*Ines Smajic, Washington D.C*)

Being in Germany and learning the language has been an amazing experience for me, especially because I am now capable of speaking to many relatives in German. It has been great to spend time with them and learn about their everyday life and culture overall. I've seen them twice since I've been here, and hopefully will be able to visit them one more time right before I leave. I feel very fortunate being able to communicate with my Uncle in his native language, as he tends to cove and tells me stories of his and my father's childhood. (*Andrew Pfeifer, Germany*)



YOUTHSCAPES:

The biggest thing Allegheny students complain about is Allegheny, right? Right. My advice? GO ABROAD. What do I mean? Well being abroad, among many other things that I will get to, has shown me how awesome Allegheny truly is. Granted, those of us studying in Angers right now aren't technically at a real French university...we are at the "international kids" branch which I'm told functions somewhat differently. But I have grown to appreciate the simple little Allegheny

...things that we take for granted like syllabi, official final exam dates known far in advance, dorm rooms, on campus dining (paid for with just a swipe of the card!!) and office hours. Believe it or not, I find that I am actually more excited to attend classes at Allegheny than I ever have been. And after 2 hour classes here, those Tuesday/Thursday sessions are going to seem like walks in the park! (*Brittany Lanahan, France*)

My experience studying abroad has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I have taken so much from it and I am thankful for the great opportunity. Studying abroad has helped me learn about other cultures different from my own. It has allowed me to break free from what I am used to and experience different things. It has

helped me to gain a greater perspective of the world we live in. It has helped me to understand that not everyone sees things the same way I do. Everyone is different. This experience has educated me in a whole new way. It has taught me how to interact and has helped me understand people from different cultures. I want to let people know, that anyone who is able to take time and live/study abroad in a different country should definitely take the time to do so. It will open your eyes so a whole new way of living and understanding the world.

(*Emily Hoar, Australia*)

Living in a city of unrest for the past two weeks has challenged my sense of safety. I live in a safe neighborhood in Athens, and my school was also located there, but we were within easy walking distance of the

protests and demonstrations. I could go online at my apartment and see what was happening a short a distance away. After a few days, hearing of more protests became second nature, and soon I began to hear stories of friends who had ventured near the riots, most learning first-hand what tear gas is like. Almost two weeks after the beginning of the riots, the city is getting back to normal, and my only nerves now are about flying home tomorrow. (*Christine Heagy, Greece*)



There is no way that I would ever discourage anyone from studying abroad. This may sound as if it comes out of an ad, but you truly do learn things about yourself, which you may not be able to at your home school. On a less emotional note, while I do love Allegheny, there is a lack of diversity and culture in its surroundings. By studying abroad in Washington D.C., I was able to not only expand my interactions and exchange experiences with people who share my nation, but was able to gain international perspectives by communicating with international students in a truly international city. I think it's important to step outside your comfort zone (i.e. Allegheny College) into somewhere new and exciting, because I think I learned the

most from these cultural exchanges, and that they helped me to better understand the lesson I was being taught in the classroom. (*Elizabeth Tuttle, Washington D.C.*)



I would definitely encourage other students to study abroad, no matter what their reasons or goals are. Studying in a different country is the absolute best way to improve your language skills. You can only learn so much in a classroom before you need to just be immersed in it and speak it everyday, make it part of your everyday life. I wouldn't say that the actual schooling overseas is a reason to go. I think that the

differences can be interesting, but really I think that whether you are studying a different language or not everybody should have a study abroad experience just because it's such an eye opener. You learn so much about the culture by being there, the kinds of things that you don't learn in your history courses. You learn about the way the people in other countries see themselves and the world. You also get the chance to travel and experience something that is just completely different from America, or from anywhere I've been in America. Who would pass up the chance to go live in a new and exciting place? Honestly, once you graduate and get a job and a life, when are you going to have time to travel like this? (*Arielle Kanner, Spain*)

COMING HOME:

Although I am not leaving Kenya for another semester because I am a yearlong student, there are many things I have already learned and appreciate about this experience. Coming into to Kenya, although I had told myself not to, I had many stereotypes and expectations about what life would be like over here. At first, these perceptions stayed in place and it was hard not to criticize differences instead of seeing behind them and what circumstances have created the society I viewed as so behind the United States. Over time though, I've started to appreciate the simplicity of this life. All in all, it has opened me up to a new way of life and has made me appreciate the simple pleasures. Leaving the U.S. and exploring different ways of life is important in any capacity

you do it. Allowing yourself to learn and see outside perspectives allow you to reconsider and reflect on your own beliefs. It is during this process that you are able to see life from more perspectives and in turn make better decisions in your own life.

(Ashley Teal, Kenya)



When you decide to study in another country, you don't realize that five months is enough to completely change your life. My roommate, who is another Allegheny student, left last night to do some travelling before he heads back home. I had to close his door so I wouldn't see his empty room

every time I walk by. I know I'll see him again in a month, but by him leaving I realized that my time is also running out. My life has changed since I've been here. I now accept the Mexican lifestyle as my own. I wake up to sunshine everyday, even if it's not warm outside. I eat huevos mexicanos or quesadillas before I go to school. I catch the public transportation bus home everyday. I talk in Spanish with people who are capable of speaking English. On the weekends, I go out with friends and we eat tacos at 4 a.m. or later. I may have only been here for four months, but that was more than enough time for me to accept my new style of life. Coming home is not going to be an easy thing for me to do. Of course I can't wait to see my family and friends, but that also means that I'm leaving my new family

...and friends behind. In less than two weeks I will have to go through a transition to adjust back to a life that I have already lived for 20 years. It's something I never thought I would have to do, but I'm realizing now that it is going to happen. I'm not sure that I'm ready to come home quite yet, but my choices are limited. I recently read a quote from my friend that said, "I go to sleep late, I wake up early, and I take advantage of every second of my day with absolutely no regrets." I feel like for the most part, I have done exactly this during my time here in Mexico. These last 9 or 10 days here I'm going to make sure that I do exactly as my friend does and hopefully bring this newly learned appreciation of life back home to the United States. There has never been a dull moment during my semester here, and I hope that's

something I can bring with me back home to Allegheny. (*Tori Speicher, Mexico*)

My stay in Greece marks the second time I have been out of the country. The first was to the Dominican Republic where I stood out from the crowd primarily due to my skin color. But this time, I was headed to a country where I physically more or less fit in. I lived with and attended school with other Americans and a few Canadians, so language wasn't an issue in that arena. But when it came to interacting with Greeks, I felt as if there were a large sign over my head that blinked "American! American!" in large neon letters. We were told from the first day that most Greeks spoke some English, but that they appreciated any attempt at Greek. Understand that while I like languages, I do not

pick them up as some do. (*Christine Heagy, Greece*)



I think as studying abroad in England, because of the location, I was able to fulfill both the roles as American and Allegheny College ambassador. The people I got to know the best were my flat mates. It was neat to always be around them and they soon began to see me as just another flat mate, even if the conversation of how we say things differently and how the school systems are so much different between here and there came up every single day, I still became much more a member of the flat than a member of their country. I say this because I began to feel

...very comfortable in the flat, almost like a family, whereas in other things I did with the university I was always the “American” or the international student. Those who I became closest to began to look past this. So, in that instance I feel that I have succeeded in being an Allegheny ambassador, because my fellow classmates then saw me as a student as well. We were there to study and not just talk about the differences and similarities between England and America, even though I definitely thoroughly enjoyed these conversations. (*Carla Morabito, England*)

My time at James Cook University in Australia was an experience that will never be forgotten. While I was there, I made sure to speak with as many Australians as possible and join in activities/ go on trips that would not be possible elsewhere. Although it was very difficult to

keep up with my studies with so many distracting things to do, such as getting my scuba diving license, traveling to Sydney, sailing the Whitsundays, etc., I did my best. I believe that I represented Allegheny College very well while I was at JCU. I ran into a few Australians who would ask me where I went to college back in the states. When I said Allegheny, their response was normally along the lines of, "Oh yeah, I've met people who have come here in the past from Allegheny. They are great people." I believe that I as well as the other girls I studied abroad with from Allegheny, kept up this image while in Australia. (*Emily Hoar, Australia*)



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 Professor Ishita Sinha-Roy