

EXL300 (spring 2011): Cross Cultural Learning: Theory & Practice



August 25, 2011

Quick Flashback:

A selection of thought provoking, funny, and insightful posts from Allegheny College students in the Spring 2011 Study Abroad/Away programs!

TEST ENTRY: While I was preparing to write this, I looked at my Statement of Purpose to see what my thoughts were about the exchange while I was applying for the exchange. They included such points as:

- improve my knowledge and appreciation of the German language, literature, culture, and customs. This is especially useful because I am a German major.
 - hundreds of courses available in German
 - immersion in a German-speaking society and culture
 - improve my knowledge of the German accent, colloquial language, and academic language
 - choose, prepare for, and research my senior thesis topic (take advantage of the many resources available in Germany, such as libraries, professors and German citizens)
 - come back to Allegheny with a deeper and broader understanding and appreciation of the German language and culture, and share it with my fellow Allegheny students.
 - help to achieve my goals as an Allegheny student, as a future graduate searching for a job or applying for acceptance into graduate school or the Peace Corps...
- Thinking about it, I may have focused so much on academics because that is something predictable,

something I am comfortable with. Even though I could get some unpredictability at Allegheny – I could join new clubs, or become involved in different ways – the backbone of life, society, communication, etc. remains the same. Although Germany is similar to the US in many ways, going there still provides an opportunity to be lost. To be lost in a different language, culture, history and mentality. This provides an opportunity to find out new things, to start from almost scratch, and to see life from a different angle unattainable for a native speaker. (*Margot Blevins, Germany*)

*Learning is experience.
Everything else is just information.*
-- Albert Einstein



GUIDE TO THE WORLD:

Washington is significantly different from Meadville or Pittsburgh. Thus far, this trip has surpassed all my expectations. I absolutely love it here. It is such a young, diverse and politically charged city. I am currently taking an 8 credit seminar class focused on the American Political system, a 4 credit research project (essentially a 35-40 page pre-thesis project) about the financial crisis, and to top it all off a 4 credit internship in Senator Tom Udall's office

(a young progressive Senator from New Mexico). The connections I have already made in the short time that I have been here is remarkable and you never know who you will run into (for example I accidentally pressed the Senators only elevator button and took a ride with Rand Paul, an individual whom I am at complete ideological odds with, but who is an extremely pleasant person). Although Washington DC is obviously in the United States, I am exposed to a large number of foreign cultures through the individuals who have come to the city to study, or for various other reasons. For example, one of my roommates is German and a substantial portion of

the great friends I have made are from various countries across the globe like Columbia, South Korea, Norway, and Bulgaria to name a few. ... Many of them are very surprised by the arrogance of our culture. Conversely, I have also enjoyed asking a few questions of my own and having deep policy discussions, like I said it's a politically charged city. It has been a great time so far and I look forward to what's next.

P.S. Someone might want to tell the Business for Diplomatic Action that people from South America DO NOT like it when we refer to ourselves as the Americans. *(Kenneth Hall, Washington DC)*



GUIDE TO THE WORLD

After momentarily misplacing my wallet and disproportionately freaking out about it, I bought a ticket to Lancaster. We hopped on the train (where I noticed a sign for “bacon rolls” — it’s alarming how much they enjoy breaded meat over here), and there we were, trekking across the English countryside on a day about as English weather-wise as you could hope for. The clouds were as welcoming as soldiers, and the houses seemed steadfast, like hardened housewives or old men who pretend they can still hear. At Manchester Piccadilly Michael helped me get to the proper platform and then said



farewell. I was on my own. Except for the many wonderful British people who were willing to help me — such as the Mr. Bean look-a-like who volunteered to help me with my bags and told me to stand farther down so I could get on the train...

[...] Lessons learned from traveling experience:

Forget what your parents taught you — talk to strangers. They are fascinating, and the best way to experience a new culture is through new people.

Sleep is important, but, seriously, you can do that later. Take advantage of time with



interesting people or in interesting places to learn more. You'll collapse later, but it will be worth it.

Some TSA agents can have a sense of humor. Don't be too quick to categorize or stereotype people, foreign or not.

Follow the signs. My roommate told me prior to leaving that all I would have to do to get around in airports is follow signs, and I didn't fully trust that answer until now. Thank you, Becca.

(Jessica Schatz, Lancaster)

GUIDE TO THE WORLD:

... Outside of the airport, things changed immediately. The "hospitality English" stopped as soon as I got on the train. Despite feeling a little thrown into my environment, ... Again and again I've seen evidence of how much the French seem to really appreciate the effort when it comes to speaking their language. A woman on the train complimented my French after I'd said one sentence! The woman across from me wasn't especially kind until I started trying to speak French to her, and then she was extremely polite. My host mother has been endlessly complimentary as well, even though I know I've been speaking "franglais" splendidly.

Their encouragement, explicit or not, makes me want to speak it more and more.... I agree that it's so important to take an active interest in your environment, and language is one of those gateways that has enabled me to do that. Now that I'm here, I'm ready to grab a *pain au chocolat* and sit down with some of the people in Angers and really get to know them. It's harder now because I no longer have an interpreter if something gets lost in translation. I can't wait until I step out of the "franglais stage," (as my host mother calls it) and can really begin to have those important conversations - in French - that I know are waiting (*Bridget McCartin, France*).



While checking my 47 lb luggage (which felt more like 100 lbs) at the John F. Kennedy airport in New York City, the female employee waiting on me could tell by my quietness and eye contact with the floor that I was a little weary about traveling to another continent by myself. Sensing my anxiety, she explained the immigration and customs process more than once to make certain I had an idea of what to expect when I arrived in the UK. My aunt and I thanked her for her detailed directions and we walked away from the counter, me assuming that was the last time I would ever see her.

After offering me more safety tips for my journey, my aunt directed me upstairs to security and, after successfully making it through the body scanner, I took my place in line at gate five, boarding pass in hand, ready to begin my voyage. I approached the gate nervously and was the next person to walk through the gate, when suddenly I saw a hand holding a brand new ticket before me. It was the female employee who had helped me earlier. She had printed a new ticket for me. Instead of my fifty-something seat I was now in 35C so I would have more time to get off the plane and go through customs once I arrived in London. I couldn't believe she had taken the time to print a new ticket, leave her post and search for me in the large airport, which just happens to be one of the busiest in the world. That kind act helped calm my nerves, giving me the assurance that people



would always be willing to help me on my journey. It taught me that I need to keep an open mind as a visitor in other countries – that is, to disregard stereotypes and humble myself to ask others questions. Of course, it's not in your best interest to trust any and everyone, but I've found that more times than not people are sincere in wanting to help. I plan on keeping my JFK ticket as a reminder that people can and do go out of their way to help you. People will surprise you, and I'm on the edge of my seat awaiting more 35C moments here in the UK. (*Courtney O'Brien, Lancaster*)

GUIDE TO THE WORLD:

To put it bluntly, my trip to Spain started off terribly. Thanks to the wonderful winter weather of Pennsylvania, my flight from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia was delayed. This would not have been a big deal except for the fact that this delayed caused me to miss my connecting flight to Madrid. The wonderful people at US Airways were able to work some magic and changed my itinerary completely so that I had to go through London, then to Madrid, and finally to Seville. This trip required three different airlines, so I expected my luggage to get lost along the way.



What I did not expect, however, was for my luggage to disappear *completely*. I have now been in Sevilla for 6 days, and nobody from any of the airlines I flew with has any idea where my luggage is. The fault falls completely on poor Iberia airlines since they were the ones who got me to Sevilla. I have been surviving on one pair of shoes, 2 pairs of jeans, 3 shirts, 2 pairs of socks, and 3 pairs of underwear. Today, however, I was informed that I can be reimbursed 300 euros for replacement items. Also, if my bag does not come within 21 days, that reimbursement total spikes to

1000 euros. This would be kind of cool except I hate shopping and have no idea what to buy. Can anyone imagine having to buy a completely new wardrobe in a foreign country? It's a daunting task to say the least. However, I refuse to let this ordeal take away from my experience. I have come to detach myself from my material possessions and now focus only on the experiences. It has been a very enlightening 6 days as I have radically changed my point of view towards clothing, toiletries, and other American comforts. All I keep telling myself is thank God I'm not a girl.

Talk about experiential learning, huh? (*Bruce James, Seville, Spain*)

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION:

I've also found that the university does not have anything at all like what Allegheny has in terms of a "Chompergram". I never realized how much I'd miss that until I got here; I always found it sort of silly. In first term, I often missed things I really would have rather liked to attend simply because I had no idea that the things were going on. A lot of information relating to lectures and events are posted on scattered bulletin boards, which was something I did not realize. I've found that Oxford doesn't look after you in this regard: if you are interested in a topic or some type of event, it is your job to find out what is offered and get there on your own. I think this reflects a great deal of confidence

in students and their abilities to find things out on their own. I still like the "Chompergram", though. (*Evan Woods, Oxford*)



Study abroad is an extraordinary experience. I mean that in both meanings of the word "extraordinary" - as fantastic and as out of the normal realm of life/experiences. But the question being asked is, how on earth can I use even just a little of what I have learned and experienced to "inform the perspectives of other young people back home"? I mean, how do you inform a person's perspective? ...

1: *Introspection*. By this, I mean the conscious contemplation of what you do and why you do it - an exploration of the self.

2: *Self-Related Perception*. This is the perceiving of and focusing on our lives. You care about what relates to you, such as your feelings and actions, and the actions and feelings of others around us. It is a little like living in a moment which is centered, or at least in some way connected to, you.

3: *Extrospection*. This is just like introspection, but instead of figuring yourself out, you focus on others - on social interactions, on customs, on the little details and the big picture. You look for connections, but also for differences, in all fields of life.



You think about the world (being aware of that is going on in different corners of the world is important for this). Personally, it seems as if most

people tend to focus on Number 2 and skim over 1 and 3. So, if I had to give one piece of advice, it would be this: take a break from your life, from your classes, your homework and that upcoming test that you haven't studied for yet. Expand your horizon, ask questions, and don't forget about intro- and extrospection. It is amazing how much you can learn by just looking around you, and within yourself. *(Margot Blevin, Tübingen, Germany)*



CULTURE TRADE:

I come from a small town near Meadville, Pennsylvania called Cochran. When I was planning to come to France to study abroad I purchased two gifts from my local and surrounding communities. I bought maple syrup and Channel Lock pliers. I was not sure what my host family would think of my gifts but I knew that I should bring something from my area and something that they could use. When I arrived I shared with them the information of my area and how maple syrup is made by one. I explained to them that I have a friend who makes maple syrup too. They were quite intrigued. They were also very happy to have maple syrup, which gave me the impression they do



not get maple syrup much. I gave the pliers to my host father and he instantly became excited. I also explained that the pliers were manufactured in America, and that they were in fact manufactured in the town where I attended to grade school and where I attend college. The gifts allowed me to share the culture of my small town life and tell a story along with them. In return they shared their culture with me. Sitting at the dinner table has introduced me to many different cultural aspects. I quickly learned that cheese and baguette are essential items for every meal. Everyday my host mother goes to the bakery and buys a baguette. The baguette is used throughout the whole meal. After one finishes

eating what is on their plate they use their baguette to clean their plate. Directly after eating the main meal my host mother serves cheese. The cheeses are so different from any I have ever tasted, and they are quite delicious as well. I cut the cheese in a specific way so that no one ends up having a piece of cheese that is just the crust. I then take the cheese and place it on my baguette and commence eating it. The first time my host mom served dessert I was quite excited and went to use my fork to eat my dessert. I quickly learned that no one ever uses his or her fork for dessert in France, it is simply unheard of. My host mom quickly handed me a spoon and told me that in France one uses a spoon for their dessert and it is easy to pick out who really knows the culture if you watch them eat. By just sitting at the dinner table I have learned so many cultural lessons on how the French eat and how to eat like the French. *(Anthony Phillips, Angers, France)*

CULTURE TRADE:

... And I realize that an “international education” is very much important to Indian parents, at least more important than it ever seemed to my parents. Even those Indian families living hand to mouth will pay hundreds of rupees extra to send their children to a private school where English and other foreign languages are taught rather than the inadequate unreliable government operated schools. It seems to me like such a legacy of imperialism, though, because it is almost necessary for any child to learn English fluently if they want to attend college because of the way the system has been set up. The article reads that it’s important for citizens to have knowledge of foreign countries and cultures, in terms of the nation state and being able to effectively communicate with/ have influence over others. I have an inner voice telling me that the system is set up so that Indians learn English so they can export their skills and be used by other English speakers, not necessarily for their own good or the good of India, and it leaves me feeling confused about whether an “international education” helps with cultural convergence or can be manipulative and exploitative. But I suppose it is both, and like most things, can have good and bad aspects. (*Jill Koehler, India*)

... On one of the first nights of the semester, Madame [my host mom] asked my host sister and I if we wanted to have salad. We said yes, and she gave us a salad with lettuce, tomato, and dressing - just like we expected. The next night, she asked us again. We answered yes, and she gave us a concoction made entirely of salted beets mixed with vinaigrette dressing. About a week later, our "salad" was peas, egg and celery. Last night, we had carrots and parsley. Finally, I said to her last night,



"You know, in America our salad is just like that first one you made us. It's pretty much the same every night." She said, "Why? That's horrible. If you make something different every time, you find out there there's so many new things to try." (*Bridget McCartin, France*)

.... In this same intensive language course, we also had a small spontaneous discussion about taboo questions in Germany. We, the students in the class, were interested in knowing

what questions were considered “unaskable”. Interestingly, the first question that our teacher thought of, as something not to ask, was, “What jobs do your parents have?” She explained that, if you know the jobs of one’s parents, you can most likely also deduce how much money they had growing up, what their living situation was like, how good their education was, etc. It is considered a very personal question. This may or may not have roots in Germany’s past, during which there were periods in which the occupation of the parents played a major role (even more than today) in the lives of their children.

Interesting side note: every day to and from class, I walk through a small cemetery (it is full of flowers and trees and is more enjoyable and interesting to walk through than on the parallel gray street). I have noticed that on some of the gravestones, the occupation of the deceased is also written on the gravestone. Perhaps the occupation was such an integral part of the deceased’s life that they decided to have it accompany their name on their gravestone. It is interesting to see how occupations may play a large role in one’s personal identity, and that this may even go so far as the occupations of the parents or grandparents influencing the personal identity of their children or grandchildren. (*Margot Blevins, Tübingen, Germany*)

CULTURE TRADE:

I realized a couple days in that the milk comes in little pouches instead of cartons or jugs. I was shopping with my family at the *Nakumatt* (the Kenyan version of Walmart) and was quite surprised by the different products and the different forms that familiar products came in. It sparked a discussion over how we buy food in the US and how it is often removed from where it is produced. That is also true here in Nairobi, but you only have to drive an hour outside of the city to find people with a very close connection to their food. I came very close to

seeing a goat slaughtered a couple weekends ago for a *harambee*, which is a community fundraiser that involved dancing, singing and the whole community coming together to build a church, school, or other community institution. As you can already tell, the fundraisers here are much different than in the US- they are much more fun and interesting here, as well as more democratic and grassroots. The goat was being slaughtered to serve at the meal after the *harambee* and I was shown the various cuts of meat, with bones and everything present as well as the stomach containing all the various organs. It



serves as a convenient sack to hold everything. The point of this is to demonstrate how different our connection to food is, and to let you imagine how the conversation went about how I have never seen anything killed before because meat comes from a supermarket, not a farm, in the US. Getting to the *harambee* was also an adventure, as is any road travel in this country. If something is 60 miles away in the US, it will take you less than an hour to get there almost always. Let me tell you- that is not the case here. That trip will take at least 2 hours and probably more if there is traffic or other issues. The roads are that bad and we discussed our interstate system and how well it works compared to the system here. Those are pretty basic examples, but

probably the most prominent. I really have no desire to impose my value system or culture on my family. On the other hand, I fully expect and want them to impose their culture on me. That is why I traveled so far to a foreign country.

I absolutely think that students should study a foreign language and study abroad. It is an incredibly educational and eye-opening experience not only in a personal way, but also in terms of understanding an American's place and role in the world as well as the role of the American government. There is a lot that you will never learn without leaving the country and study abroad and speaking a foreign language will take care of that problem. However, I do not believe that education should contribute to cultural convergence. It should not present that as inevitable, but should foster debate about



whether it is a good thing, and who it benefits. We should focus on education that improves critical thinking about conventional wisdom instead of accepting that cultural convergence is unavoidable. We shouldn't necessarily teach cultures how to integrate into a new global system that many people may not want.
(Christopher Plano, Kenya)



CULTURE TRADE:

I've had to break the news to several students that in the US, not every street corner is home to a hot dog man and not every beverage is served in a red plastic cup. However, I've made it a personal goal to prove my Australian professors wrong about American study abroad students. I visited the first lectures of five different upper level biology courses during the first week of classes to see which ones I would find most appealing, and every professor made a brief address about how the foreign exchange students "especially those from America" should anticipate struggling more in Australian courses because "we (the Americans) are often taken aback by the rigor of the Australian education system." These professors have an impression of Americans as poor students. My goal is to ace the classes I decided to take, strictly for the pleasure of proving to at least a few professors that not every student from the US is their version of an "American."

Personal experience tells me the foreign language bit is completely unnecessary for study abroad, so I disagree with that aspect of the argument. Furthermore, sending every single student abroad for a semester isn't currently a financially viable concept, nor does it take into account the other side of the equation: somebody has to be willing to take those students for a semester. If American students are perceived

as being unprepared for the intensity level of foreign universities, why would those universities want to burden themselves with more of us? A semester abroad should not be lumped into the same category as Freshman Seminars and Introductory English classes. Mandating that students participate in any particular activity means that some proportion of those students will be disinterested or not well suited for the experience. (*Caitlin Devore, Australia*)

One of the most interesting non-academic activities I have been involved in is protesting against proposed cuts in the budget which will affect students, public services, etc.. This is an important issue in that it would put an university education beyond the reaches of a great number of lower-income and even middle-class students. Participating in these protests (to some extent—no vandalism or occupation of buildings for me, a foreigner!), has not only given me the opportunity meet new people, but also to talk to people who do not necessarily agree with one of the more recent events here at Oxford: the occupation of Radcliffe Camera, perhaps one of the most famous buildings in Oxford. I have been able to explain the notion of civil disobedience, and connect it to various struggles in the history of the United States—the legacy and

tradition of civil disobedience does not seem to have much of a hold here, but I'd like to think that I've maybe convinced some people about the rightness of what the protesters have done, or at least made them think differently about what is going on. (*Evan Woods, Oxford*)

REFLECTING ON EXPERIENCE:

The French word for protest is *manifestation*. Within the first month that I was in France, there was a manifestation supporting people without papers. I stumbled across this protest by sheer luck and was immediately intrigued as to what was going on. I ventured closer to understand what was happening. I learned the themes of the *manifestation* by talking to the people who were supporting the demonstration. There were two main themes one was homosexual rights and the other one was to give rights to people who entered the country illegally. The theme of giving rights to illegal immigrants made me reflect on the current issues that are taking place in the United States. The protesters were also speaking out about the harsh treatment of the illegal immigrants by certain law enforcers. There are many reasons why people enter a country illegally ranging from searching for a job in order to support ones family to escaping to a new and better life. I have learned through my classes at Allegheny and through my own research that illegal immigrants face many hardships and dangers

when leaving their country, and in fact they can face even more problems in the country in which they reside illegally. The last thing they need to face is violence in that country. I'm not saying that illegal immigration is a good by any means, but I believe that countries should not make laws that appear to be prejudice and that illegal immigrants should be treated nonviolently and with human dignity. The demonstration made me think about the unjust treatment that occurs to illegal immigrants in any country and the prejudices that form around a nationality because of the people who enter a country illegally. It all boils down to human rights, meaning that everyone human has the right to be treated equally just because they are human beings. The manifestation that I participated in has made me reflect often on the hardships that illegal immigrants face daily, and it has motivated me to learn more about the lives of illegal immigrants. (*Anthony Phillips, Angers, France*)

I just recently had an encounter with a fellow student that shattered me to the core, as it were; afterward, I could not continue to view the world the same way, for it challenged some of my deepest-held beliefs. This student, a native of a Eastern European country said that he hated the Romani—more commonly known as “Gypsies”,

who have suffered from discrimination and outright racism for centuries all throughout Europe. What struck me most about his comment was whom it was coming from—a fellow philosophy student who, in everything else I have talked to him about, quite reasonable, seeking to draw some middle path between extremes in many debates in philosophy. How he could say something like what he had bothered me quite a lot; I couldn't wrap my mind around it—one of the most logical, mild-mannered, and kindest people I knew had said something that was blatantly racist. After a few moments of stunned silence, I confronted him. I made appeals to reason, to experience, etc., but the virulently racist comments continued; all gypsies, he claimed, were lazy thieves. I pointed out inconsistencies in his thinking on the issue, the small sample size from which he was making his generalizations, the tacit reliance on his thinking that his culture was superior to Romani culture, but nothing seemed to do the trick; nothing, it seemed, would convince him otherwise of his opinion. Now, I am still good friends with this fellow, and it is enjoyable to talk to him, still, but the encounter really made me question my own beliefs in a way which I've never been challenged before: I pride myself on being logical, methodical, and reasonable in what I believe—if I find that two beliefs I hold are contradictory, I act to resolve the

problem of which I should believe. I think that that is intellectually responsible on my part. However, I'm now faced with a new problem: are there, perhaps, beliefs which I hold that are stubbornly ingrained? What scares me is not such much that I may have these beliefs, but that, under no circumstances, would I be willing to give them up, for all my reasonableness in other matters. I learned something, not only about my friend, but about people—something I should be sad not to know, even if it is terrifying--that a truth is unpleasant is no reason to shirk away from it. (*Evan Woods, Oxford*)

I found Zemach-Bersin's article very interesting but I have had a hard time relating to it. As I have continuously brought up in my blogs, my 'study abroad' experience remains in the United States but in a culturally and ethnically diverse location. The international students here are in a somewhat similar position. Although many of them do not share the same physical characteristics that the author attributed to his lack of a genuine experience, most of them do possess something that limits their ability to observe and indulge in a majority of American culture: money, lots and lots of money. A vast majority of my international peers come from backgrounds and families of immense privilege that many of us at Allegheny would find almost unbelievable. The



first night I went out with a Columbian friend of mine who spent over \$700 on a table and drinks for the table. I obviously thanked him and indulged in his frivolous use of

cash, but remembering this after reading the article got me thinking that maybe the problem is something more than our international education. In fact, maybe these observations can be translated to a national and

regional level. I believe that money plays a large role in one's ability to observe different cultures.

Moreover, the plethora of different cultures in most countries makes a single national culture exceedingly hard to define. If you think about our experience in Meadville, it is somewhat similar to Zemach-Bersin's experience abroad. Do things like Make a Difference Day and Service Saturday give us better insight into the Meadville culture or is it the same facade of a genuine experience that the article addresses? (*Kenneth Hall, Washington DC*)

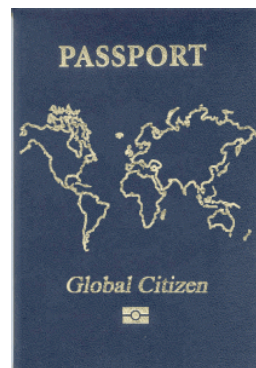
1 Universe, 9 Planets,
204 Countries, 809
Islands, 7 Seas, and I
had the privilege to
meet you.

**REFLECTING ON
EXPERIENCE:**

One thing I do agree with that the author wrote about was the amount of privilege that comes with having an American passport. The other day, my roommate and I were making plans to travel together on our spring break. She's from Bahrain and has a Saudi Arabian passport, and because of this she needs a visa to travel to most places. She has a Schengen visa, so she can go to any of the countries covered by that, but when I suggested we go to Romania and some other places in that area, she said she couldn't unless she applied for another visa. She also told me that there are certain countries that she can't

travel to at all. I couldn't believe it. And the more I thought about how unfair this was, the more I realized how much of a privilege it is to have an American passport. I can go basically anywhere I want without much effort, except for a few places where I'd need a visa, yet because my roommate has a Saudi Arabian passport, there are countries and cultures that she will never get to see because she can't get into the country with a Saudi passport. (*Stephanie Clark, Spain*)

From my early arrival in Beijing to my adjustment to the Cultural Plaza and dorm room, little can be said for cultural immersion in this place of study. Being surrounded by students from across the world, especially westerners who come from privileged lifestyles and backgrounds, our classroom/dormitory/lobby complex seems more like an American institution than a Beijing university. With daily room service and building-wide wireless internet, our hotel-



style living space is not only intensely different and more privileged than all Chinese dormitory buildings on

campus, but seems to trap all of us in isolated privilege, away from any inconveniences or living struggles.

Very few Chinese students live in our 15-story building because it is too expensive for them to afford a room. Furthermore, no other building complex on campus houses per-room bathrooms and showers, wireless internet, or front desk and room services. How can we understand and experience a culture that doesn't have the same "privileges" we experience based on race, nationality, and affordability? Our time with other students consists of westerners and non-Chinese studying the language.

I have learned more about the British and Russian cultures than I have my host-country's culture. There is an obvious problem with this.

Unfortunately, the author's assessment of wealth and privilege serving as a constraint and barrier towards understanding other cultures is exactly the problem I am dealing with. In order to understand and share in the culture and lifestyle of an ordinary Chinese citizen, I have to converse with locals in a restaurant amid stares and requests for pictures. Americans are treated as celebrity icons, which only creates a greater rift in cultural immersion. I feel disappointment in reflection of my cultural experience thus-far. I envisioned studying the culture and political landscape through intense dialogue. I even went as far as to envision sitting with an elderly Chinese man, drinking tea and discussing his opinion of China's vast progression in the past two decades. These experiences are few and far between. If I'm not getting a picture taken or receiving free beer so I can answer questions about America, then I'm sitting in a lobby full of international students having little personal experience of what the Chinese culture is really like.

American students abroad are envied and worshipped, put on a pedestal by a title on a passport. Our citizenship is something to be respected and proud of, but our

privilege limits our ability to immerse in a biased and progressing culture imagining a world far greater than their experiences. Though I have learned and continue to learn a lot about the Chinese and their way of life, I am struggling with the confined structure of this study abroad program.



The program's limits constrain and restructure my opinion of cultural immersion. I no longer have the same optimism of an incredible and life-changing study abroad experience. And so networking, class work, and infrequent conversation with locals and taxi drivers have removed my foolish visions of deep conversations with a wise *shifu*. Can Americans grasp global citizenship while abroad? Unlikely. In this program and venue, it is impossible to fully experience the rich and historic culture outside the university gate. (*Corey Shears, China*)

.... I call my host parents Mamí and Papí and they have clearly given me special privileges. I eat the same amount as them, but my room is clearly the master bedroom. I have a double bed, desk, and wardrobe all to myself

while the rest of the family has crammed themselves into the back room. I absolutely love my host family, they're amazing, but I do feel uncomfortable about the amount of space allotted for me.

I also stick out like a sore thumb in the street. Whenever I walk anywhere, men call out to me, which is pretty normal for all women in Latin America, but it happens way more often when I'm alone or with my fellow students than with Ecuadorians. Frequently men will call out 'hello!' or even 'I love you' in English as I pass by. It's impossible to blend in and the first question people always ask is 'where are you from?'

An amazing number of Ecuadorians speak English. I was really surprised. I understand the want to practice using it also, but when people immediately speak to me in English, I get a little affronted. I can speak Spanish and would like to practice, but some people just immediately begin in English and assume that's what I'd like.

This experience is still amazing and well worth it. I'm learning a lot about Ecuadorian culture and a different way of living, but I'm certainly not able to experience it firsthand or blend in. (*Rebecca McDaniel-Hutchings, Ecuador*)

My experience in Sevilla has been a little different from the author's, though. First, Spain is a developed country with educated people. Second, the exchange rate from USD to Euro is terrible, so I'm not the stereotypical American making it rain in the clubs. Third, the language barrier helps mask the fact that I'm American at times. People usually cannot tell the difference between an American and British accent. Finally, the biggest aspect of living in Seville that I think takes away from the complete cultural immersion is the fact that there are so many American students studying here. I can speak English whenever I want and really don't have to

interact with Spaniards if I don't want to. To me, that's a double-edged sword. Would it be more effective of a cultural immersion if I had to speak Spanish all the time and had no one to talk to except Spaniards? Absolutely. On the other hand, is it nice to be able to fall back on my American friends and chat in English whenever I want? You bet. Therefore, I think this issue of too many Americans is really only a problem if I get lazy and do not force myself to participate in Spanish culture. Then again, if I don't, this is really just an outrageously expensive vacation. (*Bruce James, Seville, Spain*)



My personal experience in Kenya has been riddled with instances of white privilege and colonial legacy and the program curriculum has been fully focused on the issues of class, race, the impacts of globalization, and the lasting impact of colonialism. *Matatus* are mini-buses that people use to get around the city and the drivers paid by how many people they get on board throughout the day so they are always packed and there is always competition for seats among people waiting at the stops. I have had no less than three instances where the conductor has pushed Kenyans, who had been waiting longer than myself, aside to let me have a seat. I insisted that I could wait but I was pushed

on regardless. I was given a seat on the stage at a *harambee* with Ministers and other government officials and important people from the community just because I was white. So many other little things add up- always being asked for money because you are seen as so much more wealthy than anyone else, people asking to be your friend and hinting constantly about visiting the US hoping that you will take them with you, and the one that really hits me hard is the way older Kenyans move out of your way as you walk on the street. The last is a direct impact of colonialism where the British District Commissioners demanded respect from their "subjects." Once, because I was going into the hospital compound, I was asked if I was a doctor. I am way too young and was not dressed as such but because I was white I am seen as an expert. All of these instances remind me of my privilege, and this is reinforced in class as we learn about foreign aid and the

dependency it breeds and the lessons it teaches. One that undermines development in such a huge way is the idea that only white people have answers and that Kenyans cannot solve their own problems. This is crippling and prevents progress in Kenya in a huge way. I have learned a lot about culture here, but I have also learned a lot about where the white people hang out because I find myself there for certain goods and services I can't find elsewhere. I don't like going there, but sometimes my needs necessitate it. This definitely hinders cultural immersion but it definitely helps to deepen my understanding of privilege. White people have the ability to pay for bottled water and other luxuries while people in the north of this country are dying because of a lack of water. There is no better example to demonstrate what I have learned about my position in the world while studying in Kenya. (*Christopher Plano, Kenya*)

**ourworld
ourchoice**

You can certainly visit another country and leave without ever reflecting on that country's place in the complicated world. I feel like global citizenship is a mindset. I could be a global citizen from my home in the U.S. I believe it requires an open mind, willingness to let go of ethnocentric views and learn, and a sensitivity to large-scale relationships and what these mean for the

future of the world. I don't need to be in Australia to do this. In fact, most of us are probably studying abroad because we already have an interest in understanding the world on a broader level. Being a global citizen does not come automatically from studying abroad--it's a frame of mind that you consciously adopt. I think for me studying abroad is more like a case study of a larger nation/world. I feel as if I'm gaining local knowledge for the most part. Thinking about the global aspects requires some effort--by this I mean that my everyday experiences



some kind of forum to discuss broader issues. This blog is such a forum. As the article advocates, I too think there needs to be some guidance in students becoming global citizens. I think classes I've taken at Allegheny such as "Third World Politics" and various sociology courses have introduced me to this type of mindset. However, this is not the case for all classes or majors or all approaches to education. Being a global citizen requires not just having an experience but taking time to think about that experience beyond when and where it takes place. *(Lindsay Codispott, James Cook, Australia)*

CONTRIBUTING DIFFERENTLY:

I think that the universal languages of art forms such as music, dance, theater, and visual arts, have great potential for engaging the global community and connecting diverse peoples of all backgrounds. As the saying goes, "make art, not war." All people can share the joys and beauty that a song, a painting, or a dance bring into life. Everyone can express himself or herself through some art form, through some creative outlet. Using art is a successful strategy for beautifying communities and creating points of interest. I think that this approach has been underused because the arts are generally not seen as a practical solution to the problems in the world, and often are not given the funding that other disciplines are given. However, I think that something as simple as the arts have the potential to unite people around the world. Giving out money simply does not work



because it does not address the root of a problem. Uniting communities through the arts gets people involved in efforts in which they work together on a project, the products of which give them reason to feel a sense of pride in their community. During my remaining time in the community in which I am living I hope to work with local children to create a mural. I think that doing so will be important not only for myself, as a way for me to contribute to the beautiful community that I live in, but also for the children and the rest of the community, who will play a part in its creation both as influence and as helping hands. *(Emma Cook, Ecuador)*

CONTRIBUTING DIFFERENTLY:

... I think it is far more important as global citizens to be open and receptive to what other cultures have to offer instead of trying to assimilate them. It is also important to share openly and to create networks that facilitate this sharing of ideas. Whether we communicate more through internet or through travel, it is good to get to know a place and its people. One of the problems with globalization is that it often ends up globalizing problems rather than solutions because acts of charity, however well intentioned can have negative effects. I think it can also have the effect of separating groups instead of bringing them together as a global community.

Although I am positive that these acts of sharing ideas and culture are happening in the world, they do not receive much attention because it is often at an individual level. It is easier to say, “we are bringing the world together by helping this country in its time of social or economic need,” and it generates a lot of media attention because that is how humans want to connect. However, it is not always the best way to connect and it is not always the best way to spread global ideas and wealth. The idea of a global citizen is more than just lending a hand. It involves getting to know your neighbors during peaceful times as well. (*Tess Miller, Costa Rica*)

Although charity and entrepreneurship can be categorized as elements of global citizenship, they are not the be all and end all by any means. Global citizenship begins when people take a genuine interest in the world and strive to become more educated about other cultures and people. Another aspect of global citizenship can be a concern for other cultures and the perspectives of other people. Global citizenship does not involve infiltrating other cultures or endeavoring to have the world come together under one meta-culture, but rather it involves people gaining interest in other people, and desiring to appreciate and preserve different cultures. (*Jessica Schatz, Lancaster*)

Since the last blog, I have thought a lot about what I think it means to be a global citizen. Aside from charity or social entrepreneurship initiatives, I have learned that being able to feel “at home” wherever one lives is an important component of what constitutes global citizenship; this idea makes me want to answer this blog by proposing a mandatory study/living abroad requirement for all American students. This is a program that I completely support because it forces students to learn more about themselves, and another country at the same time. The gap year program is an example of a great model that the U.S. doesn’t encourage as much as it should. I think that if we

modeled ourselves after other countries who force students to take a gap year, we would be more likely to contribute to the global community. There are too many students who don’t get the opportunity to see the world or to at least learn about other countries; by limiting this, we are limiting our connection with the rest of the world. Each student should be required to live for a year or two in another country (paid for by the government or by another form of aid so that it does not exclude certain demographics). They can have the option of working, or going to school in their host country, and required to reflect on their experience like students who study abroad at Allegheny.

I have also realized that study abroad experience simply is not for everyone, and in fact, for some, studying abroad causes more damage to students than personal growth, resulting in poor ambassadorship. To solve this problem, students who feel this way can have the option of traveling in a group to prevent feelings of loneliness, but still enjoy a growing experience in another country. By facilitating the growth of an individual via “living abroad,” social justice and social entrepreneurship will be more likely to happen. It can be viewed as taking a step back, and starting at the very beginning of the path to global citizenship. (*Erin Wahl, Spain*)

Thinking Differently And About Difference ...

I am taking a class on "Tourism & the Environment." It's very fascinating and explains that a huge factor in



tourism (especially with the great barrier reef) is to encourage people to "think globally and act globally". This is a phrase often said by my professor. Tourism seems to be a fantastic way to get people to experience other places and encourage people to want to help and protect the places they travel so far to see. It just goes to show that whether helping a different country with political issues or environmental issues, it is important to think on a global scale. [...] If you want to contribute to the world and help another culture, the best way to go about it is respect. This is essential in being a global citizen. You can't just walk in somewhere and

tell another culture they're not advancing properly, you have to be willing to understand why they are the way they are. Maybe it simply works for them or maybe they could use some help if they accept it. Contributing differently to the world is important to do and requires much more respect than is being practiced today. (*Emily Allerton, Australia*)

One of my Australian hall-mates asked me what I felt was a remarkably racist question just completely out of the blue the other afternoon. I couldn't even begin to respond and luckily there were other people around so I just ignored the question and we continued on with the rest of our inconsequential banter. It really bothered me



though the rest of the day and so that night I asked an Australian friend if I was just being hypersensitive or if that sort of racist thought process is acceptable here. By starting that conversation, which was awkward and a totally new experience for me, I learned something about Australia and a huge amount about myself and my own life experiences. Despite the hateful events that have occurred on campus at Allegheny this year concerning ABC and Queers and Allies, I still consider our campus to be an incredibly diverse and accepting place. I never realized how important that was to me until I had that conversation with my friend. I'm still ashamed of myself for not responding to the racist question, but now that I'm more aware of my own values, I hope that I can find a way

to contribute differently by not 'changing someone's mind', not 'stomping out' racism everywhere I find it, but maybe by just starting a conversation with someone about how much I cherish living in a place where not everyone looks the same way I do. (*Caitlin Devore, Australia*)



Here in Australia I am taking a film class which I have found to be an amazing form of communication. This film class has taught be a great deal about the culture and

the people of Australia and has also spurred many great debates and conversations within the class setting as well as on my residence hallway and to my friends and family back home. These films have created an important dialogue and way of learning

that I never would have been able to participate in otherwise. This film class has enabled me to connect communities across the world by taking discussions with other study abroad and Australian students within the classroom and telling my parents about them and urging my parents to learn about new things that I have become passionate about such as the Stolen Generation. In turn, my parents begin to discuss these topics with their friends and family and all of a sudden one single film has created a global dialogue.



Ultimately a great goal [for global citizenship] would be to use these skills mentioned earlier combined with art to create a connecting through a common bond. Art has its own language that reaches beyond spoken language and further into the true culture and meaning of a particular place. I believe, probably because of my art background, that art is one of the quickest ways to learn about a culture and about a people. It is an incredible way to comment to a community and is genuine. It allows you to connect on a personal level that current models of global engagement don't necessarily reach. One great example of this idea is a group called Art Corps based near my hometown in Mass. This group



sends artists to remote areas to build an art based project around the community and what needs change within the community. As I see it, this group proves that art can be a universal language and a pathway to global citizenship. (Eliza Nelson, Townville, Australia)

... One of my favorite professors here is convinced for Kenya to improve, it is vital that the United States gets out, lets the country stand up on it's own feet. I am still torn on my own position, but I do understand his plea to let the Kenyans prove to themselves and the rest of the world that they can survive without aid. For the first time in my life, I read books like



Dead Aid and *The Bottom Billion* that argue aid is poison for the global south. I have started to evaluate how I can contribute tangibly as an American, living in the United States. My time here has reminded me that life is unpredictable- who knows when I will have the opportunity to go abroad next. Until that time, it is crucial that I act as a global citizen at home, making small decisions that impact the global south in a positive way. Contrary to my former understanding, that does not always mean writing a check to a children's home in Uganda.

Through my classes and discussions with classmates, I have learned little ways can make a global difference.

I am still on the hunt for my future plans, for the answer to my question of how I will make a huge impact globally in the future. Until then I am committed to live as a globally conscious American, living in a way that is slowly improving, not destroying our neighbors. (*Laura Gaudreau in Kenya*)

During the classroom phase of the program, a guest lecturer named Francis came to talk about effective forms of contributing both as a Kenyan and as a foreigner. Empower communities. "Show them that you care and value their own culture and opinions, without imposing your own." These words stuck with me. Just by listening and being engaged, communities feel like they are important and they are experts of their own situations. Instead of being frustrated about how I can contribute without giving charity, I applied this new method at my internship. When I met with women's groups, school groups, young women who dropped out of school, instead of giving money or imposing my own opinions, I listened. I gave them confidence by asking, "What do *you* feel, and how would *you* like to see change?" My approach surprised the communities as well as made them feel more empowered.

My experience so far has shown me that by simply listening, and not trying to fix situations

according to my own back ground, I can positively influence and contribute to the improvement of many peoples' lives. (*Emma Schneider, Kenya*)

I believe that one can contribute to groups of people who are in need without it demonstrating a view that those people are "under-developed". For example, I have taken part in several missions or acts of charity, if you will. Several have been in the United States-feeding the homeless, helping children etc. Others have been outside the United States. A few years back I went to San Luis, Mexico, and played with children in an orphanage, fed the homeless, and volunteered at a women's shelter for recovering drug addicts.

While acting out these acts of charity, I never once thought that the country or society was "under-developed". For me, it was always about recognizing the fact that some people fall on harder times- There are poor, needy people in EVERY country. The fact that some people help them does not mean that they are labeling the society or country or culture as under developed, but rather that they are contributing to the well being of the human race as a whole. The subject of charity is one that we will have to agree to disagree about. However, I do agree that one should not look at a country and try to label it as less advanced or less valuable than

one's own country. Like I said, America has its share of needy people as well... we are definitely no exception to the rule. (*Allison Burgess, Tuebingin, Germany*)

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION:

I think that an open forum for students to share experiences and opportunities is important, and could be something that Allegheny College can develop. It could be as simple as an online site that allows students to post their experiences and offer recommendations for fellow students, not only regarding local experiences, but also, as is suggested in the article, global ones. I think that sharing what I have learned about another culture is now an important role in being a global citizen. By sharing my experience I can in a small way foster better understanding between my immediate community and the greater community. (*Emma Cook, Ecuador*)

I think that the easiest way to incorporate both the global and the local is to have classes which are focused on policies and initiatives of other countries and make part of the class a discussion which takes these ideas and makes them local. For instance, in Costa Rica, there is a huge carbon sequestration and renewable energy effort. They plan to be completely carbon neutral by



completely carbon neutral by 2020. While they have not yet reached their goal, they have made substantial progress. While this is something that may not

be achievable for a large developed country like the United States, it is something that can be discussed in classes to give perspective and to inspire smaller initiatives which can be applied to campus life.

(Tess Miller, Costa Rica)

It's all about perspective. The article we read quotes Nussbaum who says that, "it is also very important for students to understand what it is like to see the world through the perspective of another language." At first, I liked this phrase because I agree with it. Speaking other languages is something I think everyone should be able to do in order to be a global citizen. However, after reading this phrase over again, the word that stood out to me the most was "perspective". In order to integrate global and local thinking into the Allegheny College education, students need perspective. The only way to gain

perspective is by doing things. For example, last semester I took a service-learning course. I went to the elementary school and helped the teachers with their classes. If I had just studied the philosophies of education, I would have never gained perspective on what a classroom is actually like. Doing things on a local level is a great way to start on the path to becoming a global citizen because even if you meet people from the same area as you, it does not necessarily mean they have the same background. Once students are exposed to local thinking, it automatically promotes global thinking. Integrating more service-learning classes is a great way to promote both local and global thinking because students have the opportunity to be outside of the classroom, applying the knowledge they learn. If all Allegheny students could take a course that interests them and promotes local awareness, both the Allegheny community and the



Meadville community benefit. Local and global integration is all about perspective. If students actually do things, they will gain perspective and (hopefully) be compelled to do something about their newfound view of the world around them. *(Jordan Metcalfe, France)*

I suggest that in regards to curriculum, Allegheny College should design a special major or minor option which focuses on the process of global citizenship. It can provide students with the opportunity to become global citizens through learning another language, and experiencing many different cultures through

studying abroad in various countries. The senior thesis can be directed towards how each student personally became a global citizen. Students would of course be required to study on and off campus, and experience different local and global communities through spending time living with them. For example, a student can choose to live with an Amish family in Pennsylvania or Ohio, teach at an inner city school in New York for a month or two, and travel to China for a year to study while reflecting on each experience and the similarities and differences within each. ... I think that the global citizenship major or minor option would be well received by students who are especially interested in developing themselves within the world. *(Erin Wahl, Spain)*



I would love to see a network set up of past and future study abroad students, a sort of 'Gator Locator' just for study abroad. That way, you have names available for people that have been through your program, lived in your city, and dealt with all of the problems, educational, emotional, or otherwise, that we've all encountered during our experiences. That type of support system would have been completely invaluable for me, and may have helped me also choose between certain programs when I was having trouble deciding. It might also encourage students that are unsure about study abroad to have a peer to talk to. One more student that studies abroad is one more student that will, hopefully, come back much more globally conscious and can help to add to the global community at Allegheny.

Another untapped resource that I would really like to see more of next year is the Language Houses. The article stresses how important it is to study a language, and I think the Language Houses can really bring a multilingual and multicultural feel to campus that is currently lacking. Since I know a lot of students currently studying abroad will be in the houses next year, including myself, we should really start thinking about going past the general "crepe night" and "cinco de mayo" events and start looking for ways to incorporate elements

of true multicultural life to campus, perhaps even with some service learning mixed in. Here's just one example:

Today I drove for an hour and a half with my French professor into the countryside to teach French preschoolers about American culture. Three girls from Canada, Colombia and the Dominican Republic came as well. We spoke French, we shared our culture, the kids loved it and it was arguably the best day of my entire study abroad experience. And, fancy that, Allegheny has a program that enables students to do that every single week. The World Language Program is a fantastic independent study course that is not well-known, and it should be. Students have the opportunity to teach a language at an elementary school in Meadville. Although I'm not sure how many students can actually enroll in the class, the Language Houses and other language or international students could help in teaching classes. There are SO many opportunities for creativity here, and teaching kids in Meadville about a foreign culture would be a huge step towards the ultimate goal: a balance of local and global learning on Allegheny's campus.

With a good study abroad network available, a campus culture enriched by the involvement of the Language Houses, and the bolstering of programs like the World Language Program, I think we'd be on our way to becoming a

campus community that is much more globally conscious. (*Bridget McCartin, France*)

There needs to be more consideration placed on dialog and communicating effectively in everyday life. It involves listening, being understanding of other points of view, and negotiating these appropriately for the various circumstances that might be involved. It's obvious that you have to communicate no matter where you are in the world, and so communication is a linking factor to both the local and the global. I think it is important to teach students sensitivity in communicating with others by making them aware that different ways of communicating are just as valid and valuable as their own, although they may come out of varying societal or cultural contexts.

Now, Allegheny is not about having many requirements or a long list of core classes, so I don't think it's reasonable to have a separate class with this type of communicative information. Really, who is to say a communications class is more important than taking any other potential core class such as history or a lab class? That's probably why there are many core requirements at universities in the U.S. Allegheny does have the English 200 requirement that I believe most students have to take. But that focuses on writing and comprehension.

Of course there are FS classes that also focus on writing and speaking. I can see this as being an appropriate place to the discuss the implications of how we communicate in other ways as well. I think this could be a starting point for students thinking about communicating effectively with a variety of different people.

In the reading, I really liked the idea of doing ethnographic work while abroad. I think that could work with organizations/institutions in local communities as well. Both locally and globally, it puts students in an unfamiliar situation and asks them to understand it from the other people's perspectives, or a "neutral" perspective, even though the latter is impossible in reality. I might just like this idea because I'm really interested in Anthropology, so I'm used to reading ethnography, but I think that would have been a valuable way of interacting with people in Australia. I think being assigned to go somewhere to experience the organization and talk to people is more motivating and adds some structure to being abroad. As much as interacting with people informally is very enlightening, there is often not a purposefulness with how you interact, sometimes making it hard to think back and really understand it or reflect on it. The ethnographic approach in any kind of experiential learning of experiential class assignment seems to be valuable in giving students experience with

communicating in meaningful ways. (*Lindsay Codisport, James Cook, Australia*)

I do, however, have a few suggestions for Allegheny College in order to achieve the goals of the mission statement. First, seminars (freshman seminar, sophomore seminar, etc.) should require a certain number of hours, based on the course level, of community service. Second, there should be discussions held within the seminars about the prevalent events going on in the world, either once a week or once a month. Finally, ACCEL should incorporate Global Volunteers, which is a global community service project, into their offered programs. I definitely believe there would be student interest because it is similar to the Jamaica trip, and it has more options in regards to locations around the world. I believe these suggestions may help students fulfill the goals that are set forth by the Allegheny College mission statement. As long as students get involved, either by partaking in my suggestions or the opportunities already offered by Allegheny College, they will be taking the right steps towards becoming a global citizen. (*Jigar Jethva, Australia*)

I think it is also important to create some sort of discussion

board online for past, present, and students of interest to discuss both study abroad as well as daily happenings in Meadville. It would also be amazing to get a global discussion forum in place for students from each of the universities we exchange with to discuss topics, challenges, daily life with Allegheny students. Oftentimes, Allegheny students have such a strenuous workload that we end up in our own little bubble. Online forums and discussions would help to draw students out of their bubbles and enter the global discussion. A few times in my Allegheny career I have thought to myself and discussed with a friend about the selfishness of our own education. Sometimes, I have felt that it is selfish to me to sit over my books all day, cramming information in to my own head in order to support and achieve my own goals and successes while there is an entire world out there to learn about and be involved in. Allegheny needs to contribute to thinking globally perhaps by offering courses in each major/minor that have some global aspect to them whether it be an African dance class, an art history of Aboriginal art, a psychology of the holocaust etc. These courses could not in any way replace true global experiences but they would hopefully inspire greater recognition of the world outside Allegheny and global involvement.



activities rarely leaves any time to keep up with

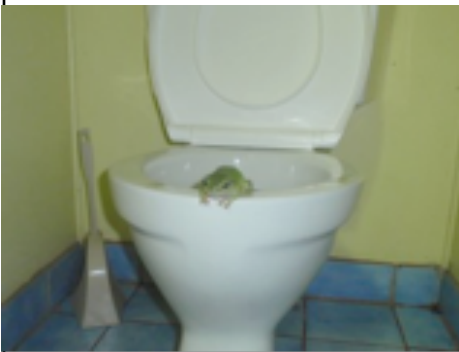
I have found, along with many of my friends that the course load and study time required to be successful at Allegheny combined with extra-curricular

domestic happenings, let alone global happenings. This is sad because if we were following the “commitment to the exchange of knowledge with a supportive approach to learning” this should include support for out of class learning as well.

Although the preparation meetings were great and the ACCEL office was incredibly supportive, before I came to Australia I still felt a little grief from various professors who felt as I was simply running away from my studies for a five month vacation.

They never said this explicitly but they seemed to think that a place as beautiful, cheerful, and sunny as Australia could not possible contain as much experience, knowledge and educational purpose as other places in Europe, for example.

It is important to have professors at Allegheny that support your decision to embark on a new challenging experience and not



make you feel guilty for wanting to have incredible new experiences away from Allegheny. Most professors at Allegheny are amazing; however, sometimes it only takes a few influential adults to persuade a experience of a lifetime.

I am glad I made the decision I did to come to Australia even though it was not always supported by the academic community. I have come to the realization of how important it is for Allegheny to consistently hire faculty and staff that share the same support towards study abroad and education on a global level. *(Eliza Nelson, Townsville, Australia)*

Rather than demanding that all *Gators* want to be global citizens that spend a semester out of Meadville, perhaps the best way of transforming the Allegheny community would be to invite students to be global citizens during the FS program and then enable them to become global citizens by making study abroad affordable and accessible. *(Caitlin Devore, Australia)*



The driven students Allegheny hopes to attract do not want to be pushed, they want to pursue. And whether this chase for knowledge and self-discovery leads them abroad or down the streets of Meadville; it is up to them to explore and choose their educational endeavors. *(Laura Gaudreau in Kenya)*



The Politics of Location....



Over the past few years, Allegheny College has made obvious efforts to support the local community of Meadville in which the university is located. While perhaps the most transparent changes are evident in the support of local foods by the dining services on campus, this idea and practice is desirable across all aspects of the institution. In large part, the student body has got behind this initiative, with a variety of organizations partnering with local businesses for student events, improving relations with our relatively 'foreign' neighbors--the residents of Meadville. In a very relatable sense, the relatively privileged student body residing in Meadville is viewed much like the

United States is by the world -- in a negative light, as occupying a position of unwarranted superiority. Our interactions with the city of Meadville provide a model for the type of learning desired by, and necessary for globalization education.... (Daniel Jacobs, Spain)



More specifically, while helping various women's groups, I saw more clearly the 'trap' of my own background. What I was telling them, came from my own background - that of being a college student in a fairly thriving town. It made me realize that while I learned so much while being abroad, the discovery with the most impact was that there is so much development that needs to be done through education and community service within my own town. (Emma Schneider, Kenya)

Above and Right: "Women are Heroes" is an ongoing project by French photographer JR that features women throughout Kenya, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Liberia to listen to their stories and visually represent the woman behind the pain of war, the pain of poverty and the pain of abuse and isolation.



WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

It was nearly 11 p.m. when I surveyed the ruined table of the hostel. Before me were the remains of the beer that we had bought to play drinking games, five of my friends from the program and one boisterous Australian named Paul that we encountered in a hammock at the hostel. After giving him a lesson on American partying that night, we fell into a lull of conversation about culture, politics and geography. It soon became clear that Paul was far more versed on American subjects than we were on Australian. With only a little help, he was able to name all 50 states, our president, our biggest film industries and even a few recent political issues. When we expressed our surprise at his vast knowledge, his response was a little incredulous. "You have to realize that America has a global influence. Most of our culture is taken from your lot."

At his prodding, we were able to provide scant information about Australia but it was the next question that sealed our fate. Not a single person from our group could name the secretary-general of the United Nations. "You're part of the United Nations. Why wouldn't you be privy to something like that?" he exclaimed (*Tess Miller, Costa Rica*)

There are other issues, however, where things get a little more complicated. Ordinarily I'm in the "think global, act local" boat when it comes to world affairs - we have enough problems to deal with in our own country, our own cities, right? But now, I'm not so sure. If there's an opportunity like the Ivory Coast, where you could help an entire country get back on its feet, is it wrong, or globally irresponsible, even, to ignore that? How do we find a balance between being globally responsible and meddling? For as much as the West preaches about the importance of education, I feel like we still have a lot to learn. (*Bridget McCartin, France*)

Global citizenship cannot avoid education, [and] in fact, education is the sole key to global citizenship. Whether it be education in the classroom at home, in the streets of some foreign city, on the farm of a host family, or even a simple conversation with local students at a foreign university you are attending; these experiences are essential and help one on their way to becoming a global citizen. The most important piece of this education is "instilling awareness and empathy of other countries, cultures, and issues of common concern across the planet." Global citizenship is about awareness, awareness of oneself in the context of the greater world and what this means

about how ones' responsibilities effect ones' thoughts and actions. Although, global citizenship is very important in our modern society, it is also important to realize that global citizenship is not just a three-step process. It is an ongoing experience that continually changes, and has no pre-determined time frame or goal. It is also very important to realize that while global awareness and responsibility are essential to learn, one must equally be aware of what happens at home. There is much to be worked on locally which is where civic activism gets involved. If one is not able to travel the world and be active in all global problems they can still be active in their own communities, something that people often forget. (*Eliza Nelson, Townsville, Australia*)

As the article states, "global citizenship is the exercise of the rights to participate in decision making in economic, cultural, and political life within and across the local, national and global arenas." However such activism actually ended up negatively impacting Kenya because the country was put in a mindset that it was "backwards" and therefore dependent on western powers to help them become developed and prosperous. Being a global citizen should not mean imposing views from one society onto another, but this is what happened in the case of Kenya and can still be seen today. Being dependent on the

“developed” world to offer foreign aid (usually in the form of checks and international organizations) have not helped Kenya and much of the poorer countries in the way that would sustainably improve them because not only does the current civic activism method lend itself to corruption, but it does not offer the independence and sustainability these counties need to truly be successful. (*Emma Schneider, Kenya*)

Although being born in any one location (and therefore having citizenship) may be completely chance, having Place can be a conscious choice and need not be dictated by birth. (*Caitlin Devore, Australia*)

A PICTURE IS WORTH A 1000 WORDS:



This picture is nothing more than a table and some chairs. It's a chalkboard with scribbles and remnants of breakfast. It's a vase with one lone branch and some fruit in a bowl. It is *la vie quotidienne* – everyday life. Everything is average. Nothing is remarkable.

If you are thinking this, clearly you aren't looking closely enough.

If you were looking, really looking, you would see the word 'zucchini' on the chalkboard, written by your host mom your first night in Angers. You would see the cereal box and remember the relief you felt that second night in Angers when you were having doubts about studying abroad and you opened the pantry to see that box of cereal – halfway across the world- with your name on it- "Jordan's cereal" (honey and almond). The candy sitting on the radiator would remind you of the day your host mom came back from her trip to Poland and how it made you smile when she gave you a chocolate heart and said she thought of you when she saw it. You wouldn't be able to glance past that bowl of apples without thinking of the night your host dad broke it when he tried to start a 'spoon and bowl' band with you. You would see your daily coffee that you drink with your host dad, the branch that your host mom picked when she went on her run, and the scarf you wear when you grab a quick *brioche au chocolat* for lunch at the local *patisserie*. And when you look at this picture, the thing that will stand out to you the most is the quite average looking table.

It is here where you have attempted to explain the difference between brothel and brother to your host dad. It is here where you sang *La vie en rose* at the top of

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

your lungs. And it is here, at this less than ordinary table, that you have been embraced by extraordinary people who are teaching you –day by day- the importance of family, friends, and learning about new cultures.

One glance at this picture would remind you that each day in your everyday life in Angers has taught you something wonderful and has left you with a memory that you will carry with you forever. If you were looking, really looking at this picture, it would make you realize that *chaque jour of la vie quotidienne* has become a celebration of life.

If you were looking, that is.

(*Jordan Metcalfe, France*)

A couple weeks after moving to Tübingen, I participated in a town-relay similar to the board game *Clue*. Each team had to go to each of the possible murder-places, find the clue, and once your team had all the clues, it was your job to figure out who the murderer was, where the murder took place, and what the murder weapon was. All of the places that we had to find were well known landmarks that you knew after being in Tübingen for a week. All, that is, but one. None of us had ever heard of the sixth place - *Synagogenplatz* (Synagogue square/place).

A Picture is Worth a 1000 words...



We asked people on the street where it was, but they too did not know where it was to be found, although they were natives of the town. Eventually, we found a person who knew where it was.

Synagogenplatz, it turns out, is a small memorial where a synagogue once stood. On the 9/10th of November, 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), the synagogue was burn down, the remains were sold for construction purposes, and the remaining foundations leveled. Nothing was to remain that could remind people of the place's former purpose. Years after WWII was over, the people of Tübingen slowly came to the decision that a memorial should be erected by the remains of the old synagogue that was no longer visible. In 1998, a group was founded to get the ball rolling on the *Synagogenplatz* memorial.

Although this is not something unique to Tübingen, synagogues all over Europe were destroyed during this time for the same reason, it is an important part of not only Tübingen's history, but also the history of Germany and



the surrounding area as a whole. When I saw the memorial, couldn't help but think of how much this little memorial depicted the history and changes in mindset of an entire town and country. When the synagogue was destroyed in 1938, one of the main goals of this destruction was to wipe the memory of the synagogue (and with it, the Jewish religion, in a way) from the townspeople's minds. Without something visible to remind them, and without the Jewish people in the town to keep the memory alive, Judaism was meant to vanish. To a certain point, this was disturbingly successful. There are, however, people who keep the memory alive. It almost seems like a private but

collective memory/knowledge of a group of Tübingen-ers that doesn't get talked about. Seeing this memorial made me realize a little more about how deep and widespread the beginnings of WWII in Germany really were. It also made the pre-WWII German history I have learn that much more potent. WWII didn't just happen in some foreign country across the ocean. It didn't just happen in textbooks. People, who walked on the streets that I now walk on, see the building that I now see, and lived in the town that I now live, were there. They saw what happened happen, and perhaps they even took part. It's funny how sometimes the smaller things, like this little half-hidden memorial, can make a part of history so tangible. (*Margot Blevins, Tübingen, Germany*)

A Picture is Worth a 1000 words...

Across gift shops and vendor stands in Beijing, a very popular image is a picture of President Obama in a communist party member uniform. Messages such as the one above are frequently seen and deserve a chuckle and reflective moment. Many interpretations and meanings come from such a photo, and understanding the Chinese opinion of US policy remains important.



This photo focuses on Chinese opinion of US policy interests specific to President Obama. Furthermore, it is important to understand that this culture uses art and subtle, ironic messages to communicate and protest/present points of interest. President Obama is viewed by many across the world as a socially progressive and socialist-influenced policy driver. This picture stands as an ironic message of a worldly opinion that is excessively debated and argued in the US.

This photo provided me the perspective that countries like China, yes even China, can have a more realistic or balanced perspective on US policy leaders without muddling in politically correct statements or opinions. American sensitivity to criticisms or comparisons in our political machine looks simplistically foolish after seeing the blatant opinions of the Chinese. This photo also serves dual irony as the Chinese are not able to have strong opinions of their own government, but quickly prescribe opinions to US interests. (*Corey Shears, China*)



... One more thing that is necessary to fully understand this picture is that the Arava Desert region in Israel is considered to be an extreme desert. This means that it receives less than 50 mm of water per year (5 cm). This past year, only 17 mm fell on the area (1.7 cm). So we start our trip, everyone a little down, and during our picnic lunch on the first day it starts pouring! We had been swimming in the Dead Sea and everyone grabbed their things and piled back into the bus. Since the whole area is made up of sand and rock, the water starts running straight off the cliffs and into the Dead Sea. After driving for a few minutes we start to see huge waterfalls in the mountains! Most of the Israelis, Jordanians, and Palestinians

have never seen so much fresh water in their lives and even the bus driver is amazed. At one point we come across a waterfall that is close to the road and is starting to cause flash flooding. The water is emptying into the Dead Sea and we all get out of the bus and run towards the water. We stand in front of the falls and are in awe. Waterfalls in the desert. It sounds impossible and it's so beautiful. (*Rachel Willis, Israel*)

A Picture is Worth a 1000 words...



This picture shows the Maasai *morani* (warriors, men of a certain age and after certain initiation ceremonies) demonstrating how they make a fire by rubbing two sticks together. With my love of camping, I was absolutely fascinated by this and was so excited to see this method actually work for anyone other than Bear Grylls. I asked Alex, our tour guide of sorts, about what makes it work and he explained that the long tall stick is made of a soft wood and the flat one it rubs against is made from hard wood. The friction between the different hardnesses creates a pile of embers that you transfer to some grass, and there you have it: fire. I was told that I could buy a set of sticks to take home with me, and I was totally going to because I think it would be really cool to take on Outing Club trips and use. Later though, Alex brought me a set and pressed it into my hands saying "No problem." He had given me them as a gift instead of having me buy them. It was a seemingly small gesture, but it was one that transcended the transactional relationship that we formerly had to one of mutual respect and maybe even friendship. I think he had picked up on my enthusiasm for his small bit of culture he

had shared and it meant enough to him to give me a gift. It was one of those moments that you hope for constantly, but that so rarely happen. Even with all of the animals around us all weekend, it was that moment that really made the trip incredible (*Christopher Plano, Kenya*)



... Now for the revelation: As I was standing over the look-out point, I said to my traveling companion, "This is not my life." I would never imagine being able to see someplace as exclusive and absolutely beautiful as this first person. On my couch with the travel channel on TV, sure, but not in real life. It's also a phrase I've used as a bit of a mantra in the past when I'm not thrilled with a particular day or event - This is not my life, real life hasn't started yet, today won't mater in the long run. Then the companion replied, "It is now." And for some reason, that simple reply illuminated the fact that I really am on my grand Australian adventure that I've been planning for years (and I get to learn about the continent's science

simultaneously!!). Recognizing the present moment as something that really is happening, and time really is still ticking, made me realize that my life isn't on hold just because I'm in college or just because I'm on study abroad. This, right now, really is my life. The "real world" isn't waiting for me after graduation and I won't get extra time at the end just because I waited to start actually counting my daily experiences. ... And this new recognition of time is something I will bring with me when I return to the US to continue getting the most out of my daily life. (*Caitlin Devore, Australia*)

COMING HOME

The part of this reading that stood out to me the most was the section where Brockington and Wiedenhoft discuss how people live in and are surrounded by "concentric circles" (pp. 118-119). They assert that "Our task as citizens of the world, and as educators who prepare people to be citizens of the world, will be to 'draw the circles somehow towards the center,' making all human beings like our fellow city dwellers."

When I read this, I thought about the concentric circles that I live in and coexist with and how the idea of "draw[ing] the circles somehow towards the center" could be integrated into the Allegheny College curriculum. While I closely interact with my fellow members of the Allegheny community -- the "local" -- the education we receive, the people we meet, and the actions we take all affect others on a global scale, no matter how small these effects may be. Through education we learn about conflicts, the ways others live, the environment, and other subjects that pertain to our majors and minors or the classes we take. With this education, we are empowered locally to help make changes and impacts globally.

At times, our education may just be frustrating as we try to get through that natural science lab that we need for our distribution or stay up all night to finish our

comps, but the knowledge we acquire, especially at Allegheny, prepares us for the workforce and a global society. My suggestion for the Allegheny curriculum is to somehow explore the possibilities (for impacting and living in this global society) that we are preparing for at Allegheny. After 15 weeks here, I am beginning to see the possibilities I will have, and they may be endless. (*Lauren Balot, France*)

FINAL THOUGHTS:

The cost of internationalization seems to be completely placed on the hosts. Other than the financial burden, I haven't had to give up anything to be abroad and I haven't felt exploited by my hosts in any way. However, I feel like an unwilling participant in the disadvantaging of Australian students due to the overpopulation of Americans in some of my classes. My "Fish Class" has nearly 50 students, but the number of Aussies is under 10. Much to my chagrin, this has made it impossible to find an Aussie lab buddy and it also makes me question how many Australian students were prevented from taking the class so seats could be available for study abroad students (most of whom are American or German). The professors here have low expectations of me as an American study abroad student, which may be partially due to the fact that as the hosts, they are paying for my experience abroad. (*Caitlin Devore, Australia*)

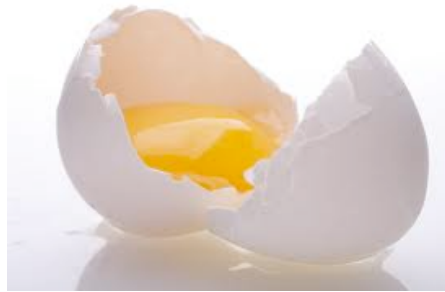
But it is so hard to escape from America here: the music is American, the language is spoken everywhere, and the clothing is American... I think the biggest step in proving the author wrong is actually caring enough to go the extra mile and be American without attempting to bring EVERYTHING American to Germany. (*Allison Burgess, Tübingen, Germany*)

Studying abroad is an experience which requires certain skills. The most important of these, without exception, is adaptability. Make no mistake, things will go wrong. Your luggage will get lost, your family will cook bad food, and your hostel reservation will get canceled without explanation. However, if you are adaptable, all of these experiences can turn into positives. I once had to speak with the Seville police. It all started when I was racing home for dinner on my bike (my *madre* was very particular about dinner times, so I wanted to be on time). I was going faster than I probably should have, but I was on the bike path, which is supposed to be a pedestrian-free zone. While I was rounding a bend, a young man jumped out from behind a building and was looking the other way while trying to catch a bus. With my high speed and his negligence, a collision was unavoidable. He got knocked to the ground as we banged heads. Even though I was the one with blood pouring from my head and he was more or less

fine, I knew that the initial reaction by the Spanish bystanders would be to blame me. Next thing I knew, there were paramedics on the scene and I had to give a statement to the police the next day. It all could have been overwhelming, but I did not panic. I was confident in my Spanish and calmly explained the situation. Without the unfortunate accident, I never would have had the opportunity to speak with foreign authorities. It's all about rolling with the blows when studying abroad, because all we can really take home are the stories. (*Bruce James, Seville, Spain*)

I, however, found my limit, discovered I am not always as strong as I think, and realized how much I am dependent on those closest to me. It was not as if I had never been far from home; I go to college thousands of miles away from my hometown. There is something entirely different about picking up and moving across the ocean, attempting to quickly fit into a culture that at its roots is just... different. I quickly learned why so many people are shocked when I say that I lived in rural Kenya basically alone for half my program, why they personally would never do the same. It is not because they are ignorant, or not adventurous. It is because it is hard. I honestly thought I would breeze through the challenges, come out the other side ready for round two. Instead, I found myself literally weeping mid-term,

wondering why the hardships were affecting me the way they did. My world was rocked; the way I had measured my strength I quickly discovered was faulty. [...] My best advice is to let yourself be vulnerable, let the experience overtake you. Attempting to be strong and stoic through the hardships fools no one but yourself, and in the end you will learn far more through those times that you fall apart.



You are not a better traveler if you can make it through a semester abroad with no ups and downs, frankly that is impossible. You are not a bad traveler when you realize how much you wish you brought your laptop to better record your experiences. World travelers I think by definition [want] to be tough, are supposed to be independent, and [are] assumed to be able to take it all without flinching. It's true, it takes guts to run around the world for whatever length of time you choose. Just remember it is just as important to feel through your experiences as it is to think about them. (*Laura Gaudreau in Kenya*)

... the thing which was important to me, and which created the most meaningful six months was to keep an open mind and BE FLEXIBLE. Be. Flexible. (your time abroad deserves it). Your open mind and flexibility will carry over from being abroad onto life past the awesome adventure abroad. It changes how you approach everything. Your tomorrow, your next year, your career ... etc. The amount of personal growth a short four - six months a person who studies or travels abroad is immeasurable and precious. (*Emma Schneider, Kenya*)

I have been humbled by living in the position of a "foreigner", by being the one who sometimes feels like they are "missing something", or not completely understanding the way of life, the communication, the culture. Because I have now experienced this cultural reality shock, I have made a vow to myself to forever be more patience and respectful of "foreigners" trying to make it in the United States. I have promised myself to go out of my way to make "foreigners" feel comfortable in my city, in my state, in my country, and to open lines of communication the best I can without making it seem like a chore to do so. By vowing this, I can consider myself trying to be a better global citizen. (*Erin Wahl, Spain*)

Advice for Fellow Travelers



-Don't pack too many pairs of socks. Other countries have socks too. (This is applicable to whatever packing item you obsess over – jeans, shirts, toothpaste, whatever. For me it was socks. No idea why; this is Australia, people rarely wear shoes, let alone socks.)

-Seriously consider booking only a one-way ticket to get abroad and then booking a separate ticket to get yourself back to the US. You have no idea how your end of semester plans may change and booking two tickets at two separate times is going to be much cheaper and easier than trying to change one leg of a round trip ticket. (Plus, an airline may cancel a flight back to the US meaning

you end up in limbo waiting for them to re-confirm at their leisure that they'll honor you with a seat on a plane at some point.)

- Not all universities require their professors to provide office hours. (Not every place is as amazing as Allegheny College. Who knew?)

- Listen to music from the place you're going. If you can sing along to the car radio when someone gives you a ride, you're more likely to make a friend. (And get more free rides!)

- Slang dictionaries are not only hilarious, but highly useful.

- Add a minimum of an extra 30 minutes to any scheduled activity during the first week – walking to class, eating meals, catching a buss, everything.

- Talk to strangers and take time to practice the fine art of people-watching. (Cultural immersion can be active or passive.)

- Smile constantly and never take yourself too seriously. You have been given an opportunity to radiate joy out into the universe – not taking full advantage of it would be a shame. (This is also true even when you're not traveling, but it makes me sound like a hippy.)

(Caitlin Devore, Australia)

About EXL 300 (1 credit) -- Cross Cultural Learning: Theory & Practice

This is a one-credit letter grade course that may also be taken credit/no credit. It is mandatory, along with all the other pre-departure and re-entry requirements for an Allegheny College-sponsored study abroad/study away program.

The course is designed to encourage students to think and be actively engaged in their new cultural setting, whether this is Washington D.C. or Africa. Assignments are designed to capture experiential intercultural learning in complex ways. The course encourages students to connect the local and the global as they reflect on how their experiences at the host destination may relate to life at home. Participants are encouraged to adopt a non-ethnocentric perspective in sharing cultural knowledge with the Allegheny College campus community, and to consider ways in which they may use their intercultural experiences to inform their personal and professional lives.

Course Instructor:



Dr. Ishita Sinha Roy teaches Media & Cultural Studies in the department of Communication Arts & Theater at Allegheny College. Her research focuses on postcolonial investigations of how national identity is constructed and negotiated within the media, and popular culture, for strategic economic, political, and cultural purposes. She has designed and taught the EXL300 course for Allegheny College Study Abroad/Away participants since 2004.

Course Collaborators:

Jenny Kawata is the Director for the International Programs and Services Office at Allegheny College and oversees the administrative aspects of all the Study Abroad and Study Away programs. Ms. Kawata also supervises the faculty-led Experiential Learning (EL) summer study tours, and is the point person for international students, faculty, and staff on campus.



Michael Hurley is Instructional Technologist in the Learning Commons at Allegheny College's Pelletier Library. Among his many responsibilities, he designs and leads technology sessions that allow participants in the EXL 300 course to use blogs and digital storytelling to capture their experiences in meaningful ways.
