Charles Prahl

The Berkley Center’s Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) program offers Georgetown students the unique opportunity to augment their study abroad experience through careful thought and reflection on the religious dimensions of the cultures they become immersed in while away from the hilltop. The program helps participants discover insights about their host countries and, more importantly, themselves.

Sarah Delaney

One of the best things I learned about myself abroad is that I am a hard-core Hoyah at heart. I loved meeting new people, eating new foods, traveling to new places, and immersing myself in a new culture...and all the while found myself wanting to discuss and analyze these experiences in the way we do every day here at Georgetown. Students really take it upon themselves to explore the world around them and have enlightened conversations about significant issues. That's something I never realized set apart a Hoyah before my time abroad.

Katharine Davis

The more time I spend abroad, the more time I find myself dedicating to confronting and accepting my own strengths and weaknesses. ... At the moment, I don't fully understand my place or purpose in the world, but I have come to realize that I will never be able to do so without the varied experiences that come only from living and traveling in other countries.

Flávia Menezes

JYAN encouraged me to be a conscious observer of everything that was happening around me during my new life in Paris. I was definitely able to think more reflectively about the Parisian culture because of JYAN. I would definitely recommend the JYAN program to anyone who wants to feel like they were truly able to get the most out of their study abroad experience. Being part of JYAN allows you to dive your heart and soul into introspective reflection about living in this new country, and to start understanding how to think like a local of your study abroad country.
Owen Sanderson

Sitting on the London Underground, it hit me. Like a blast of the hot, desert air I had experienced two weeks earlier in Qatar, I collided with reality. Traveling beneath a dynamic, diverse, and politically vibrant city, I finally began to understand the vast complexity of the international system.

Whitney Pickels

With the ever increasing role of religion in society and world affairs, no cultural and political assessment is complete without recognizing the unique role of religion in society. The JYAN program helped me to focus on the religious factor and has also connected me to a broad network that helps me compare my experiences with people in other countries.

Elspeth Williams

The JYAN experience motivated and prompted me to mull over and engage with what I was seeing and encountering. Traveling around the world I found the entrenched richness and history of religion just about everywhere. In particular, faith was everywhere I looked in India, Thailand, Cambodia, Brazil and Argentina. Perhaps it’s coming from a much more secular, politically correct world in the United States where religion tends to be confined to the realm of one’s private life, but I was really blown away with what I encountered along my travels. Religion was omnipresent and often so very in-my-face, if not literally on my face or arms in the form of blessing dots on my forehead and good luck blessing bracelets around my wrists.

Table of Contents

About the Junior Year Abroad Network ................. 2
Student Reports from Abroad
Learning About Religion and Culture .................. 4
Traditional Religion Meets the Modern World ........ 8
Seeing History Up Close .......................... 13
Religion in Spite of Secularism .................. 17
Development and Religion on the Ground ........... 21
The Global Challenge of Immigration ............. 24
Learning about Others, Learning about Oneself .... 27
Study abroad is often a time of profound discovery and self-transformation. Students confront a new world in foreign lands and through these encounters, discover themselves.

The Berkley Center Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) links up study abroad students into a global conversation on religion, politics, and culture. Students immersed in diverse settings—from England to Egypt to China—share their experiences and observations with one another, the Georgetown community, and beyond.

During their time living in a foreign country, students write several “letters from abroad” dealing with questions of religion, culture, and politics in a different part of the world. They share these with each other through the Berkley Center website. They engage in dialogue about their common experiences and perceptions of their different cultures, particularly the many roles that religion plays in their host country’s culture. They share stories about how to navigate new lands and the discovery of promising new directions for their lives.
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
STUDY ABROAD

Georgetown University encourages students to spend a semester, year, or summer session abroad as part of their academic experience. Georgetown sponsors overseas study programs in various countries, including: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, China, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Cote d’Ivoire, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Scotland, Russia, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, and Taiwan.

Students may enroll in a Georgetown-sponsored program or may occasionally study in an independent program overseas. Almost 70% of students enroll in direct matriculation programs, where they take courses in the language of the host university alongside degree-seeking students at that institution. By being fully integrated at the host university, Georgetown students are better able to make the most of the overseas experience.

BERKLEY CENTER FOR RELIGION, PEACE, AND WORLD AFFAIRS

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, created within the Office of the President in March 2006, is part of a university-wide effort to build knowledge about religion’s role in world affairs and promote interreligious understanding in the service of peace. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, the Center explores the intersection of religion with four global challenges: diplomacy and transnational relations, democracy and human rights, global development, and interreligious dialogue. Thomas Banchoff, Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the School of Foreign Service, is the Center's first director.
Learning about Religion and Culture

Students were spread across many countries and countless cultures, yet there is a commonality in their tone and emotions that is not typically heard in discussions of different religions and cultures. In Georgetown classrooms, students are presented with texts outlining ideological contradictions, cultural clashes, and the challenges of fundamentalism, and they learn these are often intractable issues. However, the students’ letters do not speak of encountering intractability or hopelessness. Instead, they are engaged by the contradictions and invested in the possibility of achieving solutions.

Students went to a foreign land to learn a new language and discover new traditions, but through their reflections they came to understand the same truth: the more they learned, the more questions they had. Their questions are an encouraging sign for the future, they speak to our leaders that the next generation is eager to address religious and political conflict armed with a more profound understanding of other religions and cultures.
Anne Barton-Veenkant

**MAJOR:** Interdisciplinary Studies: Human Development as the Complete Life, Georgetown College

**HOMETOWN:** Princeville, Hawaii

**HOST COUNTRY:** Brazil

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Pontifica Universidade Católica–Rio de Janeiro

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring semester

Anne’s interests involve primarily the relationship between personal development and development of the international community as it concerns a holistic perspective on life: health, finances, spirituality, freedom and responsibility. Anne has worked since 2003 with Amigos de las Américas in community development, youth leadership and cultural exchange within Spanish-speaking Latin America, leading her to now pursue studies for six months in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While at home, Anne has led Georgetown University’s UNICEF Campus Initiative and Education Without Boundaries’ Project Argentina as well as participated in the DC Schools Project. She is currently working to develop an online newsmagazine on international health and finances, partnering with her father, Raymond Veenkant. After graduation, Anne hopes to pursue entrepreneurial projects, especially concerning nutrition, agriculture, and small businesses in developing nations.

If you can survive Rio, you can survive anywhere in the world ... this is a test by fire,” 74-year-old Doralice, my host-mother, tells me. From anywhere in the city, I can look up and see Christ the Redeemer standing on high with his arms out as if surrendering the city up to a higher will, and in the same moment, I must cast a furtive glimpse to my back to observe who is watching, who may be following me. This is a city of paradox. Religion in the City of God, as I have observed it, is not about morality. It is about maintaining the self amid this paradoxical chaos—light and dark, enjoyment and violence, celebration and suffering, an amalgamation of influences from history and present day. Sexuality, discrimination, violence, pleasure are not swept under the rug. They are part of life and part of each of us.

As American culture understands religion, it may write Rio off as a godless place. However, it is in fact extremely spiritual. It has integrated innumerable spiritual influences into a Brazilian way of being. A typical Brazilian may go to Mass on Sundays, navigate romantic relationships by astrology, steer clear of black cats, and throw white roses into the ocean on New Years Eve as an offering to Lemanjá, an African Goddess of the Sea. Brazil is a country that defies definition, transcends labels and any experience of any outlined identity.

Flávia Menezes

**MAJOR:** Government, Minors in Sociology and French, Georgetown College

**HOMETOWN:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

**HOST COUNTRY:** France (Paris)

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Paris IV–Sorbonne and Paris VIII–St. Denis

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring semester

Although she is Brazilian, Flávia has lived in Brazil for only five years of her life. She spent her childhood moving around, having lived also in Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, Portugal, Morocco, and Maryland. After returning to Buenos Aires for a summer abroad program in 2006, she decided it was time to return to Europe. At Georgetown, Flávia is active in organizations such as GU Women of Color, Take Back The Night, Leaders for Education About Diversity, and the Diversity Action Council.

It was not too long ago when Canal +, a public television channel in France, aired a news segment about Nicolas Sarkozy […] present in a public religious ceremony […]. Despite its laïcité, the French society is rather cognizant of the fact that Catholicism is undeniably tied to their nation’s rich cultural past, and certain traditions that have been carried on and maintained from this past are therefore still seen as acceptable today […]. It is also acceptable that certain government officials be present to witness the act. There is a line that is drawn, however, when the presence becomes an active one. […] One’s own personal religion is rarely mentioned in social settings and most certainly never in professional settings, particularly if your professional domain is that of the political world. In the news clip aired, Sarkozy is actually seen crossing himself on stage, hence publicly acknowledging himself as a Christian, something that is not acceptable for someone in his position to be doing. A politician in France is to be seen as religion-less as far as the public is concerned; he/ she is to be neutral in this aspect, and must never ground
any of his/her political beliefs on any religious morale. [...] The reporter narrating the story on Canal + concluded the segment with, “[This was] a religious gesture that a Minister of State should exempt himself from,” adding, with a certain tone of sarcasm, “this too is the tradition, but this one that of the Republic.”

Elizabeth Bowers

**MAJOR:** International Business and Finance, McDonough School of Business  
**HOMETOWN:** Wellington, Florida  
**HOST COUNTRY:** Ireland  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** University College Dublin  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall semester

Elizabeth Bowers was born and raised in South Florida. From an early age, she has expressed an interest in her Irish heritage and always desired to study in the Emerald Isle. While attending Georgetown, Elizabeth was a member of DC schools and the Georgetown University and Alumni Federal Student Credit Union. She is a proud member of the School of Business and plans to double major in International Business and Finance. After graduating in 2008, she plans on attending law school.

Upon arriving in Dublin this September, it was difficult not to be impressed by the beauty and serenity of both the Irish people and the Irish countryside. Having an uncle who served as an American diplomat in Ireland, I knew that the Emerald Isle wasn’t always as beautiful and peaceful as it is today. The arduous Irish Peace Process is still far from over; but, several politicians and religious figures have made valiant strides to end the fighting between both countries this past decade. Being a student studying in Dublin, it is often easy to forget of the troubles that once plagued this land, namely the bitter battle between unionists and nationalists or as some might say Protestants and Catholics. Nevertheless, we were all reminded on Friday, November 24, of the sinister hatred between the two aforementioned groups that still brews underneath Ireland’s seemingly beautiful surface. This past Friday a convicted killer, Michael Stone, disrupted the Stormont’s session and reinforced the view of some skeptics that Ireland will never be able to achieve peace. The news of Stone’s attack quickly reached individuals in both Northern Ireland and The Republic.

Emily Majka

**MAJOR:** Arabic, Georgetown College  
**HOMETOWN:** Colonia, New Jersey  
**HOST COUNTRY:** Egypt  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** The American University in Cairo  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall semester

Emily Majka is a junior studying abroad at the American University in Cairo. She has also studied Arabic at the University of Damascus in Syria, and has spent time in Turkey. In her free time, Emily has worked at the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. Outside of academia, she has played for the Georgetown Women’s Rugby Team and is an avid runner. She is a founding member of the Georgetown Tap Club and a sister in the Delta Phi Epsilon Foreign Service sorority. She is also fluent in French.

My last year in the Middle East- Egypt, Syria, Morocco, and Turkey- has shown me firsthand the diversity of the region. Syria was a conservative, Muslim country where I met few women who worked and a paucity of western influence. Egypt was a polar opposite from Syria. Anytime I wanted to escape the dirt, noise, and pollution I could step inside Coffee Bean, the Egyptian version of Starbuck’s for an iced mocha frappe. Morocco was a beautiful beyond belief, and visiting this gem during Ramadan meant that almost all women and men dressed in traditional Moroccan garb. The markets in Marrakech reminded me of the stories of Arabian Nights where monkeys danced in the square, and snake charmers mystified audiences. Turkey was Muslim but also very liberal and I was shocked to see women wearing tanktops as they walked around the main square. It was a trying experience to live in third world countries, but I’m ultimately thankful that it has made me a more discerning consumer of the “Arab” news we hear so much about in The States today.
“E você é católica!”

Less than 72 hours into my 6 months in Brazil and a minute into my first conversation with my host family, I had already been pigeonholed into a particular religious identity. Yes, I am a Catholic, and no, I am not ashamed to say it… but how did my host mother know? And would it make any difference in the way she and her husband would treat me over the course of the upcoming semester? Before I had a chance to pinch my earlobes or feel my neck for any silver crucifixes I might be wearing, an answer came in the form of divine intervention…or a more down-to-earth reaction to the look of surprise plastered across my face. Reminding me that I had referenced my Christian upbringing on my housing form, with a laugh she told me that it was something we had in common.

I use this anecdote in conjunction with the following two observations to reflect a more generalized view of religion in Brazil (or, at the very least, the city of São Paulo) I can offer thus far. The first observation I have made is more basic: despite my host mother’s initial assertion of her Catholic faith, I have yet to see her attend a mass. The second observation I have made regards Catholicism in a broader context—although a graduate of Latin American History like myself might assume that past customs continue to dominate contemporary practices, it feels as though this is not necessarily the case. The common link amidst this commentary is then as follows: with respect to religion, Brazil can feel like a country of contradictions.

Alanna Hughes is a junior in the School of Foreign Service. Although she missed Washington, DC, as well as her hometown, Andover, Massachusetts, Alanna enjoyed six months in South America taking Latin American History, Ethnotourism, and Urbanization classes at Pontificia Universidade Catolica in São Paulo, Brazil, interning, and traveling. Back at Georgetown, one can find her working for the Corp, teaching citizenship classes to Central American immigrants at CARECEN, or, of course, “studying” in Lauinger.

---

Alanna Hughes

**MAJOR:** Regional and Comparative Studies (Latin America and South Asia), certificate in International Development, School of Foreign Service

**HOMETOWN:** Andover, Massachusetts

**HOST COUNTRY:** Brazil (São Paulo)

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Pontificia Universidade Catolica (PUC)

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring semester
Many students were fascinated by the interactions of tradition and modernity they observed. Each day they explored new implications of globalization, finding themselves disturbed by the clashes between different worlds and heartened and surprised by striking similarities. They found cultures which, confronted with the modern world, have turned to fundamentalism. They also found cultures which, in reaction to the traditional religions of their pasts, have secularized. Across the multiplicity of reactions and struggles to adapt, they discovered that, whether with angry or hopeful ears, people around the world are listening. Their words demonstrate that now, more than ever, there is potential for deeper collaboration and richer dialogue across the divide between religious and secular life.

Tim Fernholz

MAJOR: Government and Theology; minor in Arabic, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Gilford, New Hampshire
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

Tim Fernholz was raised in the great state of New Hampshire. Coming to Georgetown, he knew he wanted to become involved in public affairs. Since then, he has become an editor at The Georgetown Voice and interned at The New Republic, worked for numerous liberal and progressive causes and officials, and occasionally attended class. Tim decided to study in Cairo because of his interested in both Middle Eastern politics and theology. Tim is also a member of the Philodemic Debate Club and WGTB, Georgetown Radio.

In Egypt, as in much of the Middle East, public political participation is not particularly welcome. Demonstrations are (barely) allowed, to vent popular anger and also allow
a public forum for intimidation by security services—if the 25 to 1 ratio of police to mainly serves to remind people of their place. But through the institutions of Islam—despite the fact that the government funds Imams and Mosques—people find outlets for their opinions and dissent and places of assembly where the Emergency Law has suspended assembly for decades. Mosques are more than just religious centers, they are community centers, where people will eat meals, nap during the day, teach lessons or relax. At Al Azhar Mosque and University, the institutional home of orthodox Sunnism in Egypt, children will slide in stocking feet over the polished marble courtyard that is filled kneeling penitents on Friday.

The main opposition party in Egypt, such as it is, are the Muslim Brothers, who have been banned, persecuted, committed acts of terrorism and violence and later publicly renounced them. They hold a small voting bloc in the Egyptian parliament, where they push for more an independent judiciary, increased freedom of political participation and other civil rights, like any opposition party—they even publicly hedge over whether they pursue an Islamic state or not. The Brotherhood presents a case of cognitive dissonance for those of us from the West who would like to see real liberal democratic reform in the Middle East but feel uncomfortable approving of an organization whose early leading light, Sayyid Quttb, laid the intellectual foundation for the anti-Western Islamist political actors who present a violent challenge to our way of life. If today they embrace democratic methods—and claim broad popular support—where can we stand?

Alexandria Rose Motl

**MAJOR:** Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service

**HOMETOWN:** West Bend, Wisconsin

**HOST COUNTRY:** Spain

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** University of Salamanca

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Full year

Alexandria Motl was raised in a household where the beliefs and traditions of the Catholic faith flourished, but the rich culture of her Jewish heritage was never forgotten. She has become accustomed to religion being present on a daily basis as a result of attending Catholic schools all her life and growing up in a very religious home. An active member of her church in Wisconsin, she has served as a piano accompanist, a Eucharistic Minister, and a board member of the church’s Youth Group.

We’ve all heard the stories about the crusades, Martin Luther, the Inquisition, and so on. We’ve seen pictures of countless different churches dotting the European county side, seen grand cathedrals, and seen an array of paintings of the Madonna with the baby Jesus. We’ve come to characterize Europe as a sort of second Holy Land.

However, somewhere between our history books and real life, something changed. The majority of the people
living in Spain are Roman Catholic, but this is really more of a classification rather than a way of living. The government is now wholly separate from religion. Almost as a backlash to Franco’s harsh enforcement of religion over the country, the people now actively choose to live with something even more drastic than the American right to freedom of religion—they choose freedom from religion.

Yet despite not practicing Catholicism, Spaniards do still associate themselves with the Catholic religion. The adults remember growing up under Franco and learning Catholic doctrine, but no longer practice any religion because they are no longer forced to. Many Spanish children do not attend Catholic schools anymore, but they have a strong interest in religion—maybe due to the lack of its presence. While Catholicism does not play an active role in life, it is a crucial part of the foundation. The Catholic faith is a part of the nation’s identity, if not its lifestyle, thus making it a both sacred and secular country.

Alex Schank

MAJOR: English; minors in Government and Arabic, Georgetown College,
HOMETOWN: Edgewater Park, New Jersey
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: The American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

Alex entered Georgetown University staunchly interested in the Middle East. He had attended a small Quaker high school in New Jersey, where he gained an appreciation for stillness and contemplation. At Georgetown, Alex focused his extracurricular efforts in journalism, writing for the student newspaper, The Hoya, and eventually serving as the managing editor and chair of the paper’s board of directors. He has interned with several governmental and non-governmental bodies, including the pro-democracy Ibn Khaldun Center in Cairo and the American embassy in Doha, Qatar.

Just as Arab nationalists rallied the people because of their defiance to external powers in the last century, Islamists are rallying the people today from the mosques—the one venue still available to reach the people. ... If the Islamists (in Egypt’s case, the Muslim Brotherhood) are integrated into the democratic system, however, and given legal status as a party, they will be forced to moderate their policies and accept the democratic system. As has happened in several Muslim democracies, they could very well lose their mass popular appeal to the people as the holy resistance after 10 to 15 years of democratic participation, [Egyptian democracy advocate Saad Eddin] Ibrahim says.

Thus we see that as the Shari’a changed and adapted over time centuries ago to meet the circumstances of the day, so can it change today. The Shari’a, in fact, is built on the notions of free reasoning and consensus—meaning adaptability. The trick in the twenty-first century is to co-opt the modern promoters of the Shari’a (Islamists) fully into the democratic system. Only then will their policies be moderated, the democratic system secured, and the voice of the people represented in their governments.
Emily Liner

**MAJOR:** Government; minors in History and French, Georgetown College  
**HOMETOWN:** Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi  
**HOST COUNTRY:** France  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Université Lyon II, Institut d’Etudes Politiques  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring semester

If Emily Liner were a city, she would be Washington, DC—originally southern, but with a northeastern mindset and an ambition to make a mark on the world. Emily was born in New Orleans and lives nearby in Bay Saint Louis. Emily always knew that she wanted to work in government, and Georgetown attracted her with its location in the nation’s capital. She spends most of her time working for The Hoya. She has also interned at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Georgetown University Press.

When I asked my host family’s son, who became an ordained Catholic priest in July of 2007, why the French feel threatened by Islam, he explained it to me like this: Unlike America, which has a history of religious pluralism, France has been dominated by Catholicism, and no other religion has ever really been able to compete before. Religious institutions are numerous in the United States, and moreover, many of them are pretty similar in beliefs and culture. But in France the Catholic hegemony is being challenged by another religion as well as a corresponding cultural identity which are both radically different from the French character in many ways, and for some people that is kind of scary.

French people have two distinct areas of their character, “la vie publique et la vie privée”, or public life and private life, and it takes a long time before a French person feels comfortable broaching the division with someone. Religion is firmly entrenched in the private life. There’s an understanding that you keep certain things to yourself. But many Muslims feel that being devout means incorporating their religious beliefs into their everyday lives. These two ideas are diametrically opposed, and the more one side tries to push its agenda, the more the other side is repelled.

Charlotte Drew

**MAJOR:** Government, Georgetown College  
**HOMETOWN:** Rochester, New York  
**HOST COUNTRY:** South Africa  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** University of Cape Town  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall semester

Charlotte Drew is a junior in the Georgetown College and was born in Rochester, New York. She is a government major, and is minoring in history and French. She also volunteered at an HIV/AIDS education class and worked with the Treatment Action Campaign in the paralegals department. Charlotte plans on attending law school after graduation, focusing on constitutional law and international law. She enjoys playing the piano, traveling, and reading.

Recent religious revival in Africa demonstrates the prevalence of political and religious interdependence. At a time when political failure is widespread, coupled with the disillusionment of World Bank and International Monetary Fund programs for development, rekindled religious sentiment reflects disappointment with the current system of governance. Because religion locates evil in society, and allocates power accordingly, ambiguity concerning the morality of the state logically breeds religious excitement. The same applies to nations with strong governments like South Africa. Here, “religious movements challenge the very bases of legitimacy of states which operate through institutions and norms of governance originally created in colonial times”. A considerable factor in the anger over forced removals under the apartheid regime stems from traditional religious beliefs. On the Zulu homestead, a clan’s land is regarded as sacred. Ancestors are buried there and it is also the site of important rituals. By forcing people to leave their land, the central beliefs of African Traditional Religion were placed under direct attack by the state. In the 1970s, a homeland was established for the Zulu people, called KwaZulu, consisting of a small portion of the original Zululand. After apartheid, the Zulu people formed their own political party, the Inkatha Freedom Party, and hold a prominent place as an opposition party today.
John Stewart

MAJOR: Spanish/Latin American Studies; minor in Cognitive Science, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Dallas, Texas
HOST COUNTRY: Buenos Aires, Argentina
HOST UNIVERSITY: UBA, UCA, FLACSO
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Riding on horseback through the Sacred Valley in Peru, my attention was grabbed by a unique phenomenon: Every single one of the small mud and straw huts that I saw was festooned with a small wooden cross and a diminutive statuette of a bull. This was my first introduction to the magnificent combination of traditional Andean beliefs and Catholicism that defines religion in Latin America.

When I was traveling in Bolivia and Peru, making my way slowly towards my final destination of Buenos Aires where I would be studying the next semester, I was witness to this same tradition of spiritual synthesis every day. To the people of these countries, there is no difference between the Pachamama (the Inkan notion of mother earth) and the Virgen Mary. Both hold equal significance. In Potosí during Carnival (a celebration of both the coming of Lent in the Christian calendar and the coming of Spring in the Inkan calendar), I saw a Bolivian woman wrapped in the traditional Andean poncho, holding on her bowler hat with one hand, and spreading flowers on the cobbled streets and doorsteps with the other. I asked her why she was performing this curious ritual and she looked at me was a toothless grin and said: “Mijito, es para la Virgen...y para la Pachamama.”

Charles Prahl

MAJOR: Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Cambridge, Maryland
HOST COUNTRY: South Africa
HOST UNIVERSITY: University of Cape Town
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Religious convictions can be the motivation for amazing acts of kindness and compassion among people, but they can be bent to far more sinister ends as well. Especially in the case of a people with a perception of history—whether factual or exaggerated—that emphasizes their “people” as being a minority that has been victimized, the danger of being captivated by a violent sort of liberation theology that stresses the unique covenant that exists between God and the oppressed, is great.

Although it will never be politically possible for such a situation to exist in South Africa again, one must nonetheless be wary of any struggle for political power between groups that attempt to make God a primary participant in their struggle. Once one begins to slide down that slippery slope, previously unthinkable acts become conscionable and one runs the risk of losing oneself.
Seeing History Up Close

Junior Year Abroad Network students remind us that in a perfect world, all history lessons would be taught on location. Students experience firsthand the effects of prejudice and the tenacity of people to overcome oppression. The textbooks and statistics on racism in South Africa and humanism in Prague are made meaningful by conversations with their host families and taxi drivers. Most significantly, their letters display a new understanding of interstate and interreligious relationships as they confront the sources of bitterness face-on.

Whitney Pickels

MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Richmond, Virginia
HOST COUNTRY: Turkey
HOST UNIVERSITY: Georgetown University’s McGhee Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Drawn by an interest in other cultures, Whitney came to Georgetown to study international affairs. As a Culture and Politics major, most of her classes have centered around international development, religion and the interaction of religion in society and politics. She hopes to study the interaction of secular and Muslim dimensions in Turkish society and politics, to gain a firmer grasp on the role of secular elites and the army vis-a-vis Islamic interests.

Following the Turkish War for Independence after World War I, many Greek Orthodox were deported from Turkey in massive population exchanges with Greece. Others have left in response to pogroms, like those suffered by the Greek quarters during the 1950s and 60s, who were resented for their wealth. The scars of ethno-religious tensions of the past can be seen and felt in Turkey today. Most of the names of cities along the Aegean have been changed from their Greek names to more Turkish...
sounding ones: Smyrna became Izmir, Telmessos turned to Fetiye. In Istanbul, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate still remains from the days of its glorious past under the Byzantine Empire. In speaking with a representative at the patriarchate, I felt the heaviness with which he spoke about the Greek population in Istanbul, which he said had shrunk from 300,000 at the turn of the century to around 3,000 in the city today. In the quarter that surrounded us, he went on to say that in the local Greek school, a large building which now had less than 10 students, only a smaller portion of the building was being maintained to reduce building maintenance costs.

Mela Louise Norman

MAJOR: International Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Del Mar, California
HOST COUNTRY: South Africa
HOST UNIVERSITY: University of Cape Town
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Mela Louise Norman is a senior in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. Mela Louise was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and graduated high school in San Diego, California. She is majoring in International Politics with a secondary concentration in Women and Gender Studies. Mela Louise first became interested in intersection between religion and politics while interning for a prominent Brookings Institution fellow, exploring such issues within modern Islam. She is a fellow in the Tocqueville Forum on the Roots of American Democracy and the Embassy of Israel’s Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Fellowship program. Outside of academia, Mela Louise is an avid photographer, and has been published in a nationally released photography anthology.

On my first night in Ocean View one resident told me, “When they relocated us here, the first thing that went up was a bottle shop. The second was a church.” The Muslim community in Ocean View is large and incredibly vibrant. My host mother, a devout Muslim, extended more generosity and kindness to me over the course of three days than I have ever received as a guest in the United States. I awoke on the first morning to the sound of her early morning prayers, and awoke again to the exotic smells of her cooking. When I inquired about her life in Ocean View, and she confided to me the tragedy of her forced relocation and the death of her husband. Yet, when I asked her how she managed to deal with the immense hardships in her life, she replied sincerely, “What has happened in the past is in the past. Allah has blessed me with beautiful children and grandchildren. I have been to Mecca, and every day of my life is a blessing.”

Dmitriy S. Zakharov

MAJOR: International Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Mobile, Alabama
HOST COUNTRY: Czech Republic
HOST UNIVERSITY: Univerzita Karlova v Praze (Charles University in Prague)
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

Though now a proud citizen of the United States, Dmitriy S. Zakharov was born in the capital of the U.S.S.R. and spent several of his early years in Moscow and Rostov-on-Don, as well as his present hometown of Mobile, Alabama. He has worked with the DC Reads initiative and spent a year employed at the head office of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. Dmitriy has served as Associate and Commentary Editor for The Georgetown Independent and is a very active member of Hoya Blue, the G.U. student spirit organization. He is also a John Carroll Fellow.

Alone among the Slavs and the former Eastern Bloc (excepting the Baltic States), the Czechs have a long and well-established history of Protestantism. Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christianity have been the dominant religions throughout these realms; only in the Czech lands, where Jan Hus launched his reformist movement even before the coming of Martin Luther, is there a heritage of homegrown Protestant Christianity. Conflict with
Catholic neighbors and rulers did take place, leading to calamities like the Thirty Years’ War, but the strength of the Hussite, Utraquist, Brethren, and other Protestant movements resulted in the establishment of a level of religious toleration that was quite unusual...

This uniquely and comparatively pluralist heritage explains not only the lack of Catholic domination in the Czech Republic, but also the tradition of humanism that stemmed from the Protestant influence. This tradition, which is notably absent elsewhere in the Slavic and post-communist realm, can still be seen today: more than a few Czechs have told me that religion does not play a big role in the country today—it is not that important, in the grand scheme of things. Part of this, undoubtedly, stems from the legacy of communist atheism. The growing secularizing influence of Westernization is at play as well. However, the humanist, rationalist approach to life is also evident, particularly among intellectuals and the younger generation. Even among believers, religious faith is largely viewed as a personal, internal question, rather than a communal matter. Evangelism appears rare, and overt displays of religiosity are tempered by the general modesty and lack of ostentatiousness displayed by Czechs in public. Faith is an icon, not a billboard.

Brittany Gregerson
MAJOR: International Politics (Foreign Policy and Policy Processes), African Studies Certificate, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Los Angeles, California
HOST COUNTRIES: Tanzania, South Africa
HOST UNIVERSITIES: University of Dar es Salaam, University of Cape Town
LENGTH OF STAY: Full year

A native Californian, graduate of public schools and the first in her family to go to college, Brittany came to the School of Foreign Service full of excitement. Since arriving at Georgetown, Brittany has worked on campus at the Lombardi Cancer Center and the Woodstock Theological Center as well as in DC for Friends of Hillary, the Democratic National Committee, and various state and local Democratic campaigns. She is a member of the College Democrats, H*yas for Choice, and Students Taking Action Now: Darfur.

Approaching Cape Town from the airport, one is struck first by an aggressively Mediterranean landscape—very Cádiz in the summertime—and a grand bay vista that evokes San Diego, California more than anywhere else. A small collection of neatly packed plate-glass skyscrapers; impatiently blue waters filled with all manner of boats; chain stores and cheeseburger joints. It wouldn’t mesh with the common American preconception of Africa. Few things about Cape Town do. Upon further inspection, however, cracks in the generic sunny façade emerge: there’s Table Mountain to one’s left, a singular sight to be sure, with its rolling, tempestuous tablecloth of thick, beckoning cloud cover; the rainbow ruins and contemporary ghost-town of District Six to one’s right, cruelly stripped of its former glory by an oppressive and unrepentant act of cultural disregard during the height of Apartheid; and all around, visible evidence of the dichotomies of power, luck, health, and resources that so characterize the great African cities of the modern age. Still, it’s more London than Lagos; more cosmopolitan than it is cut-off; more a story of the knowing wisdom of old cities than of the follies and chaos of the prevailing African stereotype. Cape Town lives in the omnipresent shadow of its own history, as old cities and new democracies inescapably do.
Sarah Delaney

MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Phoenix, Arizona
HOST COUNTRY: Ireland
HOST UNIVERSITY: University College Dublin
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

A native Arizonan, Sarah is a junior in the Georgetown School of Foreign Service. Sarah has also studied at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador, and is fluent in Spanish and (almost) in French.

Her experiences as a Scowcroft Fellow at the Aspen Strategy Group from January to August 2006, researching and preparing conferences on the burgeoning powers of India and China, added significantly to her passion for international affairs. She is an active member of the Georgetown Lecture Fund and former Georgetown Office of Leadership Development Coordinator.

When I arrived in Ireland earlier this spring, I expected to be bombarded with news and information about the Northern Ireland conflicts. How could such a devastating situation not be at the core of the country’s identity? Neighbor versus neighbor, brother versus brother, all fighting for their people, be it the Catholics or the Protestants. Yet only once have I heard the phrase “Northern Ireland conflicts” spoken outside of a history classroom.

Unfortunately, in order to prevent repetition of history, discussion of the Northern Ireland conflicts among the general population is exactly what must happen. More frustrating, and more dangerous, however, is the lack of meaningful interchange between different religious faiths about their opinions and practices; one core problem of the conflicts was the allegiances of the Catholics to Ireland and the Protestants to the U.K., leading to fighting between the two groups of faithful. The Irish are hyper-politically correct when it comes to discussing religion; in order to appease everyone, the subject is essentially avoided altogether.

The critical need to address these issues became even more apparent to me after visiting Belfast in Northern Ireland. We walked through both the Catholic and Protestant areas of the city, which are literally divided by a gate that is locked at night to prevent violent attacks. Can there be a more obvious sign that the situation is not under control? As the Catholic Church loses influence and more non-Catholic immigrants enter the country, Ireland must decide how it wants to preserve its history and move forward with its spiritual nature intact. Without this honesty, the Northern Ireland conflicts will remain the huge secret that everyone ignores but that no one forgets.

Hafsa Kanjwal

MAJOR: Regional Studies of the Muslim World, International Development, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Toledo, Ohio
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: The American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Hafsa was born in Indian-occupied Kashmir and moved to the US when she was six years old. She has lived in Buffalo, New York, Boston, Massachusetts, and her family currently resides in Toledo, Ohio. At Georgetown, she has been active in the Muslim Students Association, Students for Justice in Palestine, and the Interfaith Council. She has also co-founded an organization called KashmirCorps that seeks to improve the development, healthcare, and education sectors in Kashmir through its volunteer and internship opportunities.

It’s interesting to note how in a list of the oldest universities in the world, the first two are located in the Muslim world. Education has been a crucial element in Islamic history from the beginning. Scholars in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo were unraveling the mysteries of medicine, science, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics well before their Western counterparts. Unfortunately, Western scholars make it appear that they created critical thought and the realm of “liberal education” during the Enlightenment in the 16th century. However, Europe was still in its Dark Ages around the time of the height of Islamic civilization, which contributed greatly not only to the sciences, but also to art, literature, and religious studies. Today, this lack of appreciation for the contribution of Islam to education, science, philosophy, etc. is part of the reason the Muslim world feels under attack and unappreciated.
Asked to reflect on their observations of their host culture’s religion, many students were confronted by paradoxical traditions. Puzzled by Christmas in France and the low attendance rates at Mass in Spain, they learned to differentiate between religion as deeply embedded institutions and culture, and religion as an expression of belief and faith. Their expectations were challenged by the religion they found in the rich traditions of the most secular countries, and the quiet, moderate faith witnessed in countries the media paints as radical. Throughout their global journeys, they were most struck by the discoveries they made at the very moment they ceased to consciously look.

Julia McCarthy

MAJOR: History; minors in Biology and Japanese, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Narberth, Pennsylvania
HOST COUNTRY: Japan
HOST UNIVERSITY: Nanzan University
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

“America is my country and Paris is my hometown.” This phrase of Gertrude Stein’s, applied to Tokyo, rather than Paris, describes the sentiments of Julia McCarthy. Though she was born in Croatia to an American mother and Irish father, and though she spent most of her childhood in various parts of America—New Orleans, Chicago, and Philadelphia number among the cities where she has lived—Julia identifies best with the sprawling Asian metropolis that is home to kabuki, sushi, and the bullet train. Having spent middle school and the beginning of high school living in Tokyo, singing karaoke, shopping in Shibuya, and sauntering about shrines, she calls Tokyo, where her parents once again live, home. Upon returning to America, Julia spent the latter years of high school at an all girls’ high school in Pennsylvania, running track and...
The Japanese notion of religion is complex and, at times, appears contradictory. My Japanese friends describe themselves as nonreligious, and yet they, like many other Japanese, buy each other Christmas presents, visit their local Buddhist temple for festivals, and pay respect to their ancestors in their home shrine. As a person from a society where religion often plays a divisive role, I initially had a hard time understanding when my friends observed Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian practices, yet described themselves as nonreligious. I did not understand that their participating in religious activities was not necessarily a spiritual observation, but a social, cultural, and political custom; I did not understand that many Japanese view very skeptically the faith-based, organized practice of religion.

Clare Orvis

MAJOR: International Politics/Foreign Policy, Certificate in Asian Studies, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Amherst, Massachusetts
HOST COUNTRY: People’s Republic of China
HOST UNIVERSITY: Harbin Institute of Technology (Ha Gong Da)
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

Clare Orvis, born and raised Episcopalian, grew up in the small rural town of Amherst, Massachusetts, where she was active in her church and served on the vestry and in various other service ministries before coming to Georgetown. At Georgetown, Clare has participated actively in theatre productions and has served on the executive board of the Mask and Bauble Dramatic Society. Clare started studying Chinese in middle school, and has traveled to China once before embarking on her study abroad experience in Harbin, Heilong Jiang Province, a city in the far northeast of China near the Russian boarder.

The Chinese culture has a deep concern for balance—the fengshui of a room is good or bad depending on if its furniture and negative space are balanced, their characters and subsequent calligraphic art are centered around the idea of balancing space on a page, and most importantly, as this experience at Yuantong Shi was showing, there was a deep concern over balancing both spiritual and physical aspects of worship. There was a balance between the natural and the manmade—the turtles and goldfish in the moat coexisted with the altars and statues and swam beneath the stone bridges. Here at the monastery worshippers fed both their own physical bodies but the “physical” bodies of the statues, and in doing so, fed their spiritual needs. And maybe the fact that this place was bustling and full of peddlers was a system in balance too—a system that recognizes that Buddhists have not just spiritual selves, but they also exist in the midst of a very real world.

Ana Maria Thomas

MAJOR: Government and English, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Clearwater, Florida
HOST COUNTRY: Spain
HOST UNIVERSITY: University of Salamanca
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Ana Maria Thomas was born and raised in Clearwater, Florida. Georgetown inspired in Ana an interest in politics, and she is thus pursuing majors in both Government and English, as well as working at Hoya Kids and tutoring through Sursum Corda. Her decision to study abroad in Salamanca was based less on the weather and more on her desire to forge a stronger relationship with those members of her mother’s family who still live in Spain.

According to my host mom, the Easter Bunny does not frequently make the trans-Atlantic journey to visit Spanish children... The excitement of the week preceding Easter Sunday is not found in receiving baskets of candy and goodies, but rather in attending any number of the many processions, overtly religious affairs all recalling in some way the passion of Christ. Public announcements do not assume the politically correct sensitivity to religious pluralism to which I am so accustomed in the United States. Billboards state simply “Buena Pascua,” oftentimes with an image of a crucifix and with no trace of traditional secular icons to dilute the religious reminder. The fact that this Christian holiday is not universally recognized has been completely ignored. It’s as if celebrating Easter—attending the processions, making and eating the typical dishes—is not so much a part of being Catholic as it is an integral part of being Spanish. That is not
to conclude that Spaniards, as an overgeneralization, are deeply religious (the churches and cathedrals still strangely vacant for an Easter Sunday); however it is to say that a religious identity, namely a Catholic identity, is traditionally and continues to be tied to a cultural identity.

Dorothy Voorhees
MAJOR: Economics and French, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Birmingham, Alabama
HOST COUNTRY: France
HOST UNIVERSITY: Sciences Po (Institut d’Etudes Politiques, Paris)
LENGTH OF STAY: Full year

Dorothy is originally from Birmingham, Alabama, but now resides in Atlanta, Georgia. During her time at Georgetown, she has become involved in supporting Hoya athletics as a member of Hoya Blue. She also participates in DC Reads, a part of the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown. She chose Sciences Po for its location in Paris and focus on International Relations and Economics. After graduation, she hopes to pursue a career in Development Economics, working to improve Africa’s development prospects.

France is by all measures a secular state, perhaps to an extreme. The dedication to laïcité has undoubtedly promoted the secularization of a traditionally Catholic nation. So much so, in fact, that marriage is on the decline, and those who do choose to marry do not always opt for a religious ceremony, but more frequently for only a civil one. There are a number of reasons that a couple would choose to have only a civil marriage. For example, my host family’s daughter was married this weekend, and decided on a civil marriage because neither she nor her husband are particularly religious, and because they come from different religious backgrounds. He comes from a Catholic background, whereas she is the daughter of a Jewish father and a Muslim mother. The simple difference in faiths prevents them from participating in a religious marriage without one or the other of them choosing to convert. Despite the lack of religion in this marriage, the ceremony itself is not so fundamentally different from a religious one. It took place in a town hall, rather than a church, and a mayor presided instead of a priest, but the bride and groom exchanged their vows and rings in essentially the same manner.

Hilary Winn
MAJOR: English, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Owings Mills, Maryland
HOST COUNTRY: Turkey
HOST UNIVERSITY: Georgetown University’s McGhee Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Hilary was raised in the lox-loving community of Jewish Baltimore, but didn’t really develop an interest in religion or a religious-based identity until matriculating to Georgetown, where she quickly developed an appreciation for Easter break. As an English major, Hilary focuses on postcolonial, ethnic, and critical race studies, but is taking the semester off from literature to pursue her interest in Mediterranean/Middle Eastern affairs at Georgetown’s McGhee Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies. She is an active member of the Georgetown Israel Alliance and is eager to see how Turkey’s version of secularism compares to that of Israel. Hilary spent last summer interning at the Israel Museum of Jerusalem and living in an immigrant absorption center in a neighborhood with a large Israeli-Arab population. She recently spent ten days painting bomb shelters and clearing forests in northern Israel. Hilary has studied voice for many years and hopes that her new roommates in Turkey do not mind when she sings in the shower.

As a participant in Georgetown’s McGhee Center program, I have had the opportunity, over the past two weeks, to meet with many members of Turkish society working on various political, social, and environmental issues within Turkey. I and the nine other McGhee Center students have had the chance to ask them many different questions about Turkey, but almost all of them have had, initially, one question in specific for, well, not all of us, but for one of my peers in particular. This student happens to be Muslim and to wear a headscarf. Prompted both by her name, which is of Turkish origin, as well as her headscarf, the questions this student receives about her nationality and heritage are certainly never vicious or condescending, but it has been a surprise to most of us studying at the McGhee Center this semester how many times our friend must insist that she has been born and raised in the United States of America before her questioner believes that she tells the truth about...
her birthplace and nationality. When this student asked a Member of Parliament about the headscarf issue, he treated it diplomatically, clearly in deference to her, but also denied, as David Remnick wrote in an article entitled “The Experiment: Will Turkey be the Model for Islamic Democracy?” in the New Yorker, that, “when asked if his [Atatürk’s] wife would wear a headscarf at public events, he [Atatürk] replied, ‘I won’t take her along.’”

Todd Wintner

MAJOR: International Politics (Trans-State Actors), School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Pepper Pike (Cleveland), Ohio
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

As an International Politics major in the School of Foreign Service, Todd is currently studying abroad at the American University in Cairo with hopes of achieving proficiency in Arabic language. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Todd has also worked with the Cleveland Council on World Affairs to host international visitors under the auspices of the US State Department. During his sophomore year, Todd served as a Yitzhak Rabin Fellow at the Embassy of Israel, where he studied conflict negotiation and resolution. At Georgetown, he has served as a Senior Analyst for the National Collegiate Security Conference.

Just the other week, Cairenes witnessed students from the American University, the bastion of Egypt’s secular elite, protesting against government misconduct in the same square as some of nations most radical, Islamic factions...The lesson here runs deeper than misjudging physical appearances. Rather, these paradoxes, which exist solely as a figment of the misguided imagination, expose the fallacy of viewing Egyptian society in any linear fashion. By throwing liberal secularists at one end of the spectrum, Islamic extremists at the other, and forcing the remainder into the mold somewhere in between, the mind easily loses sight of that indefinable, silent majority of Egyptian society, the one from which pragmatic reforms seem most likely to appear.

Julie Yelle

MAJOR: Regional and Comparative Studies, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Washington, DC
HOST COUNTRY: France
HOST UNIVERSITY: Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris à Menton
LENGTH OF STAY: Full year

A native of the DC area, Julie decided to attend Sciences Po’s Middle Eastern and Mediterranean campus to reconcile her academic focus on the Middle East with her long-held dream to study in France. While abroad, she became a founding member of the Babel Initiative, a student association aiming to promote dialogue between the two banks of the Mediterranean. At Georgetown, Julie has also served as a research assistant in the government department, been active in the International Relations Club and Concert Choir, and performed community outreach activities through DC Reads and Mobile Soup Kitchen.

The visibility of celebrations with a religious basis seems to run counter to the French policy of laïcité, which ostensibly sets religion squarely in the private domain. On the other hand, the holiday celebrations of France, a traditionally Catholic country, seem to have taken on a life of their own and become so fully ingrained in the cultural life of the society at large that religious background and beliefs no longer seem to be criteria for participation in the holiday festivities. While Christmas is still a day to spend with family and friends, exchange gifts around the tree, and savor the tastes and smells of holidays meals and sweets, never once did I hear Christmas day referred to as such outside of church; rather, all the fanfare was centered around “the 25th [...] Yet the same sort of celebrations on the same scale from another religious tradition would not likely be equally well-received but rather considered to be a breach of the private domain into the public domain. In the end, the nuances of the policy of laïcité and the line between the the private and public realms of religion in France remain to be clarified.
Many students found religion where they had not thought to look—as a surprisingly under-represented but significant force within the development world. Through their studies at host universities or endeavors in actual development work, they learned first hand about the role of religious communities in addressing global challenges of economic and social inequality. These letters examined the realities of religion as a social force—for both good and ill—and reflected on the role it can take in shaping and reforming economic, social, and political life in the context of globalization.

Katharine Davis

MAJOR: International Politics (International Law, Institutions, and Ethics), Certificate in Justice and Peace, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Sacramento, California
HOST COUNTRIES: Tanzania and Chile
HOST UNIVERSITIES: University of Dar es Salaam, CIEE Program, Santiago, Chile
LENGTH OF STAY: Full year

Katharine attended Catholic schools in California and Oregon until her junior year of high school, when she studied abroad as an exchange student in France. Halfway through her senior year of high school, Katharine’s family moved to Singapore, which further contributed to her desire to study global issues (and resulted in a passionate love of chili crab). She decided to study in Dar es Salaam and Santiago to gain insight into parts of Latin America and Africa. Katharine has interned and volunteered at various organizations in the United States, Singapore, Tanzania, Chile, and Cambodia and is particularly interested in human rights, conflict, and development.

On campus at the University of Dar es Salaam, I have often been awakened around 4 a.m. by the call to prayer...
at the campus mosque, headscarves are common, and many Tanzanians who live on my floor play gospel music and attend church regularly. The religious diversity visible at the university can be seen as a microcosm of the country as a whole; in addition to the presence of Christianity and Islam, indigenous religions are practiced in certain areas of the country and play a crucial role in local cultures and societies. On the one hand, the various religions have been used to promote or maintain damaging practices and inter-religious hostility has contributed to tensions within Tanzanian society. In some rural areas, people are still killed because of traditional beliefs in witchcraft. FGM has roots in both religious ideas and cultural traditions and is currently practiced in some areas by Christians, Muslims, and members of local religions. Muslims have complained about unfair treatment, as prior governments would not formally acknowledge Muslim schools, and Christians have argued that they are less likely to receive scholarships or jobs because of the lingering influence of a former president who was Muslim. At the same time, however, religious organizations have made substantial contributions to Tanzanian society. The National Muslim Council of Tanzania provides HIV/AIDS education and fights against discrimination, and the Christian Council of Tanzania lobbies for policies intended to ameliorate conditions for the poor. As in other countries, religions can encourage both dangerous and beneficial practices, but their importance in Tanzanian society is indisputable.

Elspeth Williams is this year’s Georgetown recipient of the Circumnavigators Club Foundation travel-study grant allowing her to travel around the globe to conduct research in preparation for her senior thesis. Her extra-curricular pursuits follow her academic interests and include fundraising for Baphumelele Children’s Home and for Education Without Boundaries, a student led non-profit organization, which provides educational access to marginalized women and children in the developing world.

Before my travels and research, I generally assumed the efforts of faith-based charities and organizations abroad were inappropriate and misdirected for the local populations they served. I saw religion imported with food aid and cringed, thinking it offered less salvation than coercion. I was never certain that the involvement of religion in international development efforts on any level was desirable. As I saw it, foreign beliefs were shoved into hungry mouths and outside ideas were read into illiterate heads.

Throughout my research of strategic organizational response to children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, I had the honor of meeting countless individuals serving the world with good hearts and strong religious convictions; people who selflessly serve because they feel moved to do so by their faith. I’ve encountered my fair share of nuns, monks, and priests, but also numerous individuals devoted to their respective faiths in less official ways doing similar work.

My interactions with faith-based organizations proved that they promote less religious imposition than amazing care with enriched values. Those I encountered weren’t proselytizing, but rather promoting holistic care that was sensitive to providing both physical and spiritual nourishment. Oftentimes these values were adapted to whatever local religious practices were already flourishing in villages.
on the ground. These faith-based groups are incredible because they so often function or try to function where governments and larger organizations fail or skip over. They were often working for the most vulnerable populations before governments came on board and they have been frontrunners in caring for these children who have no one else to look after them.

Hammad Hammad

**MAJOR:** International Politics (Trans-State Actors), School of Foreign Service  
**HOMETOWN:** Livermore, California  
**HOST COUNTRY:** Egypt  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** American University in Egypt  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring semester

Hammad Hammad is a Palestinian-American immigrant to the United States. Hammad was born in Jerusalem, and lived half of his life in the West Bank town of Deir Deewan near Ramallah. As the President of Students for Justice in Palestine, he organized rallies, vigils, and an inaugural gala. He has also served as a peer leader in Young Leaders in Education about Diversity. Through the co-ed community service Fraternity Alpha Phi Omega, Hammad is involved in many community service projects.

As I have seen firsthand, religion in Egypt is multi-faceted and diverse. There are mosques, churches (I live closer to a church than a mosque), and synagogues. American politics affect everyone here and social status and class influence the degree and type of religiosity. In Islamic Cairo, a poorer area in Cairo, religion permeates the air. At prayer time, throngs of people rush the many mosques that line the streets. Instead of Starbucks, mosques line up every corner and many people pray on the street during rush prayer times and Friday prayer. In Zamalek, an island on the Nile and the “Manhattan of Cairo” (where the American University of Cairo dorms are located), mosques are far apart and hard to find, and secularism is evident. Coffee shops are easier to find. Many of the students I have spoken to about religion associate religion with backwardness and dismiss the role of religion in politics. Being abroad, I saw something else. I saw that religion is often utilized as a political tool by the political elite in both Israel and Egypt. What role will religion play in the future of the Middle East? The answer depends on people re-claiming their religion and freeing it from the corruption of politics and war that utilizes religion to create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

---

Participating in the Berkley Center’s Junior Year Abroad Network helped me hone in on certain cultural and religious elements within my host country that I think I would have otherwise missed. Participating in the program motivated me to really investigate and observe religion in South Africa, and I feel that doing so truly enriched my experience. I would most definitely recommend JYAN to others, I think it is a fantastic program and I am very happy that I participated in it.

Mela Louise Norman
The Global Challenge of Immigration

Many students arrived in their new home to find a state of religious transition. Countries that previously embodied peaceful religious dialogue are now challenged by the increasingly mutable landscape of culture in the age of globalization. The unforeseen catalyst of this shift is immigration. The transnational movement of individuals has transformed the delicate interactions between religion and government as the faiths of immigrants diffuse throughout society. Letters of the students explored what happens when these new religions clash with status-quo culture.

Owen Sanderson

MAJOR: Government, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Hudson, Massachusetts
HOST COUNTRY: United Kingdom
HOST UNIVERSITY: King’s College London
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Although born in the United States, Owen has always felt a strong affinity for the British Isles. Despite his rural beginnings, growing up in western Massachusetts, Owen has embraced a love of travel and has visited many countries across the globe. In Washington, Owen is involved with OurMoment, an organization dedicated to the Millennium Development goals and loves to show off Georgetown to prospective students as a tour guide for Blue & Gray. Owen fosters his special relationship with the United Kingdom, broadcasting a radio show entitled “Transatlanticism,” with WGTB.

Global migration fuels the nexus between religion and politics. Living in the United Kingdom this spring semester, and traveling throughout the region, I experienced this dynamic relationship firsthand. As the world becomes more and more connected, capital cities have emerged as bustling centers of cosmopolitanism. Immigrants bring new identities, cultures, and religious
practices to these modern urban spaces. They transform European cities like London, Paris, and Milan, injecting their own customs and faiths into the cityscape. However, experiences of change and political challenges are not limited to the European continent alone. In addition to my experiences in England, my travels in the small country of Qatar further depict migration’s connection with religion and politics. As seen throughout the world, international movement of individuals has enriched the interplay between religion and government by expanding the public arena. However, often this delicate relationship is strained by the constant influx of migrants and their individual beliefs. With immigration comes an implicit assault on established foundations and national traditions. Today, European and Middle Eastern governments face a constant struggle between citizens, residents, and refugees as they attempt to articulate balanced and comprehensive policy in an age of globalization. A new strand of cosmopolitanism is being thread across the international landscape. The question is will this delicate fabric fray?

Stephanie Kelman

MAJOR: International Business and Marketing, McDonough School of Business
HOMETOWN: Phoenix, Arizona
HOST COUNTRY: Denmark
HOST UNIVERSITY: Denmark’s International Study Program (DIS)
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall semester

As a Jewish girl from Phoenix, Arizona, going to a Catholic school on the east coast was a huge change and adjustment for Stephanie. She is an International Business and Marketing student with a strong passion for fashion. She has spent most of summers traveling to other countries and spending time with her family. Family is a huge part of who Stephanie is and she strongly feels that she would not be the person she is today without them. Her mother and father have shaped her religious views and cultural experiences. With these values, she plans on examining the religious and cultural aspects of a modern Lutheran country.

Denmark’s presence in the world became a bit more noticeable after a Danish newspaper published cartoons depicting Muhammad in September 2005. What started as a discussion of self-censorship, quickly evolved into a religious debate that questioned Denmark’s values and ideals about culture and religious differences. The Danes realized that their isolated world was rapidly changing and no longer exclusively filled with tall, Scandinavian blondes. Over the years, immigrants from Middle Eastern countries have slowly began to populate the Danish culture. The effects of this change only recently exploded once the cartoons were published.

After the Mohammed crisis broke out, the world’s attention shifted to the quiet, peaceful country of Denmark that was in cultural and religious strife over cartoon drawings. The main aspect of the conflict is the fact that the drastic actions were un-Danish and did not fit into the “consistent” society. It challenged Denmark’s proud concept of freedom of speech, which had not been questioned in years. Denmark immediately became immersed in discussions around the world and new conflicts emerged within minority groups in Denmark. In my opinion, Denmark was most shaken by the Mohammed conflict because it greatly disrupted their everyday life. In general terms, the events that took place revealed Denmark to the world in a way which they had never witnessed.

The JYAN project gives you, the foreigner, an excuse to sit down and crystallize all of your daily observations and interactions into concrete ideas. It helps focus the study abroad experience and provides a new perspective to all the travels and friendships you build along the way. I think the primary lesson I learned through my JYAN experience in Egypt is that the Islamic world, and Cairo specifically, is not as black and white as even my professors at Georgetown would have me believe. In a city of 18 million, there were 18 million different takes on religion and its role in public life and government. I was fortunate to get to interact with people representing the entire spectrum of those beliefs.
Juliana MacPherson

MAJOR: French; minor in Economics, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Greenwich, Connecticut
HOST COUNTRY: France
HOST UNIVERSITY: Université Paris VIII, Saint-Denis
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring semester

Juliana MacPherson is a junior in the Georgetown College and was raised in Connecticut, just outside of New York City. Living close to a large metropolis with such a diverse population made her extremely aware of culture and language. Upon attending Georgetown, her interests shifted and took a more political focus after interning at the United Nations in the summer of 2006. On campus, Juliana is a member of the Georgetown Chapel Choir and serves on the board of H*yas for Choice.

In the face of immigration, the French government has made efforts to avoid religious conflict within the public sphere. As recently as 2004, France passed a law banning students from wearing conspicuous religious symbols in public schools. The initial reaction was anger and fierce objection from all sides. Created to protect religious minorities and avoid prejudice in academic settings, the ruling was criticized as discriminatory because it concerned any religion that required wearing a burka, veil, or yarmulka, but rarely—if ever—affected Christian students. Furthermore, the change pressured many religious minorities to leave the public school system and enroll in private schools where education was expensive and not always easily accessible.

As of late, the 2004 ruling is more widely supported by the general public of France, a fact that may not only demonstrate an acceptance of laïcité—France's version of separation between church and state—but also a general trend of secularism within the country. Whereas France was approximately 80% Catholic thirty years ago, now only about half of the populace identify themselves as Catholic. This development is due in part to the immigration of non-Christian populations, but can also be attributed to increased secularization. Even among Catholics, fewer individuals are formally practicing, and religion and politics seem to be moving farther apart. France's quotidien newspaper Le Monde describes this phenomenon as “le grand triomphe du libéralisme,” or the increased separation between the private domain of religion and culture, and the public domain of social and political life.
Learning about Others, Learning about Oneself

Writers have spent many pages extolling how they learned about themselves while living in a foreign land. The network of students in the Junior Year Abroad Program was no different. With similar voices, they spoke of finding a sense of original and evolving self alongside their varying encounters with other peoples, cultures, and religions. They discovered strength in twenty-hour crowded train rides, resilience in contaminated food, identity in living as a minority, and reverence on the steps of Angkor Wat. Most significantly, the network gave them the opportunity to share this process of discovery with other students in different lands undergoing unique yet parallel adventures. Flung across the four corners of the world, immersed in different languages, beliefs, and activities, they learned one lesson that was universal: the revelation that they shared a common humanity with each individual they encountered.

Emily Liner

What I really liked about the JYAN program was that it gave me an arena to share my experiences living in a new country with a group of peers who were observant, thoughtful, and looking to get the most out of their time abroad. Plus, the variety of our locations and personal backgrounds gave each letter a fresh perspective. I really enjoyed comparing my letters about France to the letters from the other students in France to see if we were having similar or different experiences, as well as reading the letters of students in more exotic areas, like Cape Town, Cairo, and Tokyo, to get a taste of those areas.

Hilary Winn

I learned that knowing your own strengths and having a strong sense of identity can help you through almost any situation, that trusting strangers can be a freeing and rewarding experience, and that riding the train twenty hours from Istanbul to Bucharest is a hot, sweaty, and yet highly entertaining adventure.
Alanna Hughes

At Georgetown, I live a pretty fast-paced life; when I arrived in Sao Paulo, I expected to hit the ground running so that I might squeeze everything that I could out of the short-lived experience. Participating in the JYAN was an excellent opportunity for me to pause to reflect upon everything I was seeing and doing and from there begin to connect it with lessons previously learned back in the U.S. Because Brazil has the reputation of being such an overwhelmingly Catholic country, I expected to leave Sao Paulo even more firmly grounded in my Christian faith than I was when I departed from Georgetown. Ironically enough, my semester abroad left me with more questions than answers; I believe that this is due to the diversity of ways in which Brazilians themselves interpret the religion.

Emily Majka

Abroad, I learned that I was stronger than I had ever given myself credit for. I learned that I could buy a ticket to a third world country where I didn’t speak the language, didn’t know where I was going, and didn’t know a soul... and still get around just fine. I learned that my credit card could fail, my ATM card wouldn’t be accepted anywhere, and with only a $20 in my pocket I could still make it on the kindness of strangers. I could get deathly ill from contaminated food and water, get shut out of my own embassy because the guards didn’t speak English, and (ahem) even learn to use a squat toilet if circumstances required... Having gone abroad and lived these things I have found a great inner reservoir of strength. No matter how badly my day is going now I always stop, think, and put it in perspective, “hey, at least I’m speaking English....”

Hammad Hammad

"Where are you originally from?" “Where is your dad from?” “What are you doing here?” “Come with us.” “Wait here.” As a Palestinian in Egypt, I have realized that there is no place in the world where Palestinians are not viewed with suspicion. This was conveyed to me from the moment I arrived in the airport. Anywhere I went, I felt a sense of suspicion about my identity. Either I was not really Palestinian because I “left” and live in America, or I was too Palestinian and thus a threat to Egyptian sovereignty somehow. After my time in Egypt, I am both more optimistic, and with less hope for a better world. I am a lot more realistic and less detached from the world that (in DC at least) we often forget exists beyond the Capital. I have changed views on globalization—often tantamount to Americanization. Our foreign policy depresses me, and our obvious lack of strategic objectives in the Arab world and our complete disregard of the Arab people’s rights to freedom and democracy (the rights we pride ourselves on) have become crystallized.

Elspeth Williams

I traveled around the globe and religion was literally everywhere. Holy cows, holy temples, holy water. Take off your shoes, cover your head, walk in a circle, point your feet away, bow down three times, cross yourself, prostrate yourself. I encountered Buddhism, the Bahá’í faith, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, and indigenous beliefs. I couldn’t help but sense this overwhelming belief in a force beyond our human world that seemed to permeate rooms as thickly as the smoke of burning incense. Moreover, I was struck with how religion oozed into and directed politics, societal structures and international health.

I saw incredible things. The Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, the Great Wall of China. I slept in a yurt in Inner Mongolia, touched the holy Ganges River, visited Eva Peron’s tomb, attended a most elaborate quincinera, had many marriage proposals, and rode a camel in the desert. I rode tuk tuks, trains, motorbikes, bicycles, an elephant, buses, rickshaws, oxes, boats, taxis and everything in between. I faced more languages than I’d like to remember where I attempted to at least learn “hello,” “how are you?” and “thank you.” Each day I awoke and tried to remember what country I was in let alone what continent. I danced, I bargained, I sweat, I cried, I laughed, and above all, I relished each day.

In the midst of the hustle and bustle, I learned both to scurry alongside the crowds but also to buy a mango from the man on the corner and stop to observe in amazement the world around. I basked in the individual moments as much as possible. I made conversation with everyone I could.

I learned the importance of connecting with those around me, valuing relationships, learning from others, trusting others, trusting my gut, believing in forces larger than myself, admiring the toil and sweat of generations before and now, counting my blessings, learning from my mistakes, knowing when to rest, knowing when to go, and learning flexibility, patience and the meaning of cultural differences.

Most of all, I learned of an overwhelming, greater force at work. I gained a faith in the connectedness of humanity and in the future.
Junior Year Abroad Network Coordinators

Thomas Banchoff
Director of the Berkley Center and Associate Professor of Government

A political scientist specializing in comparative politics and international relations, Tom is the editor of *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (Oxford 2007) and *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics* (forthcoming, Oxford). He received his B.A. from Yale, a M.A. from the University of Bonn, and a Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton.

Michael Kessler
Assistant Director of the Berkley Center and Visiting Assistant Professor

A Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Government, Michael’s research centers on political theology, religious freedom, and fundamental rights and morals legislation. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and has studied law at Georgetown.

Melody Fox Ahmed
Program Coordinator

Melody joined the Berkley Center in June 2006. Previously she worked at the Corporate Executive Board and with the Buxton Initiative, a leading interfaith dialogue organization. She received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University and is currently a candidate for Georgetown's M.A. in Global, International, and Comparative History.

Sara Rose Gorfinkel
Project and Events Coordinator

Sara has a Master’s in Liberal Studies (religious studies concentration) from Georgetown and a B.A. in Classical Studies and Religion from Gettysburg College. Previously, she was an International Conference Coordinator in the President’s Office and held a Goldman Fellowship in Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee.

Contributing Editors

Michael Kessler, Sara Gorfinkel, and Amy Lynn Filsinger. Design work by MillerCox Design.