Jorge Vega

Participating in JYAN gives students the incentive to delve further into the fabric of the local culture. Since each religion serves to answer essential questions such as 'why are we here?' and 'what is our purpose?', focusing on the spiritual aspect of a society gives students a necessary insight from which all features of the culture can be more readily understood. (page 35)

Elizabeth Zehe

I think JYAN encourages dialogue and reflection on two levels: it promotes observation and interaction with new ideas and individuals, as well as allowing students to reflect on their own religious experience in an environment that often provides perspectives drastically different from those they have been exposed to in the past. Therefore, JYAN plays an important role in both cultural exchange and one’s own personal growth. (page 7)

Patrick Eucalitto

JYAN was an extremely well-timed opportunity to process and understand issues I grappled with throughout my study abroad experience. By providing me with a framework in which to explore religion’s impact on my everyday life, it helped me transcend certain challenges I faced in trying to integrate into a new social and ideological context. Paths I didn’t anticipate—intellectual, personal and practical—opened to me through my reflection in JYAN and only enhanced what I gleaned from the time I spent abroad. (page 13)

Greg Gangelhoff

JYAN urges the student to reflect on one of the most fundamental questions today, the interplay between religion and politics. This translates into a more complex and worthwhile study abroad experience, one that teaches us much more than greater fluency in a foreign language. My letters to JYAN forced me to rethink my own conception of the appropriate relationship between religion and politics. (page 9)
Piya Radia

With a regular study abroad experience, the impetus is on the individual student to start drawing connections and investigating issues, such as religion, in their host country. JYAN pushes students to ask more questions and investigate more deeply than they would have otherwise. In this manner, JYAN enables students to have a much more rewarding understanding of their host country and their time abroad. (page 6)

Carrie Barnett

JYAN provided a structured opportunity for reflection on what I was encountering, processing, and engaging while I studied abroad. I kept a blog in which I occasionally interrupted chronicles of my tourist adventures with more critical analysis of my experiences, and the program gave me an extra push to form my thoughts coherently and decide what, of all the things I noticed, struck me the most. (page 5)

Joline Zhang

Being a part of JYAN helped me take the step between seeing and observing—the thought-process involved in articulating my experiences and reactions prompted me to go beyond merely being physically present to becoming actively engaged in trying to understand the culture that drives this beautiful city. (page 23)

Maren Trochmann

JYAN allowed me to more fully experience and reflect upon my time in Salamanca as a holistic, cultural immersion. This program inspired me to look deeper at the influence of religion in Spain’s social, political, and historical environment. I talked to local people about their views, opinions and beliefs, and I became more cognizant of the living history around me. I would definitely recommend JYAN to any student going abroad! (page 17)
46 Hoyas in 15 countries on 5 continents

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. The Center explores the intersection of religion with contemporary global challenges. Through research, teaching, and outreach activities, the Berkley Center builds knowledge, promotes dialogue, and supports action in the service of peace. Thomas Banchoff, Associate Professor in the Department of Government and the School of Foreign Service, is the Center’s founding director.
Learning about Religion and Culture

Students were spread across many countries and countless cultures, yet there is commonality in their tone and emotions that is not typically heard in discussion 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 communicate 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.
Carrie Barnett

**MAJOR:** Culture and Politics, Certificate in International Development, School of Foreign Service  
**HOMETOWN:** Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
**HOST COUNTRY:** Egypt  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** American University in Cairo  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall Semester

Carrie has used her Culture and Politics major to focus on Islam, democratization, and gender studies. She has been a student assistant at the Berkley Center since January 2008. In addition, she has worked for the Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World at The Hudson Institute, and as a research assistant for Professor Samer Shehata of Georgetown's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies while she was in Cairo. At Georgetown, Carrie is Editor-in-Chief of the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, works with the international development group OurMoment, and participates in student theater.

Whatsoever the relationship between fasting and social relations, the public piety evident from the moment I stepped out of the airport here in Cairo is all the more so during this month. As always, people everywhere fit prayer into their lives as regularly and naturally as we students check our email or text message a friend. The security guards who ensure that no men enter the women’s side of the dorm take turns praying in the stairwell. I waited quietly the other night outside a photocopy shop’s door while the proprietor completed his evening prayer. Friends report that soccer fans stopped to pray in the mezzanine of the stadium and used their team flags as prayer rugs. Every Friday, mosques overflow and alleys fill with people observing the noon prayer and listening to sermons via radio or the loudspeakers blaring from the nearest mosque or street corner. Later in the afternoon, calls to prayer blanket one another in an intoxicating mix of sound that puts me, a non-Muslim, in a spiritual mood. Taxi and bus drivers play sermons and Quranic recitations in their vehicles constantly.

Sarah Maxey

**MAJOR:** Sociology, Concentration in Social Justice Analysis, Georgetown College  
**HOMETOWN:** Walnut Cove, North Carolina  
**HOST COUNTRY:** South Africa  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** University of Cape Town  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring Semester

Born a bleeding heart liberal in a small southern town, Sarah has long been practiced in the art of diplomacy. She is using her sociology major and social justice concentration to explore these issues on a national and international level. While at Georgetown, Sarah has worked with the Center for Social Justice and the DC Reads program. During her sophomore year, she participated in the Carver Terrace project, surveying and addressing the housing and security needs of residents. At the University of Cape Town, Sarah hoped to work with the city’s refugee populations.

For a foreigner attempting to understand a new culture, the multiple levels of diversity and tension found in South African society make integration a daunting task. However, where every other sphere of public and private life contains some form of overt conflict, religion is one area where South Africans have succeeded in striking a balance. There is an accepted and respected diversity of religious belief and practice visible on the streets of Cape Town, from a steady alternation between Catholic and Protestant churches, to Muslim-owned businesses whose hours reflect breaks for prayer, to museums dedicated to the role of the Jewish community in the apartheid struggle, to the weekly Rastafarian television show broadcast on one of the three nationally-owned channels. Religion in Cape Town is thus both highly prevalent and personal, serving as an important factor in people’s lives without being the key determinant of social interaction. However, the comfortable fit of religion into South African society does not mean it has been delineated to a role of passivity. While the specifics of one’s religion are open to personal choice, religion as an institution has played a role of major strategic importance in the political and social struggles faced by South Africans in recent history.
Kelly Mulvaney

MAJOR: International Political Economy, Certificate in International Business Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service

HOMETOWN: Saint Paul, Minnesota

HOST COUNTRY: Egypt

HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo

LENGTH OF STAY: Fall Semester

Kelly has been a student assistant at the Berkley Center since 2006. The following summer, she stayed at the Center to do research for the World Economic Forum report on the state of West-Islam dialogue. Kelly went to Cairo to experience life in the Arab world and in a Muslim-majority country firsthand. At AUC, she was particularly fascinated by a course she took on Political Economy of the Middle East and North Africa and the framework it provided for understanding the region.

About a week before the Eid el-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the month of Ramadan, I was in the lobby of my apartment building having a chat with the doorman, Reddah. Like the rest of the city, he was fasting. I asked him whether he was ready to be done with the month—ready to eat regular meals again, drink water throughout the day, and smoke his usual hourly cigarette—a question that was, in my mind, fair. He looked at me as if I had offended him, saying “no” and moreover, he wished the entire year could be Ramadan. He wished it was all year long that the rich would be so generous to the poor, that the men on the streets would make efforts to restrain themselves instead of fight, and that more people would engage themselves in the peaceful act of prayer. He told me that during Ramadan he felt the entire city was closer to his God, and how could he desire otherwise?

Piya Radia

MAJOR: Culture and Politics, Certificate in International Development, School of Foreign Service

HOMETOWN: Plainsboro, New Jersey

HOST COUNTRY: Senegal

HOST UNIVERSITY: Living Routes Program-EcoVillage Network

LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Piya has been a student assistant at the Berkley Center since 2007. Long interested in development issues, she sought to put them into practice while in Senegal. At Georgetown, Piya works with Students of Georgetown, Inc. (the largest university student-run commercial enterprise in the United States), and also serves as a leader for Georgetown’s First-Year Orientation to Community Involvement (FOCI) pre-orientation program.

The line between the religious and the cultural is porous and often impossible to distinguish. From animist undertones to social relationships, religion melds with culture to create a way of living and interacting with others that fits into lifestyle here just as easily as the sun and the sand. In Senegal the Catholic/Muslim interaction melds with the Muslim Brotherhood systems, the myriad of ethnic groups and languages, and all other peculiarities of Senegalese society to create truly unique and complex reality.
Katia Shtefan
MAJOR: Spanish and Russian, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Batavia, Illinois
HOST COUNTRY: Chile
HOST UNIVERSITY: Universidad de Chile and Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall Semester

Katia was born in Kiev, Ukraine, and moved to the US when she was eight years old. She is Orthodox Christian and participates in the Orthodox Christian Fellowship, the choir of St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral, and the Interfaith Council.

A mere walk through the streets of Santiago gives one the impression that Chile is a very Catholic country. Streets, schools, social justice organizations—almost everything is named after a Catholic figure. In fact, Chile’s national holidays include not only Christmas, but also the feast day of the Virgin of Carmen, Chile’s patron saint, Assumption, Corpus Christi, the feast days of Sts. Peter and Paul, and Annunciation.

However, after doing some research, I realized that Chile’s religious landscape is incredibly diverse. In 2002, 15.1% of everyone over the age of fourteen was Evangelical. The other major religious groups, in order of largest to smallest, are Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims. I was fortunate to witness this diversity on a personal level when I got involved in an Orthodox church that was established by Arab immigrants, but now has a very active group of converts from Catholicism and Protestantism.

Moreover, the presence of public religious symbols doesn’t say much about the role of religion in private lives. Most people I talked to say that they believe and belong to a church, but that they don’t attend church regularly. This, as my research indicates, is the norm. According to one survey, among 31 countries around the world, Chile holds fourth place in number of believers, second place in confidence in religious organizations, and 57% of Chileans pray at least once a week. Nonetheless, only 19% of Chileans are observant, which puts the country in the second-to-last place in that category.

Elizabeth Zehe
MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: La Grange, Illinois
HOST COUNTRY: China
HOST UNIVERSITY: Nanjing University
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

While she came to Georgetown as an undecided major in the College, Beth quickly found DC’s focus on government and international affairs infectious. She has since transferred to the SFS where she crafted her Culture and Politics major to concentrate on globalization and cultural identity. Her other passions include long distance running, singing with the Georgetown University Chamber Singers, and exploring the culinary delights of Washington, DC. Despite all her travels, she is still convinced Chicago is the greatest city in the world.

The most significant difference between the American conception of religion and the Chinese conception: the purpose of spiritual activity is for the fulfillment of daily needs—personal guidance or inner peace—not the source of community, social order, or behavioral norms. I have been surprised by the ambivalence with which the Chinese discuss religious questions, which seem to inspire hardly any passion at all. If present at all in an individual’s life, it is a personal choice and not community motivated. A group of Chinese graduate students articulated this difference to me in a very intriguing manner: American religious activity arises out of a zuigan wenhua (guilty culture), while Chinese religious activity arises out of a legan wenhua (happy culture). That is, Americans turn to religion out of guilt and in search of moral guidance, while the Chinese turn to religion out of a desire to be happy. However unfair these sweeping generalizations might be, it is significant that the common perception is either a) one does not practice any religion, or b) even if one does follow a particular doctrine, it is most likely that you will practice only when you want your test scores or your mother’s health to improve. And with the infusion of Western inventions and ideology, many Chinese now look elsewhere to satisfy their needs.
Reflecting on the role of religion in Communist China or the French government’s support for churches that are more tourist sites than places of worship, students learned to differentiate between religion as deeply embedded institutions and culture, and religion as an expression of belief and faith. The reflection process encouraged students to seek areas of collaboration and compromise between religion and politics in societies where they can seem diametrically opposed. Students often found the greatest potential for understanding through their conversations at the local level. While not always heartening, this dialogue pushed students to continually search for ways to understand the divide between religious and secular political life.
Gregory Gangelhoff

**MAJOR:** Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service  
**HOMETOWN:** Houston, Texas  
**HOST COUNTRY:** France  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po Paris)  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Academic Year

Greg was born in Louisiana, but his father’s work took the family from Buenos Aires to Kuala Lumpur to Jakarta over the course of 13 years, and left Greg with a wealth of expatriate experience. He is a 2005 graduate of Strake Jesuit High School in Houston, the city he considers home. He has been an Associate Editor and the Editor-in-Chief of *The Georgetown Independent*, as well as Vice President of Georgetown’s International Students Association and Foreign Liaison for the Singapore Society.

The government’s policy regarding the construction and maintenance of churches illuminates an important truth regarding the intersection of religion and politics in France: the government functions as the caretaker of a history that includes religion, while trying fastidiously to keep religion out of politics whenever possible. When President Sarkozy divorced his wife and married a model only a few months later (some reports have concluded that Sarkozy’s courtship of Carla Bruni did not last much longer than three months), there was public disapproval only because the episode fit the image of Sarkozy as reckless and feckless, not because of the religious implications of such a turnaround.

The government maintains all of the old Catholic churches because religion, at least when it comes to Catholicism, has become more of a cultural-historic phenomenon than a spiritual one; churches are on the decline as places of worship, even as they remain important historical and tourist sites. It is also strange that the government is unable to satisfy a vibrant Muslim community while the formerly dominant religion is on the decline. I saw plenty of packed churches on Easter Sunday here, but during most weekends, it seems that government subsidies are one of the only props supporting the religious tradition of this former Eldest Daughter.
Kyle Hughes

MAJOR: Regional and Comparative Studies (Asia), School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Hudson, Ohio
HOST COUNTRY: China
HOST UNIVERSITY: Yunnan Nationalities University
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Kyle’s study abroad took place in China’s southwestern and minority-rich Yunnan province. He is writing a senior thesis on the topic of the limits of religious freedom in China, with special emphasis on government policies towards Christianity and Islam. At Georgetown, Kyle is a leader in the campus chapter of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and has worked at International Christian Concern, a nonprofit group promoting religious freedom and human rights around the world. His other interests include tennis, politics, any kind of competitive game or activity, and, of course, Georgetown basketball.

Despite Beijing’s claims to the contrary, Uyghurs, who speak Uyghur and not Chinese, and look more European than Asian, have been, through history, outside Chinese control, and many to this day desire independence. Since the beginning of the War on Terror, Beijing has enacted increasingly harsh measures to stamp out Uyghur “terrorists” in Xinjiang, and Islam has become a key battlefield. Concerned that the Uyghurs might link up with Islamic extremist groups in nearby Pakistan or Afghanistan, Beijing has sought to limit Islamic expression among the Uyghur community.

One of the most telling things I’ve seen in my time in China was a sign in a rural Uyghur elementary school, sandwiched between pictures of Marx and Mao, which commanded children not to participate in “religious superstition.” And such is the life of my generation of Uyghurs, who are at every turn discouraged from religious participation; I have heard many stories of discrimination against those who have chosen to pray at the mosque, both children and adults. The net effect on the Uyghurs, whose identity is (to many) intimately linked with Islam, has been disheartening. “Look at my people,” one Uyghur friend told me. “They have no hope. They have no joy.”
Jennifer Nguyen

MAJOR: English, Georgetown College  
HOMETOWN: Houston, Texas  
HOST COUNTRY: Vietnam  
HOST UNIVERSITY: Vietnam National University  
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

As the daughter of Vietnamese refugees, Jennifer’s study abroad experience in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) was intensely personal. She went for two specific reasons—to master, conversationally, the native language of her parents so that she could preserve her linguistic heritage, and to experience the land she has heard about so often through her own eyes. Surprisingly, she found Vietnam to be the warm, accommodating, picturesque country of her parents’ yester-years as well as a dynamic, new metropolis, beaming with youth, Westernization, and unrelenting enthusiasm. Prior to dodging Vietnamese traffic and bargaining for bottles of water with old Vietnamese women on the street, Jennifer’s life at Georgetown consisted of being a student majoring in English Literature with a particular fascination in creative non-fiction work. She is a self-identified “social justice nerd” having worked with education, gender, sexuality and immigrant rights issues in an array of organizations and causes across campus.

One of the most popular sites in Saigon sits in the middle of the city’s most developed area. It is sandwiched between Diamond Plaza, Saigon’s acclaimed technological marvel housing a state of the art movie theater, and the largest post office in the city. In Vietnamese, its name is Nha Tho Duc Ba—roughly translated it means Notre Dame Church. The church’s quiet and unassuming Catholic masses are attended by fewer locals than a movie screening in Diamond Plaza. In many ways, it is a highly appropriate metaphor about the treatment of religion in Vietnam: as long as government and economic interests prevail, religious practice is tolerated.

How are these religious institutions able to reconcile their teachings and practices with the lurking presence of a Communist government? I received insight to the aforementioned question while riding a motorcycle through Thu Duc, the neighborhood of my Vietnamese host family. My host sister, doubling as my motorcyclist chauffeur, drove through a Catholic neighborhood consisting of over half a dozen churches. The illuminating glow of the churches in the night sky elicited only one comment from my host sister: “During Christmas, this neighborhood is beautiful. They put up lights.” That was it. No words about the religion, the people, or the practices. In Vietnam, a religion can be relegated to mere lights.
Learning about Others, Learning about Oneself: Religion and Personal Identity

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. 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 newfound personal faith, identity in living as a minority, understanding of others through physical symbols like tattoos and foreheads marked by prayer, and they struggled to reconcile the violence of religious history while contemplating in peaceful, ornate churches. 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.

Kari Chong

MAJOR: International Business and Management, minor in Mandarin, School of Business
HOMETOWN: Honolulu, Hawaii
HOST COUNTRY: Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HOST UNIVERSITY: Chinese University of Hong Kong
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall Semester

A fifth-generation Chinese born in Hawaii, Kari went abroad hoping to learn more about her cultural heritage. She is extremely curious about the differences between the customs and philosophies of the modern Chinese people and the more traditional practices and ways of thinking that she grew up with. Kari has participated in service trips to Mexico, China, and New Orleans. While abroad, she served the community.
by teaching English in rural Hong Kong. Kari enjoys surfing, hiking, traveling, and doing yoga.

I became Muslim while I was abroad. One would expect that a conversion while abroad would take place in a country with a Muslim majority. Instead, I reverted to Islam in Hong Kong, where the 80,000 Muslims account for approximately 1.1% of the total population. And when it came to Islam, the Chinese University of Hong Kong could not have been more different than Georgetown. Here, there was no Muslim Students Association (MSA). There was no organized jumah (Friday prayer) or iftar dinners during Ramadan. The only time I had seen a hijab (yes, one hijab) on campus was when there was a lecture by a prominent Muslim speaker. So far, in a campus with a staff of 5,200, an undergraduate population of 10,000, and approximately 2,000 research postgraduate students, I had met a total of four Muslims.

Despite the lack of support on campus for my interest in Islam, being in the environment of Hong Kong helped me realize that Islam was the way of life that I wanted for myself. Hong Kong’s long history as a place where all persons and all cultures could come together seemed to translate into an appreciation of diversity. Additionally, in the absence of the friends, family, language, and culture that I was familiar with, I was in a completely new context. It was in this open environment that I had the freedom to discover who I was at the core and to decide what I truly believed.

Patrick Eucalitto wrote for JYAN from halfway through a full year abroad in the small, charming town of Menton on the French Riviera. And yes, while the beach and the baguettes were indeed fabulous, they are not the experiences he wanted to write home about. Instead, Patrick wished to emphasize that studying at the Sciences Po Middle Eastern/Mediterranean Studies Program, he had the opportunity to interact with students from all over Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, including many Muslim and Arab students. Thus, as far as religion is concerned, there was an ostensibly strange yet ultimately very unique dimension to his time abroad. He learned about Islam and about Muslims not in the Islamic World, but in a traditionally Catholic, predominantly secular environment. And the paradox proved much more insightful than he could have expected. He struggled to make sense of this fascinating and seemingly contradictory environment. He felt that writing for JYAN was a much more effective way to arrive at some sort of clarity than via his journal or the back of his mind.
Homosexuality is rarely accepted in Islamic communities. Thus, being gay in my abroad environment felt very much like being back “in the closet.” Initially, I attributed the alienating force I felt to “religion,” seeing Islam as a threat that inhibited me from rectifying the individuals living around me with their beliefs. Taking a few steps back, I realized that it was not “religion” driving this process, but the larger force of preconceptions in general, whether based on religious conviction or not. I too carried my own presuppositions about the beliefs of my neighbors and anticipated a certain reaction from them in response to my identity. The assumptions I imposed on them were ultimately an inaccurate generalization I extrapolated from the beliefs of certain groups of Muslims. I have since come to realize, however, that belief systems are not monolithic entities and that they never work in just one direction. If I felt like religion somehow excluded me from my community, it was because I too ignored the necessity to separate religious doctrine from individual belief.

Although it was a challenge flourishing in a context where I found myself suddenly relocated from the realm of halal to haram, I learned that the intersection of religion and identity is never such a simple dichotomy. Religion is a source of power, and as such can play many roles: a social bond, a source of misunderstanding, a source of isolation or exclusion and beyond. But individuals transcend those systems and are endowed with the ability to remodel and reshape them. It is only thanks to this realization that I was able to make lifelong friends in Menton. By changing my own orientation towards religion, I forged relationships that go beyond misunderstandings, that surpass exclusion and that instill in me a personal hope for potential inter-religious appreciation.

Robby Meara

MAJOR: International Politics, Certificate in Arab Studies, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Houston, Texas
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall Semester

Robby was born in Findlay, Ohio, but raised in Texas. During his childhood, he spent two years living in Moscow, Russia, with his family while his father worked there. From Moscow he was able to visit countries all over the world, including Thailand, Malaysia, Egypt, the United Kingdom, France, Austria, and Ecuador. Robby’s extra-curricular activities include Sigma Phi Epsilon, for which he has served as the Vice President of Brother Development, and the annual Run for Rigby. He is interested in the effects of Islam on society and politics.

Egyptians, by law, are required to classify themselves as Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. However, the Egyptian government is not alone in its obsession for religious classification. It seems that ordinary Egyptians, too, place great importance on classifying themselves along religious lines.

Muslims have many symbols and styles of dress that they use to differentiate themselves from members of other religious communities in Egypt. Many men proudly display a “zabeeb,” the colloquial term for “prayer mark,” on their foreheads (this mark comes from daily prayer and is a sign of piety). Other symbols, primarily seen among the lower classes, include the galibiyya and the fully-grown beard. Many Muslims also display the shahadah or a Quranic sura in their car or in their workplace.

Additionally, Coptic Christians make great effort to distinguish themselves from the Muslim community. Many Copts have a cross tattooed on their right hand or wrist, and most wear a cross around their necks. In place of the shahadah or sura, many Christians proudly display crosses or icons (common images include St. George slaying the dragon and the head of the Coptic Church, Shenouda III). In a country where the state controls most aspects of a citizen’s life, religious expression and identification is greatly prized. This is true for members of both the majority Muslim community and the minority Coptic community.
A local DC resident, Natasha has framed her Culture and Politics major around theology and international relations, focusing on religious fundamentalists and fanatics. She is combining her interests in a thesis that will examine modern-day fundamentalist movements in Latin America. In Madrid, she took classes looking at both the anti-Catholic backlash in the post-Franco Spain as well as the medieval and modern Muslim “invasions” of Spain. Natasha hopes to use her studies to become a Foreign Service officer and work in cultural diplomacy.

One of the first facts I learned about Spain was that only 14% of the young people in Spain described themselves as religious, a percentage that many of the young people I’ve asked seem to think is far too high. When I asked a group of Spanish college students who were eating in the cafeteria if they would describe themselves as Catholics, I got the ironic response: “No! Por Dios!” (By God, No!) It didn’t take me long to realize that while Spain is often considered to be a very Catholic country, Spaniards are not. Listening to the Spanish students discuss religion one comes to find that being a-religious, or even anti-religion, is a trait that indicates that someone is progressive, worldly, and intellectual, that one has gone beyond the troubled times of their parents and grandparents and evolved into the 21st century. When I explained to some girls in my dorm that I was a Theology major one girl asked me if I “actually believed in God.” Digging deeper, she told me that she thought I was “too smart” to actually have faith. It’s interesting to see that the once most Catholic country in Europe now is one of evaporating faith.

Cassandra’s past travels have taken her to Belize, Kenya, Cameroon and the Middle East. She was involved in a televised class on Comparative Political Systems with the students of SFS-Qatar and studied in Qatar with the class. In Cameroon, she was part of a program called the Global Youth Partnership for Africa in which she toured the country researching youth development. She enjoys her international friends, yoga, music, and exploring the outdoors. Cassandra hopes to work with the Foreign Service, implementing programs that will aid religious toleration.

The extremity of a nation’s religious identity, whether holding the city tightly or completely missing from statutes and social infrastructure, provides no answer for the warring and conflicts the Berkley Center, Georgetown and institutions around the world try to combat. Both secular and religiously affiliated nations fight. There are fervent followers of faith that fight and those that do not; the same follows for questioners, atheists, and everything in between. The key issue that sparks different persons’ and nations’ interests is ownership. People mistake self-righteousness for ownership, believing that their “truth” dictates possession of the land of “false” that needs saving. People are dangerous when they believe that their minds possess truth. Obviously a huge problem occurs when both sides believe they possess truth. The issue of highly priced cathedrals and historic sites pales in comparison to those of Israel and Tibet where the land perpetually feels the battles of the righteous. Yet, the issue is still illustrative. London tells the world that it owns St. Paul’s, when in fact it should be the world’s. The places of import to history are the world’s because they have shaped everyone’s lives in the highly interconnected, complex centuries of social interaction.
Jessica Rimington

MAJOR: Culture & Politics, Social Entrepreneurship, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Cotuit, Massachusetts
HOST COUNTRY: Mexico
HOST UNIVERSITY: Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Jessica Rimington serves as Executive Director of a nonprofit organization she founded called One World Youth Project. In 2002, she was one of two students chosen to travel to the Children’s Earth Summit, held in conjunction with the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In April 2005, she also represented SustainUS at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York City. Jessica was the recipient of the 2004 BRICK Award from Do Something, the Massachusetts Governor’s Points of Light Award as well as the 2005 Brower Youth Award. Jessica has also been a keynote speaker alongside Dr. Jane Goodall and former President Bill Clinton, as well as a speaker at UN World Environment Day, the UN Youth Assembly and the Green Festival.

I feel cheated by the inquisition. By the conquistadors with their moral justification for evangelism. Because that church, with those white walls of gold paint, where I sat and listened and responded when told—that church can’t ever fill me. It can’t ever heal me. It can’t reconnect me when I have become detached. Because it itself is detached—grasping for a hold—enforcing itself with confidence in the way that only the most insecure claim their power. Built on ancient stories of a place that we can’t even put for sure on a map—built on close to unchanging order, separation, regimen, and faith in the intangible.

I want history to give me back the tangible. Give me back the roots—my roots—to a place that can actually be found, walked on, cultivated, lived with. I want history to give me back griots and a time when my body and life rhythm synched with earth without struggle. My ancient vocabulary that didn’t know ‘nature’ as separate from “man”—that didn’t give me words to describe my shame, my sin, my subordinate position—give it back. I want history to give it back to me, and my country, and to all of Mexico.

Megan Shudde

MAJOR: Arabic, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Phoenix, Arizona
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Megan Shudde is a fifth generation native of Arizona and spends her breaks in Phoenix with her mother, brother and yellow lab named Vito Andolini Corlione: the Dogfather. Her goals in Egypt were to improve her Arabic, travel, and enjoy a break from the DC winter. Her favorite things about Cairo were the sunshine, low cost of living, and delicious juice drinks available everywhere. Among her least favorite things were the traffic, ubiquitous smoking, and crafty shop owners who attempt to lead tourists to their perfume and papyrus shops. After graduating from Georgetown, Megan hopes to attend law school somewhere on the West Coast. Ultimately she would like to combine her interests in language and law to work with immigrant and refugee issues.

Religion is inescapable in Egypt. Though freedom of religion is enshrined in the Egyptian constitution and most Egyptians pride themselves in a long history of peaceful pluralism, the religious landscape is much more complicated than many want to admit. To a large extent Egyptian society is drawn along sectarian lines. Even at first glance one’s religious identity is usually obvious. A huge number of Muslim men sport a zebibah or bruised forehead caused by the prostrations performed during prayer. Muslim women usually wear the hijab or head-scarf. Similarly, Coptic Orthodox Christians (who make up the majority of Egypt’s Christian population) often have one or more crosses tattooed on their hands.

Among Muslims, religiously significant names like Muhammad and Khadija dominate. Copts choose surprisingly Western monikers like George and Madonna. Egyptian law further aggravates these differences. For instance, citizens must register their religious affiliation on their national ID cards, but only Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are government-recognized religions. This requirement proves odious for unrecognized groups, especially Egypt’s small Baha’i community. Baha’is may not list the Baha’i faith as their religion and are frequently denied official documents such as IDs and birth certificates. Christians who convert to Islam, then
Franco regime the identity of “Catholic” became even more important and apparent as Franco fought a brutal civil war, with the support of the Catholic Church, to restore tradition. Franco’s dictatorship meant that to be a loyal Spaniard you must proclaim yourself to be unequivocally Catholic. Hence, the political necessity of religious appearances added a new dimension to the historical role of Catholicism in defining and shaping the Iberian Peninsula.

When I asked my host family what religion they were, the immediate and simultaneous answer was that they are Catholic, just not practicing. There is no hesitation or even reluctance when non-practicing and young, liberal Spaniards tell me they are Catholic. In a way, they seem to be identifying themselves through their religion. By telling me they are Catholic, they are telling me that they’re Spaniards and all that entails: the political struggles, the social strife, and the historical molding. Some of that history may make them regretful or apprehensive while other aspects engender pride and confidence, yet their history, the history of Spain as a nation, is one deeply intertwined and influenced by religion. By acknowledging their Catholicism, they, in a way, recognize their own history and evolving identity as a people through good and bad.

Maren Trochmann

MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Fargo, North Dakota
HOST COUNTRY: Spain
HOST UNIVERSITY: Universidad de Salamanca
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Originally from Fargo, North Dakota, Maren hopes to work for a few years either in a nonprofit organization focusing on human or women’s rights or for the government after graduation. She eventually plans to attend law school. In Spain she took courses related to human rights and international development. She was excited to fully experience another culture and learn about the views and perceptions of religion and its intersections with political and social life in the EU.

The final expulsions of the Moors and the Jews reinforced and confirmed Spain’s Catholicism. These military victories sent the clear message that Jews and Muslims were foreigners, invaders, and usurpers whereas the true Spaniards are Catholic, linking Spanish identity to Catholicism in a lasting way. Much later, under the Franco regime the identity of “Catholic” became even more important and apparent as Franco fought a brutal civil war, with the support of the Catholic Church, to restore tradition. Franco’s dictatorship meant that to be a loyal Spaniard you must proclaim yourself to be unequivocally Catholic. Hence, the political necessity of religious appearances added a new dimension to the historical role of Catholicism in defining and shaping the Iberian Peninsula.
Asked to reflect on their observations of their host culture’s religion, many students were confronted by paradoxical traditions. They puzzled over contradictions, such as a dynamic religious culture in Spain amidst declining mass attendance rates and the profusion of beautiful cathedrals in France and Italy amidst lack of interest in their religious significance. Many came to realize that faith can transcend its “official” practice. 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.

Sarah Cooper

**MAJOR:** International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
**HOMETOWN:** Cedar Crest, New Mexico  
**HOST COUNTRY:** France  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po Paris)  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring Semester

Sarah spent her spring semester as a student in Paris’s primary school for post-secondary education in the field of political science: l’Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris, better known as Sciences Po. There, she pursued course work in African development and governance, European history, Middle Eastern literature, international relations theory, and French. As a student of French language and literature for nearly eight years, she enjoyed thoroughly immersing herself in French culture. When at Georgetown, Sarah is an active member of the Georgetown Program Board, having served on the executive board for two consecutive years, and also participates in Our Moment, an international development club. She
I was rather taken aback to discover that the most heated recent challenge to laïcité implicated France’s Jewish community rather than its Muslim community. In mid-February, mere days after I disembarked in Paris, President Nicholas Sarkozy unveiled his proposal for a new Holocaust Education Plan during the course of a speech delivered to the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CIRF). After controversially praising the merits of faith, Sarkozy went on to present the broad outlines of this plan, which would mandate that all French students, at the age of eleven years old, research the life story of a French Jewish child who had died in the Holocaust. Almost immediately, this plan provoked a maelstrom of controversy, eventually forcing Sarkozy to retract the plan in early May.

One of the primary objections leveled against the plan by many, including several prominent members of France’s Jewish community, concerned the utility of requiring students to tackle such a serious subject at a young age and questioned whether the experience might not be more traumatizing than informative. A second critique called into question the compatibility of such a policy and of Sarkozy’s favorable remarks on behalf of faith with official state laïcité. For several weeks all of the major French media outlets engaged in a vigorous debate about the identity of the French Republic and the role of religion with respect to that identity.

Continuing from my first letter with the theme of Spain as a country in transition, it is continually interesting to me to observe the mix of religion in everyday culture and ways of life that this seemingly “unreligious” country has. There are many feast days centered on local Saints and various religious traditions; it permeates the culture. Everyone, including the “non-religious” or non-practicing knows about different Catholic holidays and feast days, and different local dishes are closely associated with Catholicism and religious roots. Celebrating the day of your patron saint is just as important as celebrating your birthday, whether you are religious or not. This interest-

Peter Haas

MAJOR: Health Care Management and Policy, School of Nursing and Health Studies

HOMETOWN: West Islip, Long Island, New York

HOST COUNTRY: Spain

HOST UNIVERSITY: Universidad de Salamanca and Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca

LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Peter hails from Long Island, New York. He has studied Spanish for the past seven years and looked forward to finally being immersed in the Spanish culture and gaining a completely new perspective on the language and way of life. Peter attended an all-boys Catholic high school before coming to Georgetown. He has taught religion classes to elementary school-aged children and has always been interested in religion and the role it plays in different countries’ cultures.
The supposed secularism that has become closely identified with much of Western Europe can certainly be observed in the German university town of Tübingen. Sunday, for example, is spent by many of the Germans here hiking in the park or enjoying the afternoon in a nearby café, while the pews of the churches remain eerily empty. Wandering throughout the town, however, it is clear that religion still plays an important role in the tradition and day-to-day lives of those in Tübingen. Dating back to the 1500s, the magnificent Evangelical Cathedral, Stiftskirche, located in the heart of the old town, continues to bring the town together for a variety of cultural events, including University orchestral and choral concerts. At any given time of day the echo of the Kirchen Glocken, or church bells, can be heard throughout the tiny streets. Cemeteries of smaller churches are well kept and maintained, a fresh bouquet of flowers at every gravestone, suggesting a deep sense of respect for the deceased. In yet another example of religious tradition, many Germans continue to pay taxes to the
church as a way of maintaining their entitlement to certain privileges, such as getting married in the church or sending their children to kindergarten schools run by the churches. In this way, religion continues to exist in Tübingen as a strong source of tradition, shaping the way people live and what they have come to value.

Jennifer Lydic

MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: New York, New York
HOST COUNTRY: France
HOST UNIVERSITY: Université Paris Sorbonne – Paris IV
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Jennifer’s academic interests have focused on inter-religious dialogue and international development. Since coming to Georgetown, she made a great effort to aggressively develop these interests, whether it be through her recent internship at Bread for the World, through her leadership and participation in various campus groups including OurMoment, HOPE, and UNICEF, or through attending numerous events hosted by the Berkley Center and other university bodies. Originally from New York City and having attended a Catholic school for fourteen years, she has always possessed a great interest in religious faith and diversity. Her goals in Paris were to not only immerse herself in its long cultural history but also to better understand the unique place that religion holds in the city, which so prides itself on secularism. Having spent little time in Europe in the past, she made a point to travel excessively in order to complement her understanding of Paris with a better knowledge of how religion is embraced in other countries.

Within one month of arriving in Paris, I have visited two cathedrals, one mosque, one synagogue, and attended two Christian masses in addition to living with an atheist host parent. What I’ve come to realize is that though I am currently living in a city that is considered the model of “laïcité” (“secularism”) within France, religion continues to have an enormous, though often subtle and indirect, influence upon this culture.

I have spent many hours walking through the Marais in Paris, a district that has long been famous for its rich Jewish culture and identity. It was in the course of one such walk that I was reminded of a statement made Georgetown Professor Rabbi Harold White, who once defined Judaism as an “evolving, religious civilization.” This precise juxtaposition of words, however, may be equally applicable to the place of religion in general within France. What Paris, and what all of France for that matter, possesses is centuries of history that have undeniably been entwined with religion. Indeed, it is often this subtle tie to the history, the legacy and the traditions of various religions that this country has so long, though precariously, prided itself upon.

In short, what I’ve come to realize is that the connection that Paris has to religion transcends strict religiosity. Rather, people here seem to have come to relate to faith in a way that uniquely accepts religion as being historically and inevitably enmeshed within the evolving culture and history of this country.

Chelsea Paige

MAJOR: International Politics, Certificate in Russian and East European Studies, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Buffalo, New York
HOST COUNTRY: Russia
HOST UNIVERSITY: St. Petersburg State University
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Chelsea plans to attend law school and, possibly, to pursue a master’s degree in public policy concurrently. She hopes to work to improve legal infrastructures in the former Soviet Union and practice international human rights law. Chelsea was the General Manager of WGTB Radio during the fall 2007 semester and is also the Law and Politics Editor of Utraque Unum, a journal which explores the roots of American democracy and the canon of Western political and religious thought in general.

More than perhaps any other social or political force outside of Communism, Russian Orthodoxy has profoundly shaped the collective identity of the Russian people. Ever since Prince Vladimir “baptized” Kievan Rus, the predecessor of the modern Russian state, by accepting Christianity in 988, the Russian Orthodox Church has determined the nature of the Russian state and the self-conception of its people. Russians owe their language to the Church: monks Cyril and Methodius developed
the Cyrillic alphabet, which Russia uses, as well as an embryonic form of the language’s grammatical structures. Russians also partially owe their state to the organizational powers of the Church; the institution acted as a vehicle for catalyzing economic and political recovery after the devastating Mongol attacks of the 13th and 14th Centuries, which threatened the very existence of what would become the Russian state.

Indeed, the Church sunk itself so deeply into the Russian collective consciousness throughout its nearly 500 years of hegemony in both the Russian psyche and state that, though the roster of notoriously arrogant and controlling Soviet leaders would please themselves by thinking otherwise, the vicious secularism propagated by the Soviet state did not succeed in extraditing the Church from its prominent position in the Russian mind. Instead, the Soviets succeeded in creating such a comprehensive and forceful apparatus through which to brainwash and scare the Russian people into accepting secularism that the post-Soviet environment in Russia is awash in confusion concerning the Church’s role in both the individual lives of Russians and the collective life of the Russian state. It seems, however, that there is one fact that all Russians agree on: whatever subtleties its role might take, the Church will—and must—play a significant role in post-Soviet Russia.

**Madeline Sopko**

**MAJOR:** Regional and Comparative Studies (Latin America and Middle East), School of Foreign Service  
**HOMETOWN:** Cleveland, Ohio  
**HOST COUNTRY:** Mexico  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall Semester

Madeline chose to study in Mexico City in order to learn about development issues from the perspective of a developing country. She is particularly interested in human rights issues.

Modern Mexican history has been marked by a fragile and volatile relationship between religion and the public sphere. As in any other secular state, there is a constant tension between the City of God and the City of Man, but the Mexican psyche is also influenced by the legacy of colonialism and the abuses of the Church during Mexico’s early history. Over the last century, the result has been the attempted political negation of one entire facet of Mexican identity—Catholicism—by its total expulsion from the public discourse. The country is now in the process of transitioning away from this untenable condition towards a healthier relationship between religion and politics. The results of this process remain to be seen, but I doubt that Mexico will ever completely reconcile itself to its past, and thus to its present.

**Lindsay Van Houten**

**MAJOR:** Government, Georgetown College  
**HOMETOWN:** Montgomery, New Jersey  
**HOST COUNTRY:** Italy  
**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Georgetown University in Italy  
**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall Semester

Like many Hoyas, Lindsay was born and raised in New Jersey. During Lindsay’s senior year of high school, she took an art history class and became fascinated with all genres of art, especially the Italian Renaissance. After her first visit to Florence two years ago, Lindsay could not wait for the opportunity to return for a longer period of time.

Between the beautiful churches and Renaissance masterpieces, the prevalence of religion for tourists in Italy is not surprising. What is surprising, however, is how something that attracts so many visitors to Italy is absent from the lives of many Italians. Sure, technically 90% of Italians are Roman Catholics, yet only one-third of these Roman Catholics actually practice their religion. I had spent a month in Italy before I realized this. While in Rome, I joined hundreds of people waiting in line to attend mass in St. Peter’s Basilica. In Florence, I have stood in the Duomo with busloads of tourists for Sunday morning mass. Yet when I walk up the hill on Sunday morning to the piazza in Fiesole, I encounter no crowds. I stroll into the church and come upon rows of empty pews. By the start of mass, fifty locals may have filtered in, scattering among the seats. As I attempt to follow the mass with my little skill in Italian, I gaze around and quickly realize that my friend and I are the only young adults in the church. The rest of the congregation is either members of the Sunday school class or senior citizens.
I have not yet uncovered the reasons for this discrepancy between Italy’s religious traditions and its citizens’ lack of religious commitment, yet by continuing to observe and explore this culture, I hope to gain a deeper understanding.

Juline Zhang

MAJOR: International Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Singapore
HOST COUNTRY: England
HOST UNIVERSITY: King’s College London
LENGTH OF STAY: Academic Year

Juline enjoys traveling and living overseas, and is glad that her undergraduate years have been spent doing just that, taking her far beyond the shores of her hometown of Singapore to travel the world, between studying in two of its most prominent cities, Washington and London. She could almost feel perfectly at home anywhere—save for the crucial fact that Singaporean food is never as good when replicated elsewhere. Her academic focus on war and international security has thrown questions of religion, ethnicity, and social integration into the spotlight because of the issue of religiously-motivated terrorism. Moreover, as a Christian who looks ahead at a career in the public service in her small but multicultural city-state, it can be said that she has a vested interest in learning more about the interplay between the spheres of religion, politics, and society.

At first glance, one cannot miss the religious edifices that mark the streets in London: the unmistakable St. Paul’s Cathedral just off the Thames, St. Martin-in-the-fields on Trafalgar Square, and the smaller steeples that are scattered all across the city. Yet, on a Sunday, the dwindling number of church-goers in this ostensibly Anglican country seems to suggest a declining religiosity amongst the population.

Perhaps that is trying to paint the picture with far too broad a brush. Looking closer, there are pockets of religious devotion in the cultural mosaic that is London, where people of East Asian and Africa origin fill Christian services, where immigrants from Eastern Europe congregate for prayer and worship in Orthodox churches, and where devout Muslims are gathering in response to the prayer call in the mosques of East London. Against a backdrop of secularization in mainstream culture, there has been a development of niches of people whose faith means something more than the infrequent visit to a place of worship to mark a religious occasion.

I was privileged to be part of one of these niches: St Helen’s Bishops gate, an evangelical Anglican congregation that meets in a historic building in the heart of the City of London. The small, old church building is dwarfed by the glass monstrosity that is the ‘Gherkin’, and as my eye is drawn to the contrast in the church’s physical geography, I cannot help but think how it illustrates the persistence of the Christian faith amidst a changing and increasingly secular landscape.
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. Student letters explored what happens when these new religions clash with the status-quo culture.

Kamilla Khabibrakhmanova
MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Moscow, Russia
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall Semester

Kamilla’s academic interests include psychology, art history, history of the Middle East and Central Asia, and Russian literature. Although she considers Moscow her true hometown, she spent her childhood moving between Canada, Russia, and New York. At Georgetown, she is heavily involved with the Alternative Spring Breaks program and works as a Student Guard. While in Cairo, she spent her time practicing Arabic, smoking water pipes in good company, and teaching English to Sudanese refugees. After graduation, she hopes to go to law school to study international law.

The next day, we finally ventured into the Old City itself. The Old City is a walled section, encompassing what was once all of Jerusalem before it expanded into the surrounding regions. It is divided into four quarters: Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Armenian. Thus, every
Seth McCurry

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

**HOMETOWN:** Pasadena, California

**HOST COUNTRY:** England

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** School of Oriental and African Studies

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Academic Year

Seth’s studies at SOAS focused on African history, African film, Zulu and international development. Born and raised in Pasadena, California, Seth is a Georgetown Outdoor Adventure Trainer (GOAT) in the school’s little-known Outdoor Education program. Prior to starting SOAS, he spent a month and a half traveling around North Africa and Southern Europe. He plans to move to Cape Town and start a nonprofit organization working in the private health sector.

**Elizabeth Miller**

**MAJOR:** French and Linguistics, Georgetown College

**HOMETOWN:** Findlay, Ohio

**HOST COUNTRY:** France

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Université Lyon III-Jean Moulin

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Academic Year

Elizabeth Miller was born in Houston, Texas, but identifies more with her Midwestern upbringing divided between Detroit, Michigan, and rural Ohio, where she attended a large public high school. It was through Elizabeth’s heavy involvement with the nonprofit children’s exchange organization CISV that she first fostered a strong interest in international travel,
facilitated by exchange programs where the emphasis was placed more on cross-cultural learning than on sight-seeing of a tourist nature. It was in this vein, then, that Elizabeth chose a full-year study abroad program in Lyon, with the hopes of improving her language proficiency, becoming more fully integrated with her French host family, and really understanding the culture of Lyon. A few months into her stay, Elizabeth was first invited to attend religious services with her devout Catholic host family. After that she set out to further explore the complex religious climate—Catholic and otherwise—of the officially laic country, known for its rich religious history, strong regard for human rights, and lingering seeds of conflict.

Although I never saw physical evidence of either in the classrooms of my right-wing university in Lyon, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim ideologies remain salient issues in contemporary France. The anti-immigration (some might say racist) ideologies of the Front National political party still have their voice among Université Lyon III students and professors, just as housing and employment discrimination for French residents of Maghrebi descent is well documented throughout the country. I witnessed this phenomenon, albeit in a relatively minor way, through the experiences of a friend and classmate, a Tunisian native. At the accounting firm where she interns, Yousr was referred to not by name, but as “the Tunisian” for the first several weeks, a qualifier that immediately set her apart from her peers. Although my encounters with anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim ideologies were limited to second-hand experiences and never-ending media coverage, my time in France has certainly reinforced the idea that past discrimination and current challenges of integration are still alive and well.

In Irish the usual greeting is Dia duit, which translates literally to “God be with you.” Coupled with its customary response of Dia’s Muire duit, which translates to “God and Mary be with you,” the language itself encodes religious reverence. However, just as the use of Irish is declining, so too is the practice of religion in Ireland. Having been in Dublin for about six weeks, I can already recognize a notable contradiction of my expectations of the role of religion in what many outsiders consider to be a heavily Catholic society. While most Catholics seem to perceive two groups in society—Catholics and non-Catholics—in reality the religious environment of Ireland, and Dublin in particular, is growing wider and more varied. Due to an increasing number of Indian and Asian immigrants, Dublin can now boast a greater amount of diversity, both culturally and religiously. Although the influence of religion can be seen, religious practice and spirituality seem to be pursued on a much more individualistic level.
Crystal Oswald-Herold

**MAJOR:** International Politics, School of Foreign Service

**HOMETOWN:** Olympia, Washington

**HOST COUNTRY:** Germany

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring Semester

Original from western Washington state, Crystal was first inspired to study international relations during her junior year of high school, when she was a Rotary Youth Exchange student at the Sorø Academy in Denmark. Before studying in Berlin, Crystal worked at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown and at WashPIRG in Washington State. While abroad, Crystal interned at the Atlantic Community as an editor for their online forum. Crystal’s other interests include conflict resolution, traveling, nature, and swing dancing.

Over the past 60 years, German society has gradually shifted away from an expectation that temporary workers would return “home” and now focuses on the value of integration for individuals with migrant backgrounds. Unfortunately for everyone involved, just how integration is to be achieved and what exactly it means remains unclear. Can integration incorporate many religions, styles of dress, and languages?

In early February, a fire broke out in an apartment building in Ludwigshafen, Germany, and killed nine Turkish immigrants who lived there. Immediately, Turkish communities suspected arson. In the aftermath of the fire, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan visited Germany and asserted: “assimilation is a crime against humanity.” This could be a difficult statement in any country dealing with immigrant populations, but it was a particularly provocative statement given the recent tragedy, and because of the memories which ride on the shoulders of the term “crime against humanity” here in Germany.

I assume that Prime Minister Erdogan intentionally employed words which would evoke memories of the Holocaust, yet their constructive value remains murky at best. Certainly, immense work does remain to be done before Turkish Muslims living in Germany are free from stereotypes and discrimination, yet the comparison which Erdogan suggested was deeply problematic. My experiences in Germany thus far have alerted me to the fact that significant troubles still exist between individuals with migrant backgrounds and mainstream German society, but they have also convinced me that solutions to the current difficulties need to look towards the future and common interests which transcend religion and nationality and apply to every individual living in Germany.

Max Rerucha

**MAJOR:** International Politics, School of Foreign Service

**HOMETOWN:** Laramie, Wyoming

**HOST COUNTRY:** Canada

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** McGill University

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Fall Semester

Max is a native of Wyoming, where he grew up with his parents and older brother Luke. Max was home in Wyoming during the summer of 2007 as a student intern for Governor Freudenthal. At Georgetown he is a grillmaster in the Georgetown University Grilling Society and a member of the campus Solidarity organization.

Canadians have a genuine appreciation and respect for their history, dating back to the original First Nations tribes to settle the continent and more recently to the original English, French, and Loyalist settlers. History serves as much of the basis for how Canadians see themselves now and into the future. Scholars constantly debate and rewrite this history out of concern for fairness and appropriateness to all the Canadians and their groups. This delicate and never resolved process often places one group against another, whether English against French, European against non-Europeans or newcomers against established dwellers, among others. Religion plays a key role in these debates. Often religious connotations and implications mean more than the core beliefs. So the opposition of Protestantism and Catholicism have more to do with the tense relations between the English and French cultures they represent than with any substantial theological differences. Since World War II, the discussions about Christianity and non-Western religions highlight the concern about increased immigration from outside of Europe and Commonwealth areas.
citizens widely accept the law that President Jacques Chirac signed in 2004 banning religious symbols in public schools. In the U.S., this law is commonly known as the “French headscarf ban” because of its perceived aim at the Muslim community. While in the U.S. this ban was criticized as undermining individual liberties, my French friends argued that it allows students to focus on their similarities rather than differences. They also distinguish between private life, where they believe religion belongs, and the public sphere, where they say that each individual should appear as citizen equal to all others. Religion and integration must be examined within the context of French social values, which contrary to my previous assumptions, are not synonymous with those of the U.S.

Laura Tulchin

MAJOR: Government, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Larchmont, New York
HOST COUNTRY: France
HOST UNIVERSITY: Université Paris Sorbonne – Paris IV
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Laura fell in love with the Spanish language at a young age and has since gravitated toward language as the best way to approach foreign cultures. She was lucky enough to travel often throughout high school and entered Georgetown with an eye toward international politics and a love of new languages. Laura has previously studied in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro on summer programs.

For nine months I studied at a school that attracts students from a wide range of countries including Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Lebanon, France and the U.S. to learn about the Mediterranean region. The demographics of the student body, an oasis of young, international and often Muslim students, were starkly different from that of Menton, an old-generation, provincial, and historically Christian city. These demographic differences parallel a great sociological issue facing France today: the role of five million Muslims, the largest Muslim population in Europe, in a traditionally Christian country that today prides itself on its assimilationist and strongly secular values.

Muslim immigration to France has been a contentious and sensitive subject. In speaking with students about this issue, I discovered that French and U.S. opinions on how to best create a unified society are quite divergent. French
particularities of “foreign” identity remain taboo and in turn purged from public discourse. In theory, this avoidance helps to maintain a neutral public space in which every citizen may operate by the same rules and enjoy the same rights. However, as the riots of 2005 and 2006 demonstrate, Republican theory has not yielded successful outcomes in actuality. Tensions remain high between France’s minority and mainstream populations. Racial profiling is an accepted reality; police brutality a common occurrence; and derogatory slurs uncomfortably integrated into daily parlance. Disturbingly, we see that even in a country as diverse in its composition as France (the nation of “beur, blanc, et noir”), true equality can be hard to realize.

Each day I spent in Paris, I found myself surrounded by the dynamics of an active discourse on secular theory. As I explored the city’s ethnic neighborhoods, visited its houses of worship, read its journals, and observed its charged protests from the sidelines, I saw religion and politics continuously intersect before my eyes. My participation in JYAN gave me the opportunity to reflect on these experiences and to draw coherent conclusions. By connecting me to other participants across the world, the program also introduced me to an environment of rich dialogue, where I could share my thoughts and draw on the insights of others. It was an invaluable experience—one that allowed me to conceptualize the issues of religion and politics across a more global context.

Andrew Vitteriti

MAJOR: Government, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Rye, New York
HOST COUNTRY: France
HOST UNIVERSITY: Institut d’ Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po Paris)
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Throughout his undergraduate career at Georgetown, Andrew has focused his studies on the modern questions posed by migration and citizenship trends in Europe. In Paris he took courses on French secular tradition (laïcité), issues of civil rights and civil liberties among minority groups, and contemporary European politics. Andrew plans to eventually compare how French and American law handle issues of religion, diversity, and tolerance. Andrew comes from the suburbs of New York City. He has strong interests in literature, the arts, and film. He also is a passionate soccer fan and enjoys supporting his favorite European club, AC Milan.

Today’s Frenchman can fit a variety of profiles. He might not speak the language of Voltaire well or even at all. Nor may he be Caucasian, a practicing Catholic, or a staunch secularist. Instead he may communicate more comfortably in Creole, Arabic, Wolof, or Vietnamese. He may be of Middle Eastern, African, Asian, or Caribbean descent. He might be a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu, an Atheist, or even a Scientologist. And in crowds donning the newest trend à la mode, he may proudly choose to sport a boubou, a turban, or a yarmulke.

Amid this vibrant backdrop of religious and cultural diversity, true multiculturalism has been hard to realize. In this way, French society is paradoxical. Certain particularities of “foreign” identity remain taboo and in turn purged from public discourse. In theory, this avoidance helps to maintain a neutral public space in which every citizen may operate by the same rules and enjoy the same rights. However, as the riots of 2005 and 2006 demonstrate, Republican theory has not yielded successful outcomes in actuality. Tensions remain high between France’s minority and mainstream populations. Racial profiling is an accepted reality; police brutality a common occurrence; and derogatory slurs uncomfortably integrated into daily parlance. Disturbingly, we see that even in a country as diverse in its composition as France (the nation of “beur, blanc, et noir”), true equality can be hard to realize.

Each day I spent in Paris, I found myself surrounded by the dynamics of an active discourse on secular theory. As I explored the city’s ethnic neighborhoods, visited its houses of worship, read its journals, and observed its charged protests from the sidelines, I saw religion and politics continuously intersect before my eyes. My participation in JYAN gave me the opportunity to reflect on these experiences and to draw coherent conclusions. By connecting me to other participants across the world, the program also introduced me to an environment of rich dialogue, where I could share my thoughts and draw on the insights of others. It was an invaluable experience—one that allowed me to conceptualize the issues of religion and politics across a more global context.
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.

Ariel Azoff

MAJOR: Government and Arabic, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Woodstock, New York
HOST COUNTRY: Egypt
HOST UNIVERSITY: American University in Cairo
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

While she is not particularly well-traveled, having only been to a few countries outside of the U.S., Ariel was excited to be in Egypt for the semester, both to experience the culture and to improve her Arabic language skills. At Georgetown, she is a member of the mock trial team, an employee of The Corp, and has participated in the South Asian Society’s Rangila show for three years. Other interests include singing, dancing, and SCUBA diving (for which she was certified in Egypt). In 2006 she worked on a congressional race in upstate New York, and since then has been interning for a political consulting firm in D.C. At this point, her future is wide-open, with no set plans or career goals.

Egyptian culture is a fascinating blend of extreme religiosity and surprising affinity for Western culture—especially
its pop music, television, and clothing styles. I saw a galabiyya (traditional Egyptian dress for a man or woman) in the market the other day with "SEXY" written in silver lettering across the back. Talk about cultural diffusion.

Recently there were (attempted) strikes in Cairo in response to rising bread prices. I was able to see some of the emails that were circulating urging people not to go to work and not to buy anything. "If you leave everything in the hands of God," the organizers wrote, "and say 'God will take care of it' then nothing will happen. If you sit back and watch nothing will change." Such a strong, almost heretical statement seems out of character for a society whose two favorite phrases are "God willing" and "Praise be to God." But I think I've learned not to underestimate the Egyptian people. Aside from being very pious, they are a people who can use their faith as a motivational force for change. Unfortunately for the strikers, the government forces didn't share their views.

Traviss Cassidy

**MAJOR:** International Political Economy, Certificate in Muslim-Christian Understanding, School of Foreign Service

**HOMETOWN:** Phoenix, Arizona

**HOST COUNTRY:** Spain

**HOST UNIVERSITY:** Universidad Complutense Madrid

**LENGTH OF STAY:** Spring Semester

Originally from Scottsdale, Arizona, Traviss has attended Catholic schools all his life, graduating from a Jesuit high school before coming to Georgetown. Traviss has a mother named Meg, a father named John, a younger sister named Meghan, and an inconceivably small dog named Lucky. On campus, Traviss is primarily involved in The Georgetown Voice and WGTB Georgetown Radio.

In post-Franco Spain, bare-breasted women line the covers of magazines sold in street-corner shops where they are propped up front and in plain view. Likewise, commercials and advertisements offer plenty of bare skin and sultry invitations to sex—hardly the stuff of traditional Catholic morals. The growing support for sexual freedom in Spain takes on a religious/political tone that one can only fully understand in the context of post-Franco backlash. Case in point: last week while walking down the hallway at my university, I noticed a poster arguing for the right to free and easily accessible abortions. Not a peculiar item to find on a college campus, sure, but its selling technique grabbed me: a young woman lay chest upwards and completely naked, her vagina mostly (though not completely) covered by a Christian cross inside of a circle with a line slashed through it. Scribbled across her stomach was the warning, "Keep your rosaries away from my ovaries."

Such politically charged antagonism toward the Catholic Church is bound to be present to some degree in any country where the Church enjoys a significant presence. However, the anti-Catholic sentiment in Spain—especially among younger people—seems to be particularly acute due to the political and emotional baggage of Franco’s policy of imposed Catholicism.
Camille Kolstad, from Saint James, Minnesota, is a junior majoring in Political Economy and Theology. She was a Berkley Center Undergraduate Fellow in 2007, working on the report on religious advocates in US politics. She has interned for Representative Tim Walz’s election campaign and for Senator Mark Dayton. Camille has studied abroad in London and studied in Cairo during the spring 2008 semester.

Many Muslims are attempting to harmonize modernization with traditional religious beliefs. This seemingly impossible act is balanced every day, it has to be. Yet, my experiences thus far lead me to assume that tension is tightening under these current trends.

A decent portion of my female classmates wear the hijab. However, I find myself paying more attention to their brightly colored designer scarves than to those who opt not to cover their hair. Do they wear the hijab out of religious tradition, or has it evolved into a cultural expression? If something is not mundane, is it still modest? Are some of my peers forced to wear the hijab and as such they take the trendy route as a silent rebellion? Passionate opinions rage on all sides as some claim that conservative definitions have adapted to today’s globally-exposed society, while others adamantly argue that globalization does not fit into traditional faith observances. Regardless of appearances, we must be careful not to assume that lack of traditional expression represents lack of belief.

Islamic faith expression is not the homogenous, antiquated picture that guidebooks depict; it is unique to each individual, and in some respect social class. The one thing I can convincingly say is that Egyptian Muslims—like other religious people—are working to harmonize the noises of globalization and tradition, modern appeals and sacred customs. They are a faithful people, and I am excited to witness their answers.

Ann Koppuzha is originally from Kerala, India and Sarasota, Florida. She chose her destination in order to learn more about Egyptian society and Islam and to improve her Arabic language ability. At Georgetown, Ann is involved in the SFS Academic Council, UNICEF, Honor Council, and Residence Life.

This past weekend I traveled to Turkey—an often-held model for the integration of ‘Western’ and ‘Islamic’ values. Istanbul, with its enchanting mosques, active sea port, and trendy streets, was vastly different from my study abroad nation of Egypt. In Egypt I feel that religion, for better or worse, is prominent in the public sphere—women cover themselves from head to toe, the call to prayer is repeated five times daily, alcohol is limited, and I often hear blessings bestowed between people. In Turkey however, the influence of religion is more subtle.
Every afternoon I take the number 12 bus home from the Social Science building of the University of Buenos Aires in downtown Buenos Aires, Argentina to my apartment in the Palermo neighborhood. And during that twenty minute bus ride in the late afternoon I pass by five Catholic churches with impressive stone edifices and wrought iron gates tucked in amongst the simply decorated exteriors of low rise apartment buildings, secondary schools, and the occasional café or kiosk.

Perhaps more definitive then these architectural figures in the urban jungle of Buenos Aires is the manner in which most porteños, or natives of the city, recognize a Catholic church by crossing themselves. Witnessing this done five times on my bus ride home, I am always struck by the duality of the act—done without thought and as casually as one returning a salutation to a stranger yet bearing the impressive weight of tradition and sanctity. To me, this simple act represents religion in the capital. This is the Catholic Church in Argentina. This is the presence which flows from the church pew to the bus ride home to the stroll in the plaza.

Alex Kostura

MAJOR: International Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Roanoke, Virginia
HOST COUNTRY: Argentina
HOST UNIVERSITY: Universidad de Buenos Aires, Flacso
LENGTH OF STAY: Fall Semester

Alex plans to pursue a certificate in either Latin American Studies or International Business Diplomacy as he is quite interested in the commercial side of development and the role multinational corporations play in the politics of economic growth (specifically South America). Alex grew up in the small town of Roanoke in southwest Virginia. His interest in international development, business, and politics will always be supported by his passion for the arts, especially theatre and music.

Veery Maxwell

MAJORS: International Business and Finance, McDonough School of Business
HOMETOWN: Woodland, California
HOST COUNTRY: England
HOST UNIVERSITY: London School of Economics
LENGTH OF STAY: Academic Year

Veery grew up in rural Northern California. While not at school, she spends her time competing in equestrian events and volunteering for environmental causes. During her time at Georgetown, Veery has served on committees for HOPE’s Hunger Banquet and Relay for Life, and is a Student Ambassador for the GU Discovery Initiative. She has also been an intern for the Business Consulting Group at the Nature Conservancy. Veery explored how religion relates to British society and culture during her year in London.
The city of London is such a demanding whirlwind of activity and energy that many well-settled Brits seem to feel that there are simply not enough hours in the week to fit actively participatory religion into their routine. The majority chose to identify with a set of beliefs, seemingly because religion is a strong part of British tradition.

One can’t help but notice the distinct feeling of innovation and activity within the areas of the city where new residents tend to flock. In place of all the old, and sometimes grand, churches in the city center, one finds contemporary houses of worship. There are all types of churches, mosques, and spiritual centers scattered throughout the ‘transition’ areas, which are home to many of London’s recent immigrants. The interesting part of this phenomenon is that it is not limited to the minority immigrant neighborhoods. Some extremely wealthy neighborhoods house concentrations of expatriate financiers and their families, who often also gravitate towards local churches.

Tim McLaughlin

MAJOR: Government and Economics, Georgetown College
HOMETOWN: Franklin, Massachusetts
HOST COUNTRY: Spain
HOST UNIVERSITY: Universidad de Salamanca
LENGTH OF STAY: Spring Semester

Tim McLaughlin has studied Spanish for many years. He has always had an interest in the role of Catholic Church’s role in society, and was excited to have the opportunity to study in a country where the role and influence of religion in public life is undergoing a great metamorphosis. Originally from Franklin, Massachusetts, Tim is interested in international relations and international business.

Church attendance has decreased worldwide. Yet, in Spain, the decline has been especially pronounced and rapid. I walked into church here the other day, to find a flock of grey- and white-haired faithful present. As foreigners in Spain, it is often obvious that we are not natives of this country—our hair, our clothing, and our sometimes clumsy language skills all mark us as outsiders. However, church is perhaps the place where I feel most out of place, most like a foreigner in Spain. Surrounded by only the oldest segment of the Spanish population in church, it is clear that religion no longer serves as a unifying force in Spanish society. Rather, it now divides the nation. It is quite obvious that young Spaniards have little interest in the faith community that is so important to their elders.

Jillian Slutzker

MAJOR: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
HOMETOWN: Knoxville, Tennessee
HOST COUNTRY: Morocco
HOST UNIVERSITY: Al Akhawayn University and School for International Training
LENGTH OF STAY: Academic Year

Jillian is a volunteer staff member and media correspondent for One World Youth Project, a sister-school program for middle and high school students with a focus on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. While in Morocco, she mentored two youth groups involved in the project. Jillian chaired the Georgetown-UNICEF Educational Outreach committee for two semesters, and interned with the Initiatives of Change international peace center in Caux, Switzerland in 2006. In her free time, Jillian enjoys travel, reading, writing, languages, and fitness.

There is a mosque in the center of my university. If it weren’t for its tall minaret and a few headscarves among my classmates, I might forget that I am going to school in a Muslim country. My campus, modeled after the American university system, is an isolated mountaintop crossroads of French and American culture and Islamic tradition. The students here are from the upper echelon of Moroccan society. Some students drink alcohol, though Islam forbids it. Others did not fast during Ramadan. My roommate, on the other hand, prays five times a day and reads her Koran each night.

Outside my campus, however, is another Morocco. About two thirds of women cover their heads. Pictures of the king, officially “the Commander of the Faithful,” adorn billboards. The call to prayer is heard five times a day loud and clear. I see a kind of tug-of-war between what might be called “Westernization” on the one hand and more conservative Islamic values on the other. My campus echoes the liberalization—the girls in tight jeans, the American pop blasting from dorm windows. Outside
When I asked him if this meant that Catholicism is losing ground to other spiritual currents, he quickly denied it, instead echoing other [self-identified] non-Catholics in their caution of dismissing Catholic identity: “Brazilians are very comfortable with expressing their spirituality in more than one way.”

Even when they are representatives of spiritual currents that can be considered alternative and as such people whose spiritual beliefs would be much more noticeable in their way of life, none of them talked of their spiritual experience as exclusive, or in that sense, all encompassing. Neither unattached nor extremely passionate, their description of their religious experiences and how they fit into their everyday life seems to hint at a spiritual life that, even when labeled and expected to be contextualized in fairly rigid doctrines regarding morality and cultural practices, is manifested in highly personalized ways, sometimes even taking a note from other religions.

Unlike the observation of other study abroad students who find religion defining social, economic, and political practices more so than we in the U.S. are used to, religion in Brazil, including Catholicism, seems to be molded by everyday life. In fact, religion for many people seems to serve at times as more of complementary guidelines on how to live one’s life, much like a diet regime or a debt management program; spiritual salvation here goes hand in hand with physical well being, socioeconomic advancement, political empowerment, and cultural reaffirmation. It would seem that it is less of a spiritual affair than an earthly one.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, in the heart of a very spiritual Catholic family, Jorge was fascinated from early on by the way religion complements cultural identity. He was excited to live in Brazil and study firsthand the role of religion and spirituality in a rising global power. While at Georgetown, Jorge works for the Corp as a cashier in Vital Vittles and as a marketer in the IT+Marketing department. He loves reading and writing, photography and cinema, music of all kinds, and exploring Washington, DC.
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* (Oxford 2008). 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.

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*Program and Business Manager*

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.

Annie Hunt  
*Program Assistant*

Annie Hunt joined the Berkley Center in June 2008. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2007 with a B.A. in the Program of Liberal Studies and the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, concentrating in courses examining the impact of religious, philosophical, and cultural influences on peace.

Contributing Editors

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