Junior Year Abroad Network
Annual Report
2009-2010
A project of the Doyle Building Tolerance Initiative
“My JYAN experience in China challenged me to reflect on controversial issues, specifically on religion and politics. In Western China I observed how Islamic culture has had a long and influential impact in the region, and I wanted to understand what my fellow peers wrote about their perceptions and experiences with Islam. It was JYAN that allowed me to understand that religious diversity and tolerance can be met through these shared dialogues.”

Lisa He, China

“JYAN helped me make the most of my personal development throughout my study abroad experience. The moments of self-reflection were codified in my letters, explaining my troubling insights, humorous stories, and moments of confusion. By writing for a reader, I was encouraged to navigate the differences between Senegalese culture and my own.”

Jennifer Lang, Senegal

“Participating in JYAN made me sit back and critically reflect on the everyday cultural learnings and exchanges that tend to fly by unnoticed in the chaos of being abroad. As part of the JYAN network I was able to enjoy and learn from everyone else’s experiences as well as my own – who wouldn’t want to go abroad to twenty-some countries at once?”

Meghan Flaherty, Jordan
“JYAN allowed me to view my study abroad experience through a different lens. Travel and study became a means to understand the religious, political, and social trends in the regions I visited. Above all, I learned that you can connect with just about anyone talking about faith, family, politics, or the local sports team.”

Andrew Dubbins, Italy

“Through JYAN, I could relate my experience with poverty in Thailand to similar situations in South Africa or Kenya. Although each was in a distinct context, common themes of hope, generosity and compassion seemed to appear in each location. These similarities are what connect humans to humans and allow for international, intercultural and intergenerational understanding and empathy.”

Katalyn Voss, Thailand/New Zealand

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59 Hoyas in 26 countries on 6 continents

Study abroad is often a time of profound discovery and self-transformation. Students confront new cultures, traditions, languages, and beliefs and though these encounters, discover themselves.

The Berkley Center Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) connects study abroad students in a global conversation on religion, politics, and culture. Students immersed in diverse settings – from Argentina to Turkey to Japan – 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 addressing questions of religion, culture, and politics in a different part of the world, and share their reflections through the Berkley Center website. This report brings together some of the key excerpts from those letters across topic areas ranging from gender and family life to challenges of economic and social development. JYAN is part of the Doyle Building Tolerance Initiative.
Georgetown University Study Abroad

Georgetown University encourages students to spend a semester, year, or summer session abroad as part of their academic experience. Students may enroll in Georgetown-sponsored programs 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 the institution. By fully integrating 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 at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in March 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion and the promotion of interreligious understanding. Through research, teaching, and service, the Center examines religion as it relates to the global challenges of international diplomacy, democracy and human rights, and economic and social development. Two premises guide the Center’s work: that deeper knowledge of religion’s global role is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious traditions with one another and with the wider society can promote peace. Thomas Banchoff, associate professor in the Department of Government and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, is the Center’s founding director.

The Doyle Building Tolerance Initiative is a campus-wide effort to promote tolerance and intellectual engagement with diversity in the curriculum and outside the classroom. A collaboration between Georgetown College, the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, and the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), the Initiative is generously funded by alumnus and Board of Directors member William J. Doyle (C ’72). The Berkley Center’s Doyle programs encompass the Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN), the Undergraduate Fellows program, and the Undergraduate Learning and Interreligious Understanding project. The Junior Year Abroad Network links students studying abroad, and their encounter with new cultures around the world, back to the Georgetown community. The Undergraduate Fellows program brings faculty and students together for joint research projects that explore the broader political and policy implications of cultural and religious diversity. The Undergraduate Learning and Interreligious Understanding project is a five-year longitudinal study to track student attitudes towards religious diversity and their evolution in response to experiences at Georgetown in and outside the classroom.
Religion and Culture Through Local Traditions

Spending a semester studying abroad gives students the opportunity to see how people of different countries and of different faiths live their culture or religion. Many students commented that they were surprised by the depth of religious belief or the ways culture manifested itself in their host countries. Despite the varieties of practices they encountered, many students found a universal truth: religion and culture are vital to daily life and help shape the identity of people around the world.

Students also actively participated in local practices and traditions of their host countries. During the month of Ramadan, some students voluntarily fasted or found their days shaped by dietary restrictions. In some countries, students discovered a dynamic culture that challenged their original perceptions, particularly as the FIFA World Cup began in the summer of 2010. These discoveries give hope that despite religious and cultural differences, respect and knowledge can lead to a more peaceful world.

Melissa Verrilli (COL), Spring 2010, Italy

We milled around Piazza San Marco all morning taking pictures of people, listening to different musicians, and throwing confetti. Then at noon the much anticipated Volo dell’Angelo began as a woman flew down from the Campanile (with the help of a harness attached to a zip line). During her flight, the speakers played the Hallelujah chorus, and I was reminded of the religious aspect of this festival. Carnevale is a celebration leading up to the beginning of Lent, on Ash Wednesday. In the U.S., we typically compact this into just one day, Fat Tuesday, also known as Mardi Gras. Since we, as Christians, are supposed to give something up during Lent, Fat Tuesday is the last day to indulge before engaging in the 40 days of solidarity with Christ. However, it seemed that Carnevale was not about indulging, it was really about the pride of the Venetians.

Ellen Greer (SFS), Spring 2010, Germany

A colossal burden of shame was shouldered by German society post-World War II – one that would cause Germans great difficulty in engaging in any form of patriotic enthusiasm for decades thereafter. Half a century later, it seems that Germany is in a different state of mind. International sporting events – such as the zealously-followed international soccer tournaments – have provided German society with an opportunity to test-drive their patriotism. Here we have tournaments that energize the entire country: for a month during the World Cup Germans devote their free time to socializing through the recognition and celebration of their shared national identity. They tie the German flag around their shoulders, down huge glasses of Pilsner and Hefeweizen, debate the minutiae of every game, and sing loud sporting ballads known by all. Even
chocolate bars are emblazoned with the faces of Germany’s soccer players!

**Elisabeth Browne Harvey (COL), Spring 2010, Germany**

Patriotism in Germany is usually a subtle affair: the only place I can remember consistently seeing a flag is in front of the Bundestag in Berlin. Because of the country’s historical background, patriotism has been viewed with suspicion since the end of the war. The only time in which flag-waving, national anthem singing patriotism has attained a kind of normality in modern Germany is in the context of soccer. As the host of the 2006 World Cup, Germany began to cautiously explore the meaning of international prominence, while also tentatively enjoying the national fervor that heightened with every successful match. As the national team advanced through the tournament, the flag began to appear all over the place: candy bars, wigs, face paint, cars, jerseys, etc. For Germans, soccer creates a safe culture of national unity, divorced from the political and military context of the past.

**Maria Hayden (SFS), Fall 2009, Morocco**

The first “culture-shock” experience occurred directly off the plane in Fez. “What do you mean there’s no food?” It was the very beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, and we foreigners had to adjust quickly; from being respectful (read: hiding) food and drink during the day and breaking the fast with roommates and friends, to navigating the different business hours and learning from Moroccan students about the religious significance of different Ramadan practices. Religion, during Ramadan or not, plays an intrinsic role in daily life here. While I came expecting this, it is impossible to understand the actual implication of this statement never having lived in a predominantly Muslim country. My eyes have been opened to just how deeply these religious roots run.

**Marisa DeAngelis (SFS), Spring 2010, China**

While there may be no official religion in China, there is certainly no lack of spirituality here. Since I arrived, I have encountered a surprising level of religious diversity which has led me to question my own misconceptions about religion in China. Chinese culture references the Five Religious Beliefs – Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, and Christianity – all of which are believed to exist in varying degrees of harmony in China. My first real experience with Chinese Islamic culture was on a trip to Yangzhou, which features the tomb of an influential Muslim from the Song Dynasty. I was especially impressed by the fusion of traditional Chinese art and Islamic architecture around the tomb.

**Laura Fayer (COL), Fall 2009, China**

Driving down the street it appears that Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut are the only predominant representations of Western culture in China. However, amongst the population of 1.32 billion people you can never be quite sure what you will be able to find. Forty years ago the concept of religion, even traditional Eastern religions, was forbidden. Now in the 21st century, Chinese people have gone from rejecting religions to accepting and allowing Western religions as a part of their culture. Judaism cannot rival Kentucky Fried Chicken in popularity, but it remains a growing institution in China’s culture. The simple fact that a Chabad organization is allowed to exist in the nation’s capital reflects the vast changes occurring in China’s politics, culture, and society.
Christine White (MSB), Fall 2009, Ireland

Returning from a family trip, I started to wonder if the urban-rural religious divide I witnessed was the universal trend of religion in Ireland. Casually speaking with my fellow classmates who were residents of Dublin City, it appeared that my suspicions were true in the sense that, similar to America, the overall dominance of religion in daily life was declining in major cities. It was much more of a major aspect of life in the countryside. However, this was not entirely the case. The prevalence of Christianity is still a major force all over Ireland. As the month of December approached, Christmas decorations and nativity scenes sprung up all over, even on the campus of the public University College Dublin, reminding me once again of the country I am in.

Richie Frohlichstein (COL), Fall 2009, Egypt

A new friend in Cairo, an Egyptian Muslim who has spent his entire life in the United States, gets truly excited every time a call to prayer is blasted from the loudspeakers. Inspired by his religiosity and deep connection with his faith, I decided to join him in his Ramadan observance by fasting from sun-up to sundown daily. I was faithful the entire month, never eating or drinking even water during daylight hours (a daunting task in the desert). Through fasting, I got a small taste of what it is like to live life in submission to God. Periodically, as during the time I visited the pyramids in the early September heat without water, I became nearly delusional. Part of Ramadan's aim is to show Muslims what it is like to be poor and hungry in a push for greater charity among the “haves” so as to improve the lot of the “have nots.” When I was rewarded at the end of each day with a large bottle of water straight from the refrigerator, I found myself in lockstep with my new Egyptian friend in thanking God for the gift of nourishment and refreshment at the end of our fast. Looking back, I actually miss the time of Ramadan, as it became deeply spiritual, even for me as a non-Muslim.

Virginia Vasser (COL), Fall 2009, Senegal

The story of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, a spiritual leader for the development of Islam in Senegal, makes me wonder what makes a man into a saint. What makes my host brother, who never saw or knew Amadou Bamba and who lives his own life in modern, urban Dakar, passionately love the man? Mourides love their founder in the way Christians love Jesus as the one who saved them and brought them close to God. What I still fail to explain or understand is the growing effect of his name on myself. A group of men may understandably gather to worship the man who brought Islam home to them, but what explains why a non-Muslim American girl follows them week after week, and sits off to the side in the darkness for two hours of singing with chills the entire time? Why does the “la ilaha il Allah” captivate me? Why was the mention of Sëriñ Tuubaa enough to dissipate my fear of capsizing on the rocks? I have no more of a personal connection to Cheikh Amadou Bamba than my host brother has to the prophet Mohamed (PBUH), and yet his residual charisma has an effect on me.
Students who live with host families while abroad often find that their conceptions of “traditional” families differ greatly from those around the world. Host families comprise multiple generations and define gender roles in different ways. What a student may see as gender inequality, his or her host family may see as a cultural norm. While some students found a different family structure, others also found a new family function. In the midst of social or cultural fragmentation, students discovered the family unit can provide a source of strength against adversity.

Alexandra Greco (COL), Spring 2010, France
My experience in Lyon has been far from anything that I had expected. Before arriving, I was sent a piece of paper describing my “host family.” I knew that upon arrival they would be different than expected, but I never pictured what was in store for me. I was indeed living in a cute room with a “petit balcon” with Mme. Bertrand, but little did I know I would be learning much more about other cultures and religion. All of her sons that were listed had moved out of the apartment, and had been replaced by renters of many cultures. When I arrived, a 19 year old French girl was here and a 25 year old Italian boy was staying in another room. A couple of days later, a 20 year old Colombian boy joined us, and the four of us soon became friends.

Pierre Thompson (SFS), Spring 2010, China
What puzzles me is why a modern Chinese person would even choose to worship at all. Precisely because China has undergone considerable economic and social upheaval in recent times, the Chinese have a strong reactionary desire to adopt religious world views that might reflect or uphold traditional Chinese values. One example concerns the condition of the family. The Chinese have long regarded the family as the most basic unit around which community should be organized, but changing economic incentives and social norms have resulted in the disintegration of the traditional family structure. Whereas thirty years ago it was common for three or four generations to live together under the same roof, today Chinese people often pursue individualistic lives that tear them apart from their family members. Most rural children, especially girls, will migrate to large cities to work in factories in the economic processing zones and return home typically once a year during the Spring Festival. Most urban children aspire to study or work overseas in a Western country, with no intention whatsoever of returning home. Under these circumstances, there is a strong need for families to redefine or enlarge the traditional concept of community. Communities built around faith can provide many people with a strong sense of social cohesion in an increasingly fragmented society.

Michelle Vanderwist (COL), Fall 2009, Chile
The unique characteristic of Catholicism in Santiago is the focus placed on the Virgin Mary, which is perhaps the biggest way in which my Chilean family differs from my North American one. During orientation, the program directors warned us with a laugh
that Chilean “Mamas” are “…muy mamá.” In other words, they’re very motherly. In the family, the mother does all the washing, cooking, cleaning, and daily household maintenance. It is not unusual for her children to live at home all through college and into their thirties, sometimes even after getting married! My host brothers are 22 and 26 years old, and my host mother still gathers all their laundry, makes their beds, and organizes their rooms every single day. This job eventually gets passed on to the wife, who takes care of her husband much the same way that his mother did. For example, my 22-year-old host brother has a serious long-term girlfriend. She cleans up his dishes, makes his sandwiches for him, and even wipes his eye boogers out randomly at the dinner table.

Katie Martin (SFS), Spring 2010, Ecuador

“Pray before you drive off, and don’t forget to ask God to protect you!” my host mom yells as my Ecuadorian brother and I sprint out the door. It’s just the typical start of another great week in Quito, Ecuador. After living in Ecuador for two months, I have become accustomed to the slightly concealed yet omnipresent importance of the Christian religion here. I have slowly taken note of the many Catholic motifs dispersed throughout most Ecuadorians’ daily routines. Consistently blessing family members each morning, admiring the various religious paintings featured throughout the house, and wearing rosaries at all hours of the day are just a few examples of how religion has permeated their daily lives.

Comment from Chris Kelley to Michelle Vanderwist

The family norms for young adults in Chile that Michelle mentions mirror family norms for young adults just across the border in Argentina. My house mom still took on the responsibility of cooking all the meals, washing their clothes, and cleaning the house even though all five of my siblings are all older than 16. Not only was I caught off guard by particular maturation ages and expectations within the family, but also that my family was equally astounded with U.S. norms for young adults. They couldn’t believe that kids in the U.S. essentially ‘move out’ when they are 18! Career apathy, unstructured social expectations, cultural implications regarding motherhood, and financial independence are all factors that affect family norms for young, Argentine adults and serve as a parallel to very similar factors exhibited in Chilean young adults.
Many students were challenged by encounters with gender inequality in their host countries. Many female students ran up against beliefs that men are superior to women, often supported by religious texts. One student argues that oppressive stances towards women’s rights do not originate from religious text, but from local traditions and culture. These experiences gave students the opportunity to reflect on their host culture’s views of women and those of the United States. What makes them different? How do these students work within these gender roles?

Jennifer Lang (COL), Spring 2010, Senegal

As a woman in this society, there is a certain limitation to my visibility and power. Women generally cover their legs, certainly above their knees. At meal times, my brothers sit on chairs while I sit on the floor. They eat with spoons or forks while I eat with my hands. My father is polygamous and spends half of his time with his other household. Instead of these inequities bothering me as I expected, my time in Dakar has been characterized by more complicated gender relations – highlighted most prominently by my experiences with nightlife. Unlike in the U.S. where boys are generally hesitant to ask girls to dance, often the Senegalese men simply take your wrist and pull you closer. The appropriate reaction to this gesture is to point at one of my local friends and proclaim “sama jekker” – “that’s my husband.” It is important to state that I never feel unsafe in the clubs, and instead the eyes of many have a sort of protective barrier. My position here, even though restrictive, has certain aspects I hope will return with me to the U.S. I am forced to be more patient, to emphasize the community over myself, and to listen before chattering. I hope I will return a better person, friend, and daughter because of my new-found understanding and tolerance.

Sarah Tucker (SFS), Spring 2010, Cameroon

In the wave of pride that I felt on National Women’s Day, I decided to engage men throughout the day in discussion about women’s role in society. That night on the bus ride home, a man asked me to marry him. Remembering previous chauvinistic comments made that day, and feeling sassy and full of feminine pride, I told him that the man I marry must see me as a perfect equal. He said that he and I were certainly equal, but women simply have their place in the home. Men are in charge of making big decisions, earning income, and being “chef du maison.” This conversation continued until another man stated firmly: “It is in the Bible. Men are superior to women, and the woman is submissive to him. It is an absolute truth.” Debriefing this conversation later with my host brother, I asked if a good Christian can believe in gender equality. He told me, “You can believe in gender equality, yes, as long as you know in your heart that your husband has slightly more competence than you.” Happy Women’s Day!
Maura Welch (SFS), Fall 2009, Jordan

It was not the first time in my life I heard the sentence, “I don’t believe in women’s rights.” But for the first time in my life, it was not a joke. Last week our Arabic professor informed us that we would be having a dialogue in class on women’s rights in Jordanian society. We were to discuss this issue with our Jordanian friends and host families, and then present our findings to the class. My host dad, Waleed, responded immediately saying, “I don’t believe in women’s rights.” This was definitely a statement I had never heard spoken without a facetious tone. It never even occurred to me that women’s rights are something optional. Waleed believes that women in Arab society should be confined to the home and their sole purpose in life should be to serve their husbands and their children. I asked him what he thought about me, as a woman who clearly wants to receive a good education and work in the future. His response: “You are from America, things are different there. But Arab women are different, it is necessary for them to remain in the home.”

Dena Soffer (COL), Spring 2010, Dominican Republic

Many non-Dominicans feel threatened by the Dominican piropo, finding it offensive, politically incorrect, and downright annoying. Indeed, the common practice of men of all ages calling out to women on the streets can be hard to accept as an outsider. In my time here, though, I have learned not to take the piropo comments personally, but to see them as the integral part of Dominican culture that they are. Some Dominican girls I know actually get upset about not receiving any piropos, taking it as a sign that they do not look good and that men are not interested in them. I have also spoken with Dominican girls who claim to “feel ugly” when they travel to the U.S. because no one calls out to them in the streets. After my first couple of weeks here, I have begun to occasionally hiss back when I am hissed at, which almost always garners a friendly laugh or two from the men on the street.

Comment from Maura Welch to Janice Shon

I think the largest difference [between Turkey and Syria] was the feeling of freedom, especially as a woman. In Jordan I had a curfew of 10pm and in general women are not usually seen out alone at night, and if they are it is not usually viewed as a good thing. In Istanbul, we felt completely comfortable walking around as three girls alone and even staying out until 12am playing backgammon at a café.
Immigration and Minority Issues

Georgetown, and the United States at large, place great importance on respecting cultural, ethnic and religious pluralism. The situation is often more complicated abroad. Religious or ethnic minorities often live separately from the mainstream culture, identified as the “other.” There is often mistrust of “outsiders” and an unwillingness to engage in dialogue.

Some countries find ways to celebrate diversity despite their histories. Common cultural practices and beliefs can overcome differences. Whatever the situation, these students have discovered the difficulties of promoting and sustaining cultural and religious pluralism. Their reflections offer a lens through which to examine our own treatment of immigrants and minorities in the United States.

Kent Strader (MSB), Spring 2010, England

In July 2008, the British Government published the draft of a new Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Bill that introduced a series of reforms to Britain’s immigration system. One significant proposal was the option for applicants to speed up their application for full citizenship/permanent residence by submitting evidence of “active citizenship” by pledging to volunteer in the local community. The use of volunteering as an immigration tool completely devalues its purpose. A volunteer should want to help a specific organization because it is an enjoyable experience rather than using it as a means to an end. If this fundamental purpose of volunteering is altered, it simply creates the perception of community building.

Jacalyn Bedard (COL), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, Spain

On the metro in Madrid, I’ve seen several women wearing the veil in public. Since the arrival of Muslim immigrants to Spain is more recent than it is in other European countries, Spain lacks legislation on whether public displays of religion are allowed. However, there have been a few isolated controversies over whether Muslim girls can wear the veil to public Spanish schools. After a candid discussion with Spanish students and the professor in one of my classes, we noted the distinction between how many countries in Europe, including Spain, have considered dealing with religious plurality versus how the United States has. Because the image of Islam has been a controversial topic of discussion in the Western world, it has been interesting to observe and hear about how Islam and Muslim citizens are viewed in Spain, especially in a country with such a unique Islamic past.

Eleanor Hughes (COL), Spring 2010, Spain

Before arriving in Spain, my only knowledge of “gypsies” came from Disney movies. Once in Spain, I learned the connection between these people and the popular flamenco dancing, and I came to identify them as the women that stand outside Spain’s churches, shoving rosemary branches in visitors’ faces and demanding “donations.” I had heard they were a marginalized group, but was unsure why they seemed to live so separately from the rest of Spanish society. Talking with my host mother, Maria, and doing web research gave me some insight into the complicated social and political situation
of the Roma people – their preferred name – in Spain. Maria described the sense of danger felt by many Spaniards when they enter Sevilla’s Roma neighborhood, and how “los gitanos” had destroyed the apartments given to them by the government. Opinions differ as to why the Roma are unable, or possibly unwilling, to integrate into modern Spanish society, and the topic is sure to cause controversy and social tension in years to come.

Chris Kelley (COL), Fall 2009, Argentina

To Argentines, there are no ‘Indios’ (Native Americans) in Argentina and there never were. Yet to this day there are a significant number of ‘indios’ in the interior of the country. The same goes for people of African American descent. Most porteños completely ignore their presence, although there are over 1.6 million African American Argentines. It has been fascinating to gradually discover that the melting pot mentality of Buenos Aires, like other cities around the world, does not equal its reputation. The Buenos Aires ports that operated flawlessly for the European immigrants have not been as welcoming to other more recent types of immigrants and races. The straightforward and blunt Argentines that I love are sometimes the same people that voice equally unequivocal racist comments.

Justin Hawkins (COL), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, Spain

It is difficult to say whether Protestantism will grow in the near future here in Spain. While there does seem to be strong disdain against the formal Church among the Spanish youth, especially after the religiously-tinged “dictatorship by the grace of God” led by General Franco until his death in 1973, religious frustration leads more students toward atheism and secularism than toward the Protestant alternative. Additionally, Spain has not been immune to the growing influence of Islam throughout Europe, and it is likely that the percentage of Muslims in this country will grow more steadily than the percentage of Protestants. Finally, the Catholic Church as a whole is not in any danger of collapsing in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the deck is stacked very strongly against the small Protestant community here, and their behavior provides a fascinating case study of a religious minority that can only be described as David against a whole family of Goliaths.

Yonatan Moskowitz (COL), Fall 2009, Egypt

In Cairo, Simchat Torah is celebrated a little differently than I have previously experienced. Here the festival is marked with a large cloud of indifference from the rest of the city, and with a yearly death rattle from the decomposing Jewish community hidden within it. The hand-ful of old women and men who make up the Jewish Community of Cairo drag themselves to their synagogue. They sit – sulking – in their empty, cavernous prayer-hall, just to remind the policemen forced to stand guard outside that they still exist. Perhaps most importantly, no one understands that there is no real Jewish Community of Cairo anymore. It’s all a charade. They play along because they don’t know how else to live. They’re just one more mirage in this vast, lonely Egyptian desert. The Jewish Community of Cairo has no substance. It is a real live ghost, content to just keep up appearances.

Lisa He (SFS), Fall 2009, China

Practicing Islam in a non-Muslim country, especially in China where people are apathetic toward religion, is inconceivably difficult. However, there are seven officially recognized mosques that only operate indoors. Every Friday, after prayer services, a plethora of Uighur and Hui vendors set up stands selling halal shashlik, a variety of imported dried nuts and fruits, nan bread, and small gifts. When the Huxi mosque calls the prayer to a close, devout believers enthusiastically crowd the streets speaking in variants of Uighur dialects that I simply can’t comprehend. Despite China’s oppressiveness, a diverse, multi-faceted Muslim culture still perseveres. Although there is a certain level of rigid tension between the Muslim community and the greater Chinese community, I have found that through Halal food the two cultures can find a common ground.

Nayha Arora (SFS), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, England

Jack Straw, of the Labour Party, suggested during Question Time that the British National Party’s (BNP) rising popularity is not a sign of a shift in British values. He considers the BNP part of the trend in British politics of fringe parties on the right “defining themselves against the others – first against the Jews, then the Irish, then the Afro-Caribbeans, and now against the Muslims.” In that statement he may have been attempting to diminish the credibility of the BNP, but he also managed to call Muslims “the other” and upset an audience member by using the term Afro-Caribbean instead of African-Caribbean. This slip of tongue and the surprising success of the BNP in the June elections are both reminders of how insidious cultural arrogance and threats to pluralism can creep into a society.

Matt Collins (COL), Spring 2010, Scotland

There is a longstanding idea in human culture of “the other” – that there must always be someone else unlike a group of people to define just what that group stands for. So if America can draw this line at skin color – an idea that I am not upholding; I am simply observing our nation’s unfortunate history of racial oppression and the continued socioeco- nomic disparity between whites and nonwhites – Scotland has more
Katie Radaeva (SFS), Spring 2010, Belgium
In Brussels, a city that hosts delegates from all over the world every week, the fact that a section of the population remains isolated is troubling. While students at universities say that they attempt to integrate with the Muslim population, Muslim students say that is sometimes a difficult feat to achieve. To Belgian students, this idea of a separate population existing in their city is more frightening than the ideas of either extremism or religion. While a large part of the young population unabashedly proclaims their atheism, they do not shun those who believe. But while open-mindedness is generally considered an asset, it also gives rise to some of the friction that exists between the two populations. The natives of Brussels see this segregation in their own city as a rejection of the culture and history of Brussels. Since the students cannot confirm or deny what they hear about Muslims in the news or through heresay, it breeds a sense of distrust. The Bruxellois thrive on discussion, but what a dialogue cannot happen, stereotypes thrive.

Katherine Relle (COL), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, England
Some would call London ‘a world in one city,’ as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, and various other minority religions all inhabit the same urban space under one title: Londoner. Yet, I wonder how these religions exist under this same name. I have found that there is a passive existence, partly due to the English language, as well as the invisibility factor that comes from London’s large population and ethnic comfort found in the city’s multi-cultural cuisines. The common language seems to make it easier for other cultures to accept those that are different, as religious differences are taken off the forefront for first impressions and self-constructed individual images. When I rode the Tube, I realized that people spent most of their time in the Underground without ever exchanging a glance with another individual. It seems to follow that religions are able to coexist in London because it is easy for a person to become invisible, or ‘lost in the crowd.’

Comment from Prof. Corey Campion to Katherine Relle
The function of a common language in London is interesting, for it allows residents of all geographic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds to interact on a daily basis. At the same time, however, the city’s demographics appear to discourage interaction and provide solitude to those individuals for whom transcultural exchange is undesirable. What then is the true effect of a common language? Does the use of English inspire Londoners to explore and negotiate cultural and religious differences or does the language provide only a tool with which to perform the basic tasks of daily life?

Comment from Prof. Deborah Baker to Katie Radaeva
Katie Radaeva’s remarks on the peaceful, if separatist, coexistence between the native Bruxellois and the city’s Muslim population suggest a sharp contrast with the recent explosive and destructive character of these religious and social dichotomies in France.

Comment from Meghan Flaherty to Katie Radaeva
Living in Amman I’ve learned that atheism is something that the Muslim community here neither understands nor tolerates very well. During orientation before moving into our homestays, we American students were told that if we were agnostic or atheist, it would be better not to mention it. If asked, we should avoid a direct answer by saying “my parents are Christian.” Katie Radaeva’s letter made me wonder whether this faith versus non-faith divide might be part of the reason behind the seemingly voluntary segregation of the Muslim communities in Brussels.

Jamie O’Neill (NHS), Fall 2009, South Africa
Today, nearly 15 years after the end of the apartheid government in South Africa, power, wealth, land, and resources are not yet evenly distributed, with the white population still gripping the reigns of South Africa’s economic strength. Fortunately, amongst the many social and political ills that still plague the nation, religion is not one of them. A mostly Catholic and Protestant nation, religious freedom and diversity is openly accepted and expressed in today’s South Africa. A wander around Cape Town’s city center may easily take you past St. George’s Roman Catholic Cathedral, the South African Jewish Museum, countless Muslim restaurants, and numerous Protestant Churches.
Many students were fascinated by the interplay between tradition and modernity they observed in their host countries. History learned from a textbook suddenly became vividly alive and tangible—events of the distant past proved to be more relevant to the daily life of their new countries than many expected. Students noted important connections between a country’s past and their present experiences, such as the very real presence of a tumultuous and violent past in Ireland and Argentina. Finding a place for “traditional” religion in modern life fascinated students in Japan, Turkey, and France. In South Africa, students noticed how people sought to reject the past rooted in conflict and division, while in the United Kingdom, they wrote about how firmly the British embraced their historical traditions as a past inextricably linked with their present national identity.

Adam Wilson (COL), Fall 2009, South Africa
Many of my South African friends have abstained from loyalty to any party, as they have yet to see any that truly represents their values, both in politics and in personal standards. I feel that such a history rooted in fighting for respect, rights, and success for one’s self and one’s group cannot be forgotten, even as that success materializes. And when that success has only existed for 15 years, it is much harder to break from constantly recognizing and honoring the efforts that have made your reality much more different than what it could have been. South Africa is a country significantly and inextricably tied to its history, where its past is not as distant as in other democratic nations.

Jeff Morshed (SFS), Spring 2010, England
If the British mentality I observe is prevalent elsewhere in the country, then the hearts and minds of citizens will still be subservient to the Queen before the European Union. British citizens will continue following the personalities of the Conservative Party, Labour Party, and Liberal Democrats before they open up The Guardian column on Turkish accession to the EU. They will cling to the pound and mock the euro, at least while Angela Merkel and George Papandreou struggle to reach a viable and sustainable solution to the Greek debt crisis. Retaining their British identity is paramount to citizens, and it doesn’t seem as though it will change. At the onset of World War II, the idea of a European Union seemed farcical. However, sixty-five years later, it is a political fact and reality. Given this, identities can change as well. So perhaps a European identity can emerge in time. This much is true for now: if you told a British student that within two to three generations, a European identity will prevail over a British one, he or she would just laugh and say that the Liberal Democrats have a better shot at winning the next election.

Scott Breen (COL), Fall 2009, Scotland
Religion had a major influence on the unification of England and Scotland, but today that reasoning no longer exists. The Scots that I talked to did not reference religion when talking about the history of the United Kingdom. Rather, they talk about the
economic reasons behind the merger and argue that there were devious deals going on behind the scenes. They especially seem to resent that the United Kingdom is accruing so much wealth from the oil in the North Sea off the Scottish coast. I think this has resulted in a pervasive feeling among the people of Scotland that they should be an independent nation. This sentiment is manifest in the considerable influence the Scottish National Party (SNP) commands in the Scottish National Parliament. The SNP’s main issue is pushing for an independent Scotland.

Lauren Meigs (COL), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, Ireland

In Ireland, with only a handful of years separating the present from the bloody Troubles, everyone is very careful about religion. My contemporary Irish fiction course was packed with literature haunted by this recent past. Yet, while week after week we read these powerful stories of anguish and pain fueled by religious and political discontent, we never specifically discussed the direct catalyst of these works. We never ventured into the murky area of dissecting the Troubles themselves or the theme of religious furor. The authors themselves wrote cautiously. The Irish respect the power of remembered history. They pay tribute to the victims, and they memorialize their own experiences. But they have learned, with the ever-present memories of the recent past burning in their minds, to tread very, very carefully. In their minds and hearts, they know that mindless passion could lead down the bloody road to future Troubles.

Christine White (MSB), Fall 2009, Ireland

Ireland’s religious conflicts are not exactly ancient history. During a school trip up to the Northern Ireland capital of Belfast, I was able to see just how deep the Catholic-Protestant tensions once were. Fences and gates remained from where the city was strictly split between the two sects. Homes near the border still even had iron bars covering their first floor windows for extra protection from bombings and explosions. While our tour was assured that the violence is over, it is hard to forget the tensions that existed not too many years ago.

Caitlin Fross (SFS), Fall 2009, Senegal

The vein of Brotherhood Sufi Islam that runs through Senegal is unique to this country and is intricately woven into the social fabric. Nevertheless, the recent emancipation of this nation means that remnants of the colonial period still linger, and pieces of the French legacy remain intact. So while the Senegalese eagerly reach for their own history, they must continue to balance their European heritage with their more nationalist aspirations. Despite the apparent division, many citizens successfully blend the two systems – French and Senegalese – into a single lifestyle. Children can attend both Koranic and French schools and people openly discuss and debate the merits of polygamy. The greatest differences in Senegal manifest, not out of disparate faiths, but from how the Senegalese choose to take the
two systems – French and Wolof, European and African – and fashion a third alternative and make it their own.

**David Baran (SFS), Spring 2010, Argentina**

Here in Argentina, today, the 24th of March, has special meaning for nearly every Argentine, as it marks the anniversary of the military dictatorship’s 1976 coup d’état of the Argentine state. Named Día Nacional de la Memoria por la Verdad y la Justicia, or National Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice, it stands to remember not only the numerous human rights violations and lives claimed by the various military juntas between 1976 and 1983, but also all victims of political oppression in Argentina’s history. The victims are remembered as ‘desaparecidos’ or ‘the disappeared’ because many of the said victims would simply vanish, never heard from again after they were suddenly and silently seized by public officials. A national commission shortly after the fall of the dictatorship found that at least 9,000 ‘disappeared,’ however human rights organizations have placed the number as high as 30,000. In order to remember this tragedy in Buenos Aires, Argentines flood the streets around the Congress and march to the Plaza de Mayo, where the President’s office resides. Today, the government promotes the holiday and encourages the country to remember all victims.

**Justine Underhill (COL), Spring 2010, Japan**

Honorable suicides started in Japan in the form of seppuku (stomach cutting), a ritual originally used by samurai warriors as a part of an honor code to allow a warrior to die with respect, rather than be captured or killed by the enemy. Japanese suicide was brought to America’s attention in World War II by the kamikaze fighters: these fighters would rig their planes with bombs and explosives and dive into enemy ships. Japan does not criminalize suicide, unlike many U.S. states where attempting suicide is an offense that could lead to arrest or seizure of property. Insofar as legal codes are a reflection of society’s values, this reinforces the notion that suicide is tolerated amongst the Japanese. Furthermore, Japan’s most popular religions, Shinto and Buddhism, have no proscription against suicide while in contrast Christianity, Judaism, and Islam do prohibit suicide.

**Jennifer Dixon (COL), Fall 2009, Scotland**

Despite the seemingly seamless manner in which the past and the present were molded together throughout the city and culture of Glasgow, I slowly began to discover that the remnants of the past which had so dazzled me upon arrival were merely remnants for many of the Scottish people. Upon investigation, I discovered that both the Christian Union and the Catholic Chaplaincy are run almost entirely by international students. Considering the history of Glasgow and the emphasis on tradition in welcoming new students, I was immensely surprised to discover that the traditions that seemed to be a part of Glasgow Uni were rather more like impressions from without than traditions from within. These groups put on Ceilidhs (traditional Scottish dancing) for many of their social events and yet, the only Scotsmen present were those demonstrating the dances.

**Viba Saligrama (MSB), Fall 2009, Ireland**

“The Dúit!” (Classic Irish greeting). The translation is, may God be with you. The appropriate response is, “Dia is Muire duit” – May God and Mary be with you. The first thought running through my head is “wow, that is a lot like the Hindi/Sanskrit greeting of Namaste” – I bow to the God within you. The continued use of the Irish language is a source of pride. The language is considered the first official language and is the language of the government, which represents another way the Irish like to prove their independence from English. The language originated in the 4th century as a means for Irish scribes to annotate Latin religious manuscripts in their own language. According to the 2006 Statement on the Irish Language, 42% of the population has the ability to speak the language, but only 3% converse in it on a daily basis. Although all of the signs are written in Irish and English in Dublin, I have yet to hear a casual conversation in Irish. The desire to speak the language is dwindling, and I think religiosity is facing a similar trend.

**Janice Shon (SFS), Fall 2009, Turkey**

The tension between Islam and the modernization intents of Atatürk is found in Turkish political and cultural society more than 70 years after the founding of the modern republic. The devotion to Islam for many Turkish citizens may be difficult
to balance with the secular ideals and goals of their national hero, Atatürk. On a macro level, the society is trying to present itself to western countries, especially those in the European Union, as a progressive, modern, and in effect, secular country. My observations in Turkey have allowed me to appreciate the unique situation in Turkey, and have given me a better understanding of Islam and governance. Ultimately, the relationship between Islam and government in Turkey speaks of the larger struggle that many governments, and individual people, of the world confront.

Caitlin Sudman (COL), Spring 2010, France
The French look at Muslim veils and see oppression. They see women who have been forced to hide themselves from the world, usually by men. On the other hand, when I see someone wearing a veil, particularly when I’m on Georgetown’s campus, I say to myself, “wow, that woman’s really sticking by her guns…good for her!” Though the French may be taking them to substandard living conditions and then threw them in prisons like Robben Island when they protested such conditions? Current politics in South Africa may be contentious and the nation continues to have a crime problem, but there are not daily race riots, which one might expect after such an oppressive history. Part of this seemingly paradoxical reality can be attributed to the actions of Mandela and the Government of National Unity following the fall of apartheid, and what eventually amounted to an institutionalization of an inherently religious concept: forgiveness. Although Mandela had been imprisoned unjustly for almost two decades, he did not leave Robben Island clamoring for the blood, or even the subjugation of those who had put him there. Instead, he advocated forgiveness and a unified nation.

Comment from Michael Ang to Caitlin Sudman
The Middle East remains deeply divided with regards to the issue of veiling. The general consensus amongst my Muslim friends is that the veil is more a cultural remnant rather than a strictly religious one. However, there is a great degree of contrast between the style of veiling even among the conservative Gulf countries. In Qatar, many girls studying at these American institutions wear form fitting abayas adorned with jewels and elaborate embroidery. They are known as the “abaya hotties,” and the interesting styles of dressing is perhaps symbolic of the uneasy crossroads that Qatar finds itself – halfway between conservative Bedouin tribalism and the liberal sirens of modernity.

Katie Suter (COL), Spring 2010, South Africa
I began to wonder – how did Nelson Mandela leave prison and then work together with the very people who incarcerated him? On a more macro level, how has the black population of South Africa come to live alongside the people who subjected the wrong route to fix their perceived problem, I find it fascinating to look at the different ways that human rights can be perceived. Equality and liberty mean so much to the French that they’re willing to make laws about the way people dress in public; it’s a concept of civil liberties that is almost completely opposite to how we perceive them in the States.

Comment from Jeff Morshed to Katie Suter
I think your point about the politics of forgiveness is a lesson that many leaders can learn from as they traverse turbulent politics in their own countries. I find, when looking at history and political events, that Mandela understood a fundamental human concept that resonates in the political arena as much as it does in our daily lives: alienation festers civil unrest and tension. Two other leaders that failed to really embrace the politics of forgiveness are Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh after the 1971 Bangladesh War for Independence and Paul Bremer in the 2003 Iraq War.

Michael Ang (SFS), Spring 2010, Qatar
My running shoes have been steadily chalking up “frequent-runner” miles in various countries in the Middle East. They have seen action in the old medina in Fes as well as the main boulevard in Doha. However, the run along the Muttrah Coniche in Oman has thus far been my most memorable and exhilarating run. The run along the Muttrah Coniche is lined with a series of old Portuguese forts that function as useful distance markers. They are interesting vestiges of Oman’s colorful history, a reminder of Oman’s important location as a vital trade hub and rest stop for weary traders from Zanzibar or India.
Students observed that religion plays a central role in the lives of people around the world. But many found that religious belief and religious practice are not the same thing. In many countries, people identify culturally with a particular religion but are not strict adherents to its teachings. In some cases, this reality challenged the students’ notions of a country’s religious identity. What accounts for this disparity? Some students argue that the divide is generational, while others cite increasing commercialization, globalization or post-modernity in the 21st century. These experiences define a new framework with which to analyze culture and religious practice, and raise new questions about the role of religion in society.

Lacey Herchek (COL), Spring 2010, Australia

Religion in Australia is nuanced as it is in many parts of the world. It is sacred, diverse, and exploited all at the same time. Though the best word to describe Australian religion is probably secular, it is nearly impossible to use one word for defining such a large concept. Intrinsically, religion is an important part of life for many Australians. Extrinsically, strong religious undercurrents affect how religion is perceived by Aussies and other inhabitants of the sun-burnt country.

Andrew Dubbins (COL), Spring 2010, Italy

I’m used to standing out like a sore thumb here in Italy, but the feeling was particularly pronounced in Fiesole’s San Romolo Church for two major reasons. First, the North Face Jacket is a dead giveaway – I may as well drape myself in the American flag or wear Mickey Mouse ears. And second, I was one of about 4 people there under the age of thirty. The congregation tilted heavily toward elderly men and women. The high school and college demographic was significantly underrepresented. After some research, I found that this is emblematic of many Italian congregations. Younger churchgoers have dropped off, and pew space now goes to the older fur-wearing crowd – when the pews fill up at all.

Sarah Stern (COL), Fall 2009, China

Since the reforms of Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970’s, religion has slowly reemerged in parts of China, but people who identify with a religion are still few and far between, especially in the major cities. The religious struggles in China over the past few years have been highly publicized in the West; most people know about the tension and violence in Tibet and Xinjiang and the sometimes brutal suppression of the Falun Gong throughout China. I have tried to ask students at my university about their reactions to these clashes, but no one has anything to say about it. At first I thought that there must be an implicit understanding that no one discusses anything controversial, and was amazed at how much students balked at talking about religion. However, after being here more than a month, the overall impression I get is one of apathy for these people’s struggles.
Carmela Bulacan (MSB), Fall 2009, Spain

Barcelona is known for its modernist and progressive style, as well as its distinction in Spain as a strong commercial center. The city is decorated with many buildings which display the modernist relics of architects like Antoni Gaudi and houses many modern art museums of artists like Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró. There are also liberal laws within Spain that contribute to the more progressive style of the city, such as the legalization of gay marriage, which is radical for a predominantly Catholic country. This liberal law passed in 2005 portrays evidence of Spain’s movement away from its Catholic roots, while 80% of Spanish citizens identify as Catholic, only 20% actually attend church regularly.

Sara Ann Levine (SFS), Spring 2010, Spain

I have come to understand that religion is not something that people practice in Spain. It is more that religion is simply a part of the Spanish heritage and therefore a part of the people. The pride for their history can be perceived as a pride for religion, when the real reason behind that perception is the connection that religion and history have had in Spain. This doesn’t make Spaniards a non-religious people. On the contrary, there are devout Catholics in Madrid. However it has been my experience that the number is slowly diminishing. In the younger generations you are more likely to meet someone who identifies as a member of the Catholic Church, but isn’t practicing. It is a part of their identity, but not a defining part.

Annie Cruickshank (COL), Spring 2010, England

Despite the perceived difficulty of large-scale Catholic initiatives in London, the English culture still breeds an ‘underground’ style of spiritual practice: religious tradition is present, but hidden from the public eye. I developed this opinion through my involvement with the London-based Newman House, a center that provides Catholic services for students. The Sunday services at the Newman House struck me as quite unusual. The chapel was located on the ground floor of the House, the dimly lit atmosphere surrounded by grey brickwork. This reserved environment combined with the people sprinkling into the chapel individually made it seem as though I was part of the weekly meetings of a secretive group. The large turnout of students convinced me that there still exists a general practice of faith tradition despite it being private and secluded in nature.
Global Development

Slums. Stunning disparity between rich and poor. Environmental degradation. The challenge of obtaining adequate education and health care. The true costs of surviving in today’s world. Many students spent their time abroad in places far from well-developed European capitals, and encountered the above issues and more that challenged their perceptions on global development. Reflecting on their role as privileged Westerners in places that lacked the advantages they took for granted at home, many reflected on how faith could be used to empower and improve the lives of those in poverty.

Sean Caselli (COL), Fall 2009, South Africa
I was struck by Cape Town’s three great identities: developed city, natural paradise, and third world slum. I had begun my day with breakfast at a café on Long Street in the Cape Town city center, surrounded by bistros, shops, urban gardens, markets, and grocery stores. Driving east on the N2 across the ‘Cape Flats’ our van passed through Khayelitsha. Khayelitsha is one of the most squalid and overcrowded informal settlements in all of Africa; home to approximately two million Capetonians, two-thirds of the city’s entire population. Thirty minutes past Khayelitsha, we reached the start of an outdoorsman’s paradise. Hiking across mountain passes, wading through rivers, and swimming below waterfalls with an Irish woman who worked as an adventure magazine editor, three British tourists, and a couple of South African guides, the landscape gave no indication of its proximity to the modern Cape Town city center or the impoverished Khayelitsha township.

Katalyn Voss (SFS), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, Thailand/New Zealand
My final days in Thailand were spent in collaboration with a small, rural community in the northeastern province of Loei in Thailand. The village I worked with, Na Nong Bong, has seen its life utterly destroyed. In 2004, Tungkum Limited, a mining company, began operations of a goldmine approximately one kilometer away from the village. Since the start of operations, both the ground and surface waters of the region have become contaminated, the farm yields have consistently declined and the villages have experienced numerous health problems, such as cyanide poisoning. Many have left the village for Bangkok or other cities. But many remain on their land, their heritage, and continue to fight for their basic human rights to food, health and, most
importantly, water. In Thai society, Buddhism seeps beyond the
daily lives of individuals and into the fundamental operations
of the country. A community such as Na Nong Bong can draw
on Buddhist principles to communicate its struggle to a broader
audience and garner support for its cause. Two of the main ten-
ants of Buddhism, compassion and the interconnectedness of all
human beings, can be used to incite action from others.

Monica Scheid (SFS), Fall 2009/Spring 2010, Argentina

The differences between public post-secondary
education in the United States and Argentina
are notable. In the U.S., public universities are
generally less prestigious than private institu-
tions and applications for entrance are judged
by a rigid set of criteria. The cost of a college
education is increasing at a rapid rate. According to the 2009 Col-
lege Board annual report on the price of getting a college educa-
tion, in-state students at public four-year colleges and universities
pay on average $7,020 in tuition and fees ($8,193 including room
and board) every year. In Argentina, by contrast, the best university
is public, open to all, and free of charge. Because there is no tuition
and entrance is open to all, UBA students vary in age, background
and every variable imaginable.

Chelsea Rice (NHS), Spring 2010, Australia

While in Australia, I definitely noticed how
much more environmentally-conscious the
rest of the world is. I was initially disappointed
to find no drying machine in my apartment
upon my arrival. After speaking with some
locals, I discovered that this is typical. Signs
in front of the elevator suggest taking the stairs as a good form of
exercise and a way to save energy. All of the toilets have the option
to flush the full amount of water, or only half. There are so many
little changes we can make in our daily habits that produce a great
benefit for the environment. While there is certainly a big green
movement in the U.S., it is incomparable to that of Australia.

Victoria Handley (COL), Fall 2009/Spring 2010,
Turkey/South Africa

During my year abroad, I had a series of
illnesses that weren’t terribly serious, but did
require medical attention. One aspect of re-
ceiving health care in both of the locations
that I visited that truly struck me was the
cost. In Turkey, citizens receive free health
care, and in South Africa the same is true, although the health
care, at least in the area that I was living in, did not seem to be
adequate for those who had to seek care at a free clinic. As a
foreigner I paid for my health care. I made a laundry list of the
visits that I had made over the past ten months: In Turkey, five
visits to the hospital, two blood tests, an ultrasound, and an X-ray; in South Africa, one student clinic visit and one emergency
clinic visit, accompanied by an IV drip. When I added to all of
that the medications that I paid for in both countries, totaling
six prescriptions, all of my medical expenses for the year cost
me much less than five hundred dollars. It was certainly a shock
to come back to the U.S. and realize that health care was no
longer as accessible for me as it was when I was abroad.

Laura Shen (COL), Spring 2010, Kenya

I came to Africa three months ago to learn about development
and to make a difference. I pictured myself collecting loans and
evaluating the feasibility of extending credit to new customers
for an established micro-finance institution. Instead, I work
with a grassroots non-governmental organ-
ization teaching 27-year-old women from
Nairobi’s informal settlements how to save
the equivalent of one dollar a week, in order
to open a juice stand. It hasn’t been easy.
I find it challenging to work in a country
that is divided along tribal lines, whose
government is riddled with corruption, and where the GNP per
capita is under $1,600 compared to the United States’, which
hovers near $50,000. I constantly question what development
means and how to measure if I am making a difference, but as
I watched the disabled performers at a show in Nyumbani Vil-
lage and noted the environment that surrounded the modest
outdoor amphitheatre, it made sense. I am an outsider observ-
ing their lives from a jaded Western point-of-view, but for that
moment, I saw what I believe is development.
The Global Economy

Few college students today see returning to live at home with their parents after graduation as the ideal scenario. Yet because of the lengthy downturn in the global economy, this is a situation that has now become a reality for many U.S. students. In other countries, living at home until well into one’s thirties to save money has long been the norm for many young people, as JYAN students quickly discovered. The prolonged effects of the economic crisis manifested themselves in many ways abroad, and while the situation remains discouraging, students also noticed the strengthening of important societal bonds such as solidarity with one’s neighbors and the willingness to give.

**Melanie Pitkin (SFS), Fall 2009, Argentina**

The people of Buenos Aires give money to beggars not only on the street, but also on the subway, in restaurants, and in the supermarket. In some situations, it even seems that those that don’t give are being judged as selfish; they are not giving because they are rich. What I see the Argentines give usually amounts to less than an American quarter, and those who give often don’t appear to have much to spare. Despite the setbacks of the economic crisis, the concept of solidarity is still alive and well in the Argentine culture. Many economists now blame the economic collapse of 2001 on the excesses of the previous decades of welfare-style state. Based on these analyses, it is difficult to say if the spirit of solidarity is going to play a significant role in helping Argentina recover from economic collapse. However, this concept does seem to play an important role in holding the society together during difficult times.

**Mike McCormick (COL), Fall 2009, Italy**

Soon after arriving in Florence, Italy I met a 22-year-old Italian college student named Marco who still lives with his parents. Marco’s case is typical of Italians under 30, approximately 80 percent of whom (the majority being men) still live with their
parents. These young men are referred to as “Mammoni,” which literally means “big mama’s boys.” What can account for such high numbers of young Italians staying at home into their late twenties? One might guess that typical doting Italian mothers who don’t want to let their babies go might be responsible. However, taking a closer look, it becomes apparent that economic factors are more likely to be the cause the growing number of mammoni. Recently the Italian job market has been particularly unfriendly to young people. And the current economic recession has caused a significant rise in Italy’s unemployment rate, creating even fewer opportunities for young people. So perhaps the next time Marco’s girlfriend complains about his living situation he will respond, “It’s not me, it’s the economy.”

Marisa DeAngelis (SFS), Spring 2010, China

Young workers, faced with the choice of a lifetime ahead filled with long working hours, social isolation, dismal working conditions, and little chance of reuniting with their families, often feel that the best choice for them and their families was suicide. Personally, I found this logic demoralizing. Still, I couldn’t help but sympathize with the workers, who at the young age of 18 or 19, indenture themselves to a lifetime of dormitory life, harsh rules, and limited opportunities for job mobility. I also understand their strong desire to pull their families out of economic poverty and the overwhelming loss and depression that they must feel upon leaving their families. Is this what industrialization has done to China? When a company as large as Foxconn dominates the local economy, does the potential conflict of interest prevent employers from assuming their moral obligation of providing a safe working environment? Where is the accountability?

David Baran (SFS), Spring 2010, Argentina

Nearly a decade has passed since the economic crisis of 2001 that devastated Argentina, but here in Buenos Aires there are still many visible effects of that difficult time. With the unemployment rate during the crisis reaching nearly 25% at its worst, Argentines were forced to find alternatives to traditional jobs. Many of those creative means to earn money are still quite prevalent in the nation’s capital today. Perhaps the most visible sign of the lingering effect of the crisis is the numerous cartoneros that scour the streets in search of recyclable materials that they can sell for small amounts of money. During the crisis, as people lost their jobs, some turned to the life of a cartonero in order to survive. While the sight of a cartonero was much more uncommon beforehand, some estimates placed the number of cartoneros in Buenos Aires immediately following the crisis at 40,000. While that number is markedly less today, many still make their living sorting through the city’s trash.
JYAN students often unexpectedly found themselves playing the role of U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, China, or Australia, particularly during the excitement surrounding President Obama’s inauguration. “Yes We Can!” and “Obama!” were common greetings heard on the streets of Syria to the cabs of Cairo. When called upon to defend or explain their country, students sought to go beyond stereotypes of the United States as the land of “McDonalds, Obama, and Beyoncé” and work to combat misunderstandings through the bridges of friendship and knowledge with their foreign hosts.

Sarah Gardiner (SFS), Spring 2010, Cameroon
Here, I am starting to realize just how much the November 2008 election was felt around the world. I am starting to realize that “Yes, we can” holds a lot of meaning for people geographically far removed from America. I’ve been having a hard time reconciling the symbolic power my president holds for a lot of people with other perceptions of America and Americans. In a shared taxi today, a man told me that, “Americans like force. They like being the most powerful. They want everyone else to be beneath them.” People here frequently assume that, as an American, I am incredibly wealthy and that I and my country should use this wealth to make the world a more equitable place. On more than one occasion, I have been asked why the American embassy here doesn’t do more to hold President Biya accountable for his actions. “Why doesn’t your ambassador speak out more against Biya?”

Meghan Flaherty (SFS), Spring 2010, Jordan
It was very interesting to read about the wide popular knowledge of Obama in Cameroon. Though not many Jordanians would write “Yes we can!” on their car bumpers, I have received the same shouts of “Obama!” intended to grab my attention
on the street. In addition to politics, it’s interesting to note the similarities of America’s cultural presence around the world: Beyoncé can definitely be heard in Jordan as well. Although the McDonalds here sells a ‘McArabia’, it’s still an American McDonalds, and the locals are very aware of that – when the U.S. makes a policy decision that’s unpopular with the Jordanians, the university students will boycott the McDonalds as a sign of protest. I think America must be a bit of a puzzle for others to figure out if its representative images abroad are its foreign policy, McDonalds, Obama, and Beyoncé.

Marisa DeAngelis (SFS), Spring 2010, China
Along with the Obama administration, a new wave of patriotism at home and acceptance of Americans abroad is on the horizon. I arrived in China during what seemed to be an “Obama craze,” in which the President was greeted with the same celebrity status as Lady Gaga. I witnessed a high level of American support from the laobaixing, or common people, penetrating all the way to remote areas of central and western China, where many are indifferent to events in their own capital. I contrast my experiences abroad from two different administrations and I ask myself, what does this say for the future reputation of the U.S., specifically our soft power? Do our ambassadorial works abroad become insignificant if our elected leader is unpopular? How can we work to combat misunderstandings?

Jackie Aanonsen (MSB), Fall 2009, Australia
Initially, I assumed that I would be treated with a bit of disdain from Australians because I have visited other countries where Americans are not welcomed. However, when an Australian hears my American accent, they immediately want to talk to me. It is a breath of fresh air to feel so welcomed in another country. Australian Politics is my favorite class at the University of Sydney. I am one of the two American students in my tutorial made up of twenty students; therefore, I figured that I would not have much to say compared to the Australian students. However, my professor enjoys comparing the Australian and American government systems for at least half of the class. The Australian students and even the professor treat me as the liaison to understanding the United States.
2009-2010 JYAN
STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Jackie Aanonsen
Major: Finance and International Business, McDonough School of Business
Hometown: Greenwich, Connecticut
Host Country: Australia
Host University: University of Sydney
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Michael Ang
Major: Middle East Regional Studies, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Singapore
Host Country: Qatar
Host University: School of Foreign Service-Qatar
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Nayha Arora
Major: International Political Economy, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Host University: London School of Economics
Length of Stay: Academic Year

David Baran
Major: International Political Economy, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Independence, Ohio
Host Country: Argentina
Host University: La Universidad de Buenos Aires
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Jacalyn Bedard
Major: Spanish, Georgetown College
Hometown: Westford, Massachusetts
Host Country: Spain
Host University: Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Scott Breen
Major: Political Economy, Georgetown College
Hometown: Northbrook, Illinois
Host Country: United Kingdom
Host University: Edinburgh University
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Carmela Bulacan
Major: Accounting and Operations and Information Management
Hometown: Pompton Lakes, New Jersey
Host Country: Spain
Host University: Escuela Superior de Comercio Internacional (ESCI) and CIEE
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Sean Caselli
Major: Government, Georgetown College
Hometown: Stony Brook, New York
Host Country: South Africa
Host University: University of Cape Town
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Matthew Collins
Major: Economics and Music, Georgetown College
Hometown: Allentown, Pennsylvania
Host Country: United Kingdom
Host University: University of Glasgow
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Annie Cruickshank
Major: English, Georgetown College
Hometown: Akron, Ohio
Host Country: United Kingdom
Host University: University College London
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Marisa DeAngelis
Major: Regional and Comparative Studies, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Mamaroneck, New York
Host Country: China
Host University: Nanjing University in China
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Jennifer Dixon
Major: English and Theology, Georgetown College
Hometown: Royal Oak, Michigan
Host Country: United Kingdom
Host University: University of Glasgow
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Andrew Dubbins
Major: Government and English, Georgetown College
Hometown: Los Angeles, California
Host Country: Italy
Host University: Georgetown University Villa le Balze
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Laura Fayer
Major: Chinese, Georgetown College
Hometown: Larchmont, New York
Host Country: China
Host University: Peking University
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Meghan Flaherty
Major: Comparative Regional Studies of Latin America and the Middle East, School of Foreign
Service  
Hometown: Seattle, Washington  
Host Country: Jordan  
Length of Stay: Academic Year  

Richie Frohlichstein  
Major: Spanish, Georgetown College  
Hometown: St. Louis, Missouri  
Host Country: Egypt  
Host University: American University in Cairo  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Elisabeth Harvey  
Major: English and German, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Dennysville, Maine  
Host Country: Germany  
Host University: Ludwig Maximilians Universitat  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Justin Hawkins  
Major: Theology and Spanish, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Breinigville, Pennsylvania  
Host Country: Spain  
Host University: la Universidad de Salamanca and la Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca  
Length of Stay: Academic Year  

Maria Hayden  
Major: Science, Technology and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Dallas, Texas  
Host Country: Morocco  
Host University: Al-Akhawayn University  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Lisa He  
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: New York, New York  
Host Country: China  
Host University: CIEE-East China Normal University  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Lacey Herchek  
Major: Psychology, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Concord, Massachusetts  
Host Country: Australia  
Host University: University of New South Wales  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Eleanor Hughes  
Major: Psychology, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Host Country: Spain  
Host University: CIEE Palacio and University of Seville  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Chris Kelley  
Major: Mathematics, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Wilton, Connecticut  
Host Country: Argentina  
Host University: La Universidad de Buenos Aires and la Pontificia Universidad  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Jennifer Lang  
Major: Government and French, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois  
Host Country: Senegal  
Host University: Suffolk University Dakar  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Sara Ann Levine  
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Huntington Woods, Michigan  
Host Country: Spain  
Host University: Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Katie Martin  
Major: Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Tulsa, Oklahoma  
Host Country: Ecuador  
Host University: Universidad San Francisco de Quito  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Mike McCormick  
Major: Government, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Seattle, Washington  
Host Country: Italy  
Host University: Georgetown University Villa le Bate  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Lauren Meigs  
Major: English, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Huntsville, Alabama  
Host Country: Ireland  
Host University: Trinity College  
Length of Stay: Academic Year  

Jeff Morshed  
Major: International Politics and International Security Studies, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Edison, New Jersey  
Host Country: England  
Host University: King's College of London  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester  

Yonatan Moskowitz  
Major: Economics and Philosophy, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Los Osos, California  
Host Country: Egypt  
Host University: American University, Cairo  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Jamie O’Neill  
Major: Healthcare Management and Policy, School of Nursing and Health Studies  
Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Host Country: South Africa  
Host University: University of the Western Cape  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester  

Melanie Pitkin  
Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Boulder, Colorado  
Host Country: Argentina
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Major</th>
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<td>Janice Shon</td>
<td>Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
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<td>Katie Radaeva</td>
<td>Major: International Political Economy, School of Foreign Service</td>
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<td>Hometown: Rockville, Maryland</td>
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<td>Katherine Relle</td>
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<td>Chelsea Rice</td>
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<td>Viba Saligrama</td>
<td>Major: Finance and OPIM, McDonough School of Business</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
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<td>Monica Scheid</td>
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<td>Laura Shen</td>
<td>Major: Political Economy, Georgetown College</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>Hometown: Amherst, New Hampshire</td>
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<td>Dena Soffer</td>
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<td>Sarah Stern</td>
<td>Major: Chinese and Spanish, Georgetown College</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>Kent Strader</td>
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<td>Timonium, Maryland</td>
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<td>Caitlin Sudman</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td>Katie Suter</td>
<td>Major: Government, Georgetown College</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<td>Pierre Thompson</td>
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<td>Sarah Tucker</td>
<td>Major: International Politics and International Development, School of Foreign Service</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
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<td>Justine Underhill</td>
<td>Major: Economics and Theater &amp; Performing Arts, Georgetown College</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
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<td>Viba Saligrama</td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
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<td>Michelle Vanderwist</td>
<td>Major: English, Georgetown College</td>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Virginia Vasser</td>
<td>Major: Arabic, Georgetown College</td>
<td>Richmond, Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melissa Verrilli</td>
<td>Major: Economics, Georgetown College</td>
<td>Seattle, Washington</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katalyn Voss</td>
<td>Major: Science, Technology and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service</td>
<td>Laguna Hills, California</td>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
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<td>Host University: CIEE Study Center in Khon Kaen, Thailand and University of Auckland</td>
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<td>Maura Welch</td>
<td>Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service</td>
<td>Syracuse, New York</td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christine White</td>
<td>Major: Finance and International Business, McDonough School of Business</td>
<td>Long Island, New York</td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
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<td>Adam Wilson</td>
<td>Major: English, Georgetown College</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
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</table>
“JYAN allowed me to put into words the incredible experiences I was so lucky to have while in Egypt. The program gave me a concrete way to share the formative aspects of my time abroad, especially with regard to the prevalence of Islam in daily life in Cairo. The letters home remain an important way of staying connected to my study abroad experience and the lessons learned there.”

Richie Frohlichstein, Egypt

“JYAN helped me make the most of my personal development throughout my study abroad experience. The moments of self-reflection were codified in my letters, explaining my troubling insights, humorous stories, and moments of confusion. By writing for a reader, I was encouraged to navigate the differences between Senegalese culture and my own.”

Jennifer Lang, Senegal

“Participating in JYAN brought an entirely different perspective to my study abroad experience in Japan. Rather than just experiencing the culture on a day-to-day basis, I reflected on my experiences in the context of the unique attributes of the society, its belief systems, and historical influences. This added a depth and understanding of Japanese culture, religion, and politics, that I might not otherwise have gained.”

Justine Underhill, Japan

Junior Year Abroad Network Coordinators

Melody Fox Ahmed, Director of Programs and Operations
Melody joined the Berkley Center in June 2006. Previously, she worked at the Corporate Executive Board and Buxton Initiative, a leading interfaith dialogue organization. She received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University and M.A. in Global, International and Comparative History from Georgetown.

Jamie Scott, Program Assistant
Jamie Scott joined the Berkley Center in June 2010. He graduated from Georgetown in May 2010 with a B.A. in Government and minors in Anthropology and History. As an undergraduate, he focused on courses that explored American law and government, justice and inequality.

Contributing Editors

Daniel LaMagna, Vania Reyes, and Katherine Wolfenden provided valuable comments and support.

Design work by Marissa Amendolia and Lili Dodderidge.