“Without JYAN, I may have never taken the opportunity to verbalize my feelings and observations as an American student in a foreign country. Contemplating how to frame my experiences with respect to the role of religion in Egypt and that of language in Morocco compelled me to examine critically the things I witnessed and place them in an academic context. The pieces I wrote for JYAN will forever be a product of my timely analysis and a reminder of my state of mind in an inherently transformative stage in my life.”

*Michelle Saks, Egypt and Morocco*

"JYAN encouraged me to think about a topic seldom mentioned in U.S. classrooms: religion. With JYAN in mind, I picked up on nuances that I would otherwise have missed. Through JYAN I could travel virtually with my peers around the world. As I read their essays, and they mine, a dialogue grew. A unity is created through the shared experience of beholding another environment and lifestyle with the sense of wonder, perplexity, and amazement that a Georgetown student travels with."

*Nafees Ahmed, Turkey*

“Particularly in light of my split-year study abroad experience, JYAN was helpful in keeping me mindful of the religious, social, and cultural landscapes of my two host countries. Last year was my first trip outside of North America and I saw such different societies – both in contrast to the U.S. and to each other. Thinking as a JYAN correspondent kept me engaged with and thinking about the people and places I encountered in a different way than I otherwise would have.”

*Colin Steele, Turkey and Ireland*
“Participating in JYAN aided my self-reflection while navigating the constantly stimulating environment of urban India. I was able to supplement my regular coursework in development with the opportunity for critical analysis of my experience. Through producing essays tied to religion and culture, I learned to live observantly amidst the chaos. I think my eyes were more focused throughout my experience since I was encouraged to put my thoughts and feelings into words that an outsider could understand.”  
Deven Comen, India

“The JYAN experience added to my study abroad experience because it allowed me to think more deeply about my own experiences abroad and to compare those reflections with those of others studying in other programs across the world. I would recommend JYAN to others because it adds another dimension to studying abroad. The reflections made by other students are incredibly profound. It’s an opportunity to share important lessons you’ve learned with others.”  
Julie Patterson, United Kingdom

“JYAN allowed me to reflect on my study abroad while I was in-country, in a way that I wouldn’t have on my own until after I got back. My coursework was more economic and political than cultural, and JYAN gave me a unique opportunity to examine the culture and religion around me; writing about these experiences while living them was more authentic than anything I could have read about or studied back in the U.S.”  
Brooke Heinichen, France
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ABOUT THE 2010-2011 JUNIOR YEAR ABROAD NETWORK

55 HOYAS IN 24 COUNTRIES ON 5 CONTINENTS

Study abroad is an opportunity for discovery and self-transformation. Students broaden their experience and enrich their education through engagement with different societies around the world.

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 Chile to Egypt to China – share their experiences and observations through a series of in-depth letters that are posted on the Berkley Center website. Part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Initiative, JYAN is structured as an online conversation that encompasses network participants as well as faculty and the wider Georgetown community.

This reports brings together key letter excerpts on topics areas ranging from immigration to secularization and national identity, as well as background on the 2010-11 JYAN participants.
**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, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Cote d’Ivoire, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, India, and the United Kingdom.

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 the institution. By fully integrating into the host university, Georgetown students are better able to make gain more from an 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 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the Center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the Center’s work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.

The Doyle Engaging Difference 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.
Spending a semester studying abroad gives students the opportunity to see how people of different countries and faiths experience their culture or religion. Many students were surprised by the level of religious belief or the ways culture manifested itself in these countries. Despite the range of countries and religions, these students found a universal truth: religion and culture are vital to daily life and help shape the identity of people around the world.

Many students not only observed the role of religion and culture but also actively participated in their experiences. During the month of Ramadan, some students voluntarily fasted or found their days shaped by dietary restrictions. Others found new meaning in religious traditions and celebrations. In some countries, students discovered a dynamic aspect of local culture or religious practices that challenged their original perceptions. These discoveries give hope that despite religious and cultural differences, and even conflict, respect for religion and culture can lead to a more peaceful world.

**Meredith English (MSB), Fall 2010, Spain**

After spending a bit more time in Barcelona, I realized the city is not secular at all. Religion is not really spoken of because it is not something contested or debated. It is taken as part of life, and woven throughout all parts of the culture. I woke up on my first free Sunday in Barcelona hoping to explore the city and run some errands in order to get myself acclimated. Little did I know that this would be a nearly impossible task. Everything was closed. There wasn’t a single supermarket, clothing store, or department store open. The metro ran on “off-peak” scheduling, meaning it only came every ten minutes. I asked a Spanish friend why the city basically shut down. He looked at me and said, “It’s Sunday.”

**Peter Johns (SFS), Fall 2010, China**

Most people in Xinjiang are Uighur or Kazakh, while most government officials, especially in Xinjiang, are Han Chinese. The people live their daily lives according the Quran; the government officials are often required to know Chairman Mao’s quotations by heart. Xinjiang’s people clearly have some problems with the government, but these differences are reconcilable because of the Muslim faith’s widespread popularity in Xinjiang, not in spite of it. I spoke with a Kazakh Muslim during dinner one night in a small town near the Chinese border with Russia; he was the head master at the town’s school. He relayed that one major piece of Islamic philosophy emphasizes the extreme importance of helping
“YOU CAN BE A MASTER OF ARABIC GRAMMAR, AND YOU CAN PRONOUNCE EACH OF THE LETTERS ALIEN TO ENGLISH CORRECTLY, BUT YOU DO NOT SPEAK ARABIC UNLESS YOU UNDERSTAND HOW TO RESPECT GOD IN CONVERSATION.”

-SAMANTHA SISSKIND, JORDAN

the needy and less fortunate. This was what he did on a daily basis: his students would help the town’s sick and poor, numerous as they were, at least twice a week, by serving them food, among other things. Why? Simply because their faith dictated that it was right.

**Alyxie Harrick (SFS), Fall 2010, China**

Chinese religion has no leadership, no headquarters, no founder, and no denominations. But just because you do not see mangers displayed during the holidays or necklaces displaying religious symbols does not mean that the Chinese are not spiritual. Rather than a unified system of beliefs and practices, Chinese religion is a complex interaction of philosophical traditions.

Their perception of the world as a complex, constantly changing and interrelated place stands in stark contrast to the Western view of the world as a simple, fundamentally unchanging place. The United Nations often scrutinizes China for its violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but this issue is more complicated than creating more effective laws when it extends deep into their culture of holistic thinking. In the East, the individual is part of a whole and consequently gets a share of the total rights, which contrasts the Western view that individuals are separate and entitled to their own rights.

**Samantha Sisskind (SFS), Fall 2010, Jordan**

The prevalence of faith in Jordanian, and even Arab, culture is most evident in the Arabic language. When native speakers remark on my fluency in Arabic, it’s never because I’ve said something particularly intelligent, but rather because I’ve used a phrase or sentence structure in which I invoke the name of God. You can be a master of Arabic grammar, and you can pronounce each of the letters alien to English correctly, but you do not speak Arabic unless you understand how to respect God in conversation.

**Michael J. Meaney (SFS), Fall 2010, Mexico**

In Chamula, the cathedral appears to be a typical colonial Catholic church, though on the inside, it could not be more different. Instead of pews and pulpits, the church is filled with kneeling worshipers chanting in Tzotzil (a Mayan language). Crowded around thousands of burning candles and incense and surrounded by life-size statues of major Catholic saints, the people of San Juan de Chamula gather here to practice their unique blend of indigenous beliefs and Catholicism. Curanderos (medicine men) diagnose physical and psychological ailments, suggest remedies, and lead the worshippers. Chanting prayers, making sacrificial offerings (including animals, from time to time), and drinking Coca-Cola and sugar cane-based liquor somehow blend with the basic tenants of Catholicism to create a mystifying syncretic religion that is literally impossible for outsiders to understand.

**Hannah Dee (SFS), Fall 2010, Senegal**

Religious influences have the potential to play a critical role in the improvement of Senegal’s public health conditions. Senegal’s HIV rate, for instance, remains below 1% (compared to DC’s rate of at least 3%). The importance of Islam is

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Comment by Father Matthew Carnes, SJ to Michael J. Meaney

Mike’s post on the similarity of experience between Mexican immigrants in the United States, and Central American immigrants in Mexico, brought to mind themes I was recently discussing with a group of students here on Georgetown’s campus. The topic was Immigration and Catholic Social Thought. Mike helps us see that the immigrant journey—the one walked by the Hebrews, by many of our own ancestors that came to United States, by Mexicans coming to the U.S., and by Central Americans in Mexico—continues, and requires compassion and justice just as much now as it did when the law was proclaimed among the Hebrews...We come to realize that immigration is not somehow a “U.S.-only” problem, but a question of human rights and dignity that will be “solved” only in working with our neighbors in Mexico (and beyond).
a crucial reason behind this relatively low rate. Not only does Senegal have comparatively conservative social norms, but religious leaders also have a key voice in the fight against the spread of HIV. Muslim leaders preach about the disease in mosques and include HIV/AIDS education in religious teaching programs, while both Christian and Muslim organizations preach tolerance and provide support for those affected. Unfortunately, improving Senegal’s public health in other areas depends on a lot more than garnering support from religious leaders.

**Elena Lien (College), Fall 2010, Egypt**

In Egypt, slightly less than 90% of the population practices Islam, and, though people certainly vary in their level of piety, the vast majority of Egyptians share the same core beliefs and faith in God. Government policies both result from, and actively encourage, this religious conformity. It wasn’t until last year that Egyptians could self-identify as something other than Muslim, Christian, or Jewish on required identification documents. I am reticent to laud a social structure that restricts religious diversity in such a way, however, my experience in Egypt so far has made me re-consider the relative merits of an individual versus communal attitude towards religion. I find myself wondering if religious Westerners miss out on the benefits that come with living in a community where the people surrounding you share your core beliefs.

**Beth DiSciullo (College), Fall 2010, Italy**

Although it might seem cliche, the fastest way to learn about culture in Italy is to experience an Italian meal. Before arriving in Fiesole, I thought I knew what to expect. I might be eating a lot of pasta, and some pizza on occasion. I quickly learned though that it wasn’t that simple. In Italy, it’s not “pasta”—it’s *tagliatelle alle melanzane*, or *penne ai frutti di mare*, or *gnocchi alla sorentina*. There’s no “bread”—because it could be *pane toscana* (Tuscan bread, typically without salt) or *foccacia* (from the Northern coastal area of Liguria) or *schiaciata* (soft and salty, often eaten plain). It’s never just “cheese”—because cheese is *pecorino*, or *mozzarella*, or better yet, *mozzarella di Bufala Campagna*. Food isn’t to be consumed from a package or on the go—it’s to be enjoyed over several courses with family and friends (and accompanied, of course, by a bottle of vino rosso).

**Amy Guillotte (SFS), Spring 2011, Qatar**

Religious practice is present in everyday life outside of traditionally religious settings. I help teach an English class for Qatari high school girls and halfway through the two-hour class, we take a break. Before resuming class, their usual routine consists of responding to text messages and phone calls, getting coffee at the cafe, and also praying. So many customs and habits of everyday life in Qatar have been shaped directly or indirectly by Islam. Experiencing daily life through a religious lens has been a fascinating and eye-opening experience that has helped me understand more about the complicated relationships among Islam, law, and culture in a rapidly developing state.

**Deven Comen (College), Fall 2010, India**

Hailed as an “innovative township,” Margapatta City is the result of 123 farm families pooling 400 acres of ancestral farmland and setting up a private company that developed a commercial-cum-residential project. When I asked the marketing executive of the company where the religious centers were, he shook his head. “We celebrate all services at the ‘Cultural Center’ here.” My mouth flew open. One cannot walk more than 100 meters without running into a place of worship or an idol in Pune. Religious holidays occur frequently; literally every day involves some kind of worship. Though impressed with the religious inclusiveness, I still felt like the ‘cultural center’ was another substitute for Indian tradition. Just like the fake pond, the promise of a city where “religions and cultures melt and become one” left me with uneasiness. How do you build community in a place like this where traditional Indian values of family and shared space seem distant?

**CHANTING PRAYERS, MAKING SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS (INCLUDING ANIMALS, FROM TIME TO TIME), AND DRINKING COCA-COLA AND SUGAR CANE-BASED LIQUOR SOMEHOW BLENDS WITH THE BASIC TENANTS OF CATHOLICISM TO CREATE A MYSTIFYING SYNCRETIC RELIGION THAT IS LITERALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR OUTSIDERS TO UNDERSTAND.**

- Michael J. Meaney, Mexico
During their time abroad, many students become aware of the complicated social and religious environment in their host countries and the relationships of these diverse groups. Georgetown and the United States at large place great importance on cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. The situation is often more complicated in other countries. Certain religious or ethnic minorities live separately from the mainstream culture, identified as “other” or in opposition to supposed norms. This can create a 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 perceived, or real, differences. Whatever the situation, these students have discovered the difficulties and rewards of promoting and sustaining cultural and religious pluralism. They have identified some issues that divide, as well as constructive ways to unite. Their reflections offer a lens through which to examine our own treatment of immigrants and minorities in the United States.

Sarah Sealock (SFS), Spring 2011, Qatar
The unpleasant realities of a country quickly modernizing and diversifying became apparent every time I went to the grocery store or got into a taxi. Once, after realizing that I would be empathetic to his situation, a Burmese taxi driver explained to me that he lived in worse conditions in his labor camp in Qatar than he had in Burma, and that he had not been paid in months. He explained to me that he believed his boss would have treated him better had he been Muslim. Qatar has chosen to resist diversifying pressures by only allowing migrant workers to remain in Qatar for a short number of years. During their time in the country, migrants live away from the wealthy international or Qatari populations. These unwanted foreigners are kept at arm’s length to prevent them from “diluting” Qatar’s cultural identity, even as their labor builds the state itself.

Beth Goldberg (SFS), Spring 2011, Kenya
Peace and kinship are often out of reach for the estimated 500,000 refugees presently in Kenya. Kenya has become a magnet for refugees because it represents an island of relative safety and stability in conflict-riddled eastern and central Africa. Refugees are greeted by a hard, fast-paced urban lifestyle with new laws, new norms, unfamiliar languages, and plenty of other desperate people eager to take advantage of their naiveté. Why are there no mechanisms or agencies in place to greet these vulnerable urban refugees? Politically, parliamentarians are in a tricky position in the debate over employing Kenyans first as opposed to helping foreign job-seekers. In addition to economic pressures, Kenya faces regular terrorism threats from Al-Shabaab and over 8,000 Somali refugees flowing across their northeastern border monthly. These security pressures from Somalia stretched Kenyan capacities to a breaking point this February when the government militarily closed the border, turning their back on the refugee crisis.
Tiputini borders the Yasuni National Park, which is the most biodiverse area in the world. Unfortunately, the Yasuni also lies on top of 20% of Ecuador’s oil. The Ecuadorian government has agreed not to drill in the Yasuni for ten years, in exchange for 3.6 billion dollars from the UN. Eager to drill, oil companies willingly exploit indigenous Ecuadorians. Some indigenous communities do not comprehend the threat oil companies pose to them and their future. My program director was speaking to an indigenous woman about her community’s dealings with oil companies when he asked her, “What about the future? What will you do in 20 years, when the oil is gone?” His interpreter struggled to translate the question, then finally turned to him and said that the woman’s language had no concept of future. She didn’t have the words to worry about 20 years later. She only had today.

The first meal my family shared in London was at an Indian restaurant in King’s Cross run by a Bangladeshi man. My father struck up a conversation with him, asking him about his family and his job. When asked if he was happy in London, he was absolutely certain that London offered him more opportunities, support, and options than his native Bangladesh. From welfare and health care, to business opportunities and cultural enclaves, London had everything he needed to lead a rich and productive life. I asked him why he chose London—there are plenty of other cities in the world that are closer to Bangladesh—and his answer surprised me. In his experience, and the experiences of his peers, London was more racially and culturally tolerant than cities in the Gulf or other European cities, and even more so than America.

The social implications of Chile’s indigenous roots are undeniable. The colonial legacy of European elitism left behind a social structure of discrimination against indigenous peoples that has deeply embedded ethnic background in socioeconomic inequality and status. Santiago is strikingly divided by class, with the location of each comuna, or neighborhood, representing the socioeconomic status of its residents. The closer a comuna is to the mountain range on the city’s northeast side, the richer and whiter it is. It is astounding to travel throughout the city and see the difference in height and skin tones—lower and middle class people have clearly more “indigenous” features, whereas neighborhoods like Vitacura and Las Candes are home to the white upper class and could easily pass as a well-heeled European town. With inequalities in every imaginable area, from recruiters giving candidates preference by last name and appearance, to social class fueling a lifetime of social situations and interactions, how can Chileans possibly embrace their Mapuche identity?

While some South Africans are openly and consciously racist, many subconsciously stereotype others based on race. While there, I encountered a few proud racists, but I mostly found that the population discriminated unknowingly or without thought. While on safari, I met an older South African man. He had an air about him that screamed self-importance, and his actions matched. He constantly challenged our black guide because he felt he was always right. I found that this was typical of many white South Africans. While the focus is often on whites dis-
criminating against non-whites, it works in the reverse as well. I taught in a rural school comprised of black and mixed-race students. None of them lived through apartheid, yet they still felt its effects in full force. The children lived on wine farms, where their parents worked in the fields for white owners. My adviser warned us that the students would be apprehensive about white people, and he was right.

Lauren Reese, (College), Spring 2011, India

During my interactions with the Hindu Pakistani refugees, I found myself growing increasingly frustrated with the Indian government and its inability to meet the needs of its people. The number of communities and identity groups in the vast country of India seeking acknowledgement and assistance from the government is outstanding. Yet, the plight of these Pakistanis is in many ways directly related to the nation of India from partition until the present: the decision to carve out a Muslim state from India in 1947, the growing influence of Hindu fundamentalist parties, the lack of effective government intervention, and peace-keeping efforts following incidents of communal violence. The very least the Indian government could do for an identity group now was to ensure that they finally had a secure home after partition failed to provide one. The experience in the Pakistani refugee settlement overwhelmed me with questions and concerns about democracy, identity, justice, and religious tolerance.

Emily Cabanatuan (SFS), Fall 2010, Dominican Republic

One of the most striking things about coming to the Dominican Republic was witnessing and learning about how Dominicans interact with their Haitian neighbors. Obviously, this is a highly complicated issue and it would be foolish to make hasty generalizations, but, unfortunately, anti-Haitianism in a highly prevalent in Dominican society. You can see traces of this in various places: actual interactions between Dominicans and Haitians, popular attitudes towards Haitian immigration, and government treatment of Haitians and their descendants living in the country. The racism and anti-Haitianism present in Dominican society is a tragedy that is particularly noticeable to North American visitors. I don't mean to suggest that American society has magically become a utopia of equality. However, the civil rights movement at home has certainly reached a much more advanced stage than it has here. I'm not sure exactly what impetus Dominicans need to recognize the equality of the Haitian brothers, but I hope it happens soon.

Ben Johnson, (SFS), Spring 2011, Qatar

Qatar's small native population makes the tiny Gulf state almost entirely dependent on foreign workers for everything from administering universities to laying bricks for the country's constantly expanding construction projects. The resulting influx of foreigners has radically altered the cultural landscape of Qatar in many positive ways. Unfortunately, Qatar's unique demographics have also given rise to racial tensions—in particular, overt discrimination aimed at the South Asian population that makes up the majority of the country's unskilled workforce. Foreign workers constitute 85% of Qatar's 1.6 million people, making Qatari citizens a minority in their own country. This demographic peculiarity has given rise to fear among some Qataris that their native culture is at risk of being supplanted by foreign influences. These concerns aren't unfounded: one of the first things you'll notice in this country is the widespread use of English, since it's one of the few common languages among the diverse peoples that work in Qatar. However, rather than welcoming the diverse influences of foreign cultures, legal and social restrictions have attempted to isolate and preserve Qatari culture.

"FOREIGN WORKERS CONSTITUTE 85% OF QATAR'S 1.6 MILLION PEOPLE, MAKING QATARI CITIZENS A MINORITY IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY."

- BEN JOHNSON, QATAR
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— and 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 Chile. The legacies of the past—both ancient and more recent— in Italy and the United Kingdom showed students how history resonates with contemporary national identities.

Julie Patterson (College), Spring 2011, United Kingdom

Britain and the United States, being English-speaking countries, have rather parallel cultures. But often I encounter a cultural difference that I did not previously know existed between my home and host countries, and I am always surprised to find that there is a cultural and often historical reason behind these differences. World War II, oddly enough, can account for many of these changes. The prevalence of blackcurrant as a fruit flavor in many drinks and sweets can actually be traced back to the war, when food rationing and shortages deprived many Britons of vital nutrients, particularly Vitamin C. Blackcurrant, rich in Vitamin C, was well-suited to grow in the United Kingdom’s climate, and as a result its cultivation was encouraged by the British government. It was given to British children in particular, and after the war ended most of the surplus crop was converted into syrup and used for flavoring in candies, drinks, jams, and other sugar products, explaining its popularity with children and adults. As an American, I do not feel the repercussions of a war that ended more than fifty years ago. Given that the war never crossed the Atlantic, Americans were safe from many of the devastating effects of war. Our cities were not destroyed, our civilians were not injured or killed, our national landmarks were not bombed to the ground. World War II was fought in the European theatre, and its mark is still strong in the English landscape and the British consciousness.

Louis DiPaola (College), Spring 2011, Italy

Any Roman will acknowledge that they are incredibly proud of the place their city has earned in history. The world wouldn’t be the same were it not for this city and the culture that grew out of it. But the development of that culture has not ended with the fall of the Empire. The monuments of the past continue to inspire Romans to strive towards prominence within the modern world rather than to wallow in the past. Although many Romans have never set foot inside the Colosseum, they are still proud of it and agree that it and the rest of the city’s monuments must be preserved. Although many Romans are no longer practicing Catholics, they still recognize their churches as reminders of an important time in Roman history. Were it not for Papal influence over the city, they would not have the artistic gems such as the Sistine Chapel, which have caused countless people to flock to Rome and admire its splendor.
Paige Lovejoy (SFS), Fall 2010, Chile

A former Hoya who now lives in Santiago went with me to watch an equestrian show at the Military School last Saturday. As I began chatting with my friend about my research on the dictatorship, it slipped my mind that to this day the divisions of class point to political persuasions and lingering emotions about the Pinochet era. I was startled when a woman two seats down kindly leaned down and advised us that we might not have picked the right venue to speak about our opinions on human rights abuses under the regime – “many of the people here played a role in that government,” she whispered to us. And almost all of the women wore gold crosses around their necks. Catholics make up a huge majority (around 75%) of the Chilean population. So how is it that the country is divided nearly fifty-fifty in their opinions on the dictatorship? How could it be that half of the country’s Christians were inspired by their faith to fight for human rights and the other half used that same faith to defend the military regime?

Sarah Balistreri (College), Fall 2010, Chile

Today, the legacy of socially committed music still exists in Latin America, especially in Chile. While modern artists are perhaps not as strong in their criticism of the political establishment (given that today, Chile operates under an elected president instead of a brutal dictator), they echo the sentiments expressed in songs of the past. The lyrics of “Arriba la vida,” a popular reggaeton song by the Chilean group Croni-K, echo the promotion of Latin American unity present in the music of artists like Los Prisioneros when they sing, “Todos unidos como familia/Latinoamerica unida” (Everyone united as a family/Latin America united). In recent history, political sentiments can be found in the music of Latin America, especially the music produced in Chile, and music associated with political rebellion in the past continues to provoke strong reactions out of many Chileans. It is clear that Chile is still recovering from the scars left by the brutal Pinochet dictatorship that ended only twenty years ago.

Comment by Prof. Anna De Fina to Sarah Balistreri

I really enjoyed Sarah Balistreri’s depiction of the influence of the church on popular culture in Chile. It made me think of Italy (my own country), where nobody thinks twice before hanging the image of a saint on the car’s mirror. It also reminded me of Mexico where, no matter how loudly the state proclaims its separation from the Church, religious symbols and practices are everywhere. I think Sarah perceived an important cultural difference between many countries in Europe and Latin America and the United States: while in the U.S. most people are aware that there are many religious faiths in the world, other cultures give their religious allegiances for granted until they cannot do so any longer because of the presence of immigrants, refugees, and other ‘foreigners.’

Bethan McGarry (SFS), Fall 2010, Chile

Perhaps the Chilean aversion to marriage has something to do with the legal rigidity with which it was maintained for so long, and now the societal stigma for those who end it. Maybe, too, disenchantment with traditional family structures is yet another way that Chile is moving away from one type of society—patriarchal, intensely family-oriented, and religiously defined—and towards another type, one that could be called more liberal. Chile self-identifies as the most progressive country in South America, and perhaps even all of Latin America. While this perception is certainly backed up by economic and perhaps even political and structural realities, in terms of gender equality, acceptance of homosexuality, and racism, Chile still has ground to cover to catch up with other countries like Argentina.

Comment from Prof. Katherine Marshall to Paige Lovejoy

Paige Lovejoy’s letter about Chile poses the deepest questions about religion’s role. She reflects deeply on the links between politics, religion, race, and class in contemporary Chile. A society that is proud of its elitism is still self-consciously Catholic. The society is clearly divided deeply on religious lines between those who accepted or supported a cruel dictatorship that trampled on human rights and one that is among the most progressive in the Americas. Where, she ponders, do Catholic values and social teaching fit in this complex picture? Three quarters of Chileans call themselves Catholic, yet the country’s history seems to bespeak a different heritage and values. The divisions in Chile seem to be unmistakably within a single faith tradition. It is indeed a puzzle.
The Impact of Secularization

Students found 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.

Tiare Dunlap (College), Spring 2011, Italy

Before my arrival, when I thought of Italy, I thought of vespas, il Davide, food, wine, opera, and The Vatican. Catholicism, from the outside, appears to be as much a part of Italian culture as espresso, leisurely lunching, or excessive gesticulation. And yet, can religion really be a part of a culture of an increasingly diverse country? Regardless of the influx of immigrants, the increasing popularity of different faiths, and the move towards secularization, the prominence of Catholicism in Italy is indisputable. Flying over Florence for the first time I was struck by the Duomo not just because of its breathtaking beauty but also the fact that it trumps the entire city. And yet, upon closer inspection, the Duomo I have come to know and love feels more like a monument to the people and culture that accomplished the feat of its construction than a place of worship. Somehow, the history and physical features of the Duomo have come to draw more focus that its intended purpose. Whereas upon entering one of Florence’s churches my mind becomes flooded with questions of a theological nature, it is possible that when you grow up in the shadow of the Duomo your eyes adjust to the light.

Paulina Velasco (SFS), Spring 2011, France

While France denies all reference to religion in its internal and external politics, it has still fashioned for itself a role comparable to that of the United States as a defender of human rights. France’s equivalent in terms of political discourse, at least, is its appeals to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which France was a key creator in 1948 within the United Nations, and its own Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, a fundamental document of the French Revolution and the French spirit. It would certainly be interesting to ask where this strong belief in human rights originates, because it may very well be that this deist, Enlightenment concept can be said to be religious at its foundation. Nevertheless, today it seems to be the distinguishing feature for French foreign political discourse the way “American exceptionalism” based on Judeo-Christian traditions is for the United States. I wonder if I might conclude that the self-constructed “religion” on which France bases its foreign politics, in word especially, is the defense of universal human rights.
Modernization has peaked its way beyond the way girls dress in public. Five times a day, mosques throughout Amman blast the Call to Prayer. Although one would expect people in the streets to pause, take out their prayer mats, and pray in a predominantly Muslim country, one would find that except for a few religiously devout, most walk along the streets and continue with whatever they were doing. Now, what does prayer (or the lack thereof) have to do with modernization? Whether or not to do the daily salaat (prayer) is up to the individual, and frankly, there are many “nominal Muslims” in Jordan. However, for a religion that places emphasis on rituals and its pillars, I find it a little strange that I have not come across anyone pausing to do their prayers walking down the streets of downtown Amman. So, I began to think to myself, “why doesn’t anyone stop to pray when I know that many of these people in the streets in Amman attend the mosques on Fridays?” I am sure that there are many answers to this question, but one that I have been convinced of is that the bustling environment of the city does not allow room for the salaat. How could anyone possibly pray on the ground in the middle of a noisy, construction-filled city with cars zooming past you in a place where traffic laws seen to be nonexistent? And from where did this city environment originate? Economic growth and transformation.

I came to Chile expecting to find a profoundly Catholic country, and indeed the country appears universally Catholic at first glance. Bishops and church representatives interject in political debates on a regular basis, often serving as formal or informal mediators on the most sensitive issues. Catholic imagery is inescapable: the principal hill in Santiago is topped with a monumental statue of the Virgin Mary, which on a clear day can be seen throughout the city. The country’s top-ranked university (which happens to be my host university), the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, runs one of the country’s leading television networks and the capital’s leading health system. In social issues, too, the Catholic Church appears unquestioned. Divorce was only legalized in 2004, and abortion remains illegal in all cases. The possibility of gay marriage, or even civil unions, is hardly considered. Yet although the Catholic Church, as an institution, is omnipresent in Chile, the faith

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- CAROLINE HOLKEBOER, CZECH REPUBLIC
is much harder to find. 70% of Chileans may self-identify as Catholic, but only a fraction go to mass. Nowhere is this spiritual disconnect more apparent than in the youth; according to the most recent national census, 73% of Chilean youth do not identify with any religion in particular, and half the country’s 931,000 atheists and agnostics are aged 15-29. The very fact that I attended weekly mass led my host mother to conclude that I was planning on becoming a priest.

Caroline Holkeboer (College), Spring 2011, Czech Republic
While in Prague, my Jewish history professor invited us over to his apartment for dinner. As I stood at the meeting point, I looked up and saw a statue hanging from the ceiling of a man riding on an upside-down horse. It seemed oddly familiar to me, and when our professor came downstairs he explained that it had been created as a parody of the famous statue of St. Wenceslas, situated just outside his apartment building in Wenceslas Square. For me, this statue offers an interesting commentary on the state of religion in the Czech Republic and other post-Communist countries in Europe. Since arriving in Prague, I have been astounded by the unmasked secularism of not only the people, but also the establishment. Most of Europe has experienced a similar trend towards secularism over the course of the last century, but perhaps Prague can serve as a case study for the impact that totalitarian regimes and political repression have had on the course of religion and faith for an entire people. Today, between 60-80% of Czechs consider themselves atheists. Two major political events have contributed to the decline of religion. First, Nazi occupation beginning in 1938 resulted in the mass deportation of thousands of Jews from Czechoslovakia, Moravia, and Bohemia. Second, the rise of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, under the direction of the USSR, silenced religious participation and freedom in the Czech Republic.

Colin Steele (SFS), Academic Year, Turkey and Ireland
Turkey is dogged by the twin specters of non-democratic government and religious fundamentalism; if either of these ever-present undercurrents triumphs, Turkey is lost. Ironically, I think that relaxing its rigid secularism laws might be the best thing Turkey could do right now to disarm the fundamentalists, by decoupling the ability of citizens to freely express their identity as Muslims from the legitimacy of the government. Strict secularism might have been important in the beginning to allow the Turkish state to differentiate itself both from its Ottoman past and its Islamist neighbors; 90 years later, it is time for Turkey to cultivate and embrace respectful freedom of expression. Thanks in large part to secularism and Westernization, Turkey does not have the hopelessly dead-end feel of neighboring Syria, but the government must realize that, nearly a century after the nation was proclaimed by Atatürk, allowing the headscarf back into public life is unlikely to put the country into a hard right turn towards the reactionary Islamism of the Middle East.

Hannah Walker (College), Japan, Fall 2010
The Shibuya train station in Tokyo is one of the biggest in the city. Just outside the Hachiko entrance of the station is Shibuya Crossing, a five-way intersection that is flooded with pedestrians at every hour of the day and night. And this Christmas season, displayed in giant illuminated script facing this tableau of incessant activity is a sign that reads “2010 Christmas.” A Christmas sign? On a public building? In the biggest city in the world, in one of the most populated areas within that city? But in Japan, displaying Christmas decorations on a secular building has none of the associated conflict that it has in America, because Christmas functions very differently here. Christmas in Japan shares some common practices with Christmas in America: presents are exchanged, decorations and trees are everywhere, and the seasonal treats are delicious. There are, of course, some aspects of the holiday that are more uniquely Japanese. Christmas dinner is a special meal of KFC chicken, Christmas Eve is a major date night for couples, and the holiday is completely unconnected to the story of Jesus’ birth. For most Japanese, religion has never been the reason to celebrate Christmas. It’s for people of every faith, and Santa visits Japanese children even if they’ve never been to church. Although it may be shocking for an American to see, it is nice to look up at the bright sign above Shibuya Crossing and to know that its message is meant for all who pass under it, regardless of their faith.
Students directly experienced major historical events during their time abroad, and their letters served as live, on the ground dispatches documenting stunning changes to their fascinated Hilltop family. Students watched and participated in the revolutions sweeping the Arab world in the spring of 2011, and held lively debates in their letters and comments over the impact, whether they were in Egypt or Argentina. The significance of the Arab Spring was felt around the world as students reflected on what political and societal change was possible in their own host countries. The global economic crisis continued to be felt and analyzed around the world, and several students compared social change movements in their host country to those in the U.S., as precursors to the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Students wrote about the Basque separatist group ETA, which would soon agree to a historic cease fire in Spain, and they watched from afar as their fellow students celebrated the death of Osama bin Laden—and debated what it meant for them as Americans and global citizens.

**Nick Shaker (College), Academic Year, Jordan**

Thousands of people have gathered in downtown Amman in the past weeks, protesting public policies and corrupt leaders. I watch it on the news every night with my host family, but in my daily life at my house, school, and gym, I see no signs of strife. Even when I hang out in cafes near downtown there is no evidence of thousands of people gathered to protest. From my interactions with locals, I can see almost no sense of urgent change. Even in taxis, where the topic of conversation always goes back to politics, there is no discussion of the looming changes in Jordan. It seems odd to me that when the New York Times declares that hell is about to break loose, I cannot see the signs on the ground. Maybe I am not looking well enough; maybe the signs are there, and I am just missing them. But what I do know is that coming from America, we are much more sensitive to political change and upset than in the Middle East. In the last ten years, most Middle Eastern countries have experienced major political changes, from wars to moderately peaceful revolutions. Wherever you look, power is shifting and alliances are being redrawn. After all this, many Arabs have grown accustomed to drastic changes and learned how to live their lives unaffected by the political atmosphere.

**Michelle Saks (College), Academic Year, Egypt and Morocco**

Before boarding my flight, I spoke with my friend Alia, an Egyptian student at the American University of Cairo. Although Alia was certainly on edge the past few days, placing kitchen knives around her house and collecting heavy poles to place by the door, something in her voice today was different. The troubling uncertainty of her family and nation’s future was audible as she cautioned me to be safe and call her as soon as possible. Both the chaotic nature of the airport and Alia’s remarks made me think that perhaps leaving Cairo was a good idea. After spending four months in Egypt this fall, I had come to think of Cairo as a second home. Forced to leave under these circumstances was truly disheartening. However, my experiences
and every Egyptian. While it is assuredly inconvenient that I have to reconfigure my life for the next few months, disappointing that I may never fully learn the Egyptian dialect, and upsetting that I overslept on the morning my classmates went to the Egyptian museum, I will undoubtedly be able to overcome these little speed bumps. On the other hand, my Egyptian friends sit and watch the news, jumping as their cell phones ring and fighter jets fly through the air. Where they will study this semester is the least of their worries when faced with an inability to walk the streets past curfew or the possibility of running out of money before the banks reopen.

Nafees Ahmed (College), Spring 2011, Egypt

Today, Saturday January 30th, I attended the protests in Cairo. The police had left the streets and were replaced by the army who had decidedly announced that they were one with the people. Today was much calmer and much more peaceful than the violence and anger yesterday. I had walked the streets the day before and even though I could only hear faint echoes of the protests, the air was tense and eerie. Today, on the other hand, I felt the palpable sense of camaraderie. My friend, Jordan, is a tall American boy with red hair and as we walked through the crowds, people only smiled and paid no mind to us. Civilians handed soda to army men standing on tanks. A Jewish American friend of mine later told me that he himself was called up to stand on an army tank. Perhaps the most amazing and surprising bond was fostered between the Muslims and the Coptic Christians. A few weeks ago tensions between the two communities were high because Muslims had bombed a Coptic church. However on this day, the two communities put their tensions behind them and focused on a cause they knew was greater than themselves.

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- NICK SHAKER, JORDAN

Thaddeus Bell (SFS), Spring 2011, Jordan

Televsions are ubiquitous, and their programming is international. The range of culture available in many other countries is something that is difficult to appreciate in the United States. Mostly because the United States is an enormous, wealthy country with a major film and television industry in Hollywood, Americans are not exposed to very much foreign cultural output. Jordan (and I expect, the rest of the Arab World, to varying extents) couldn’t be more different. Because Jordan is a fairly small country, with a small television industry, most of the hundreds of channels available via satellite are imported from across the Arab World. News, sports, sitcoms, dramas, and documentaries are available from many different Arab countries. When it comes to watching, the Arab countries constitute a shared media space. What does this have to do with revolution? I have only been in the Middle East for a few weeks, but I think it is very much worth noting that the successes of protests in Tunisia and then in Egypt have inspired protests elsewhere in the Arab World, and not very much elsewhere. I think it has something to do with the centuries of Arab culture, compared to the few decades of today’s state boundaries. At the present moment, I think the shared media across the Arab World, particularly television, helps to sustain the sentiment of Arab unity which has allowed Arab protesters to be inspired by the successes in Tunisia and Egypt.

Jessica Schieder (SFS), Fall 2010, Germany

On a certain day in December, I had found myself in a room of pragmatic, completely grown up people, none of whom thought it was odd to be so openly concerned about social issues. It was like I was back in second grade again, talking with friends about which one of us would grow up and

Lane Feler (SFS), Fall 2010, Spain

In my coursework about Euskadi, the Basque region, the emphasis has always been on the antagonism, the resentment, and even a hint of resignation that its separatist conflict with the Spanish government will continue as a violent zero-sum game. In retrospect, this commonly painted image of Euskadi renders its inhabitants almost inhumane, almost unworthy of the respect for one of the most fervently revered cultures by its own people. From now on, when I hear “ETA,” I will stop thinking of explosions, bombings, and kidnapping by the Basque separatist group, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna. Instead, I will think of eta, the Euskal word for “and,” which constitutes part of a language that is the cornerstone of the Basque culture. The problem with the accepted image of Euskadi is that it does the reality of the region a disservice. I regret that while Basque culture is utterly unique, it rarely receives the recognition it merits for the lengths its people go to preserve it, thanks to a focus on sensational politics.

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save the world. I drifted off thinking about last fall semester, when, as a sophmore, I had answered constituent calls for hours at a Capitol Hill office. Those were dozens of hours of citizens calling in to voice their concern that expanding health insurance coverage to many poorer Americans was immoral. In Germany, by contrast, even whispers of austerity, financed through increases to tuition costs to students or cuts to social welfare programs, regularly draws large-scale protests and strikes, as happened as recently as this summer. Regardless of these inconvenient symptoms of social activism, Germans have continuously, pleasantly surprised me with an unfamiliar type of shameless, hands-on humanitarian concern and awareness. There are positives and negatives to every society and every system of government, that either agree or disagree with our own preferences and beliefs, but the generosity and impressive social awareness of the Germans I’ve met is, in my opinion, an example from which the States could learn a lesson or two. We all have idealistic goals as well as professional ones, and my hope is that, as our generation ages, we will be able to change social norms, so that we will not hesitate when voicing our concerns for issues that we care about.

Caitlin Mary DeLaurentis (College), Ireland, Fall 2010

With Ireland’s economic troubles, questions that have long plagued the Irish population about independence, sovereignty, and its role within Europe are back at the forefront. The nation that saw record emigration in the face of the Great Famine in 1846 is once again facing the emigration of thousands of its citizens, mostly young adults who cannot find employment. The Great Famine dramatically altered the cultural fabric of Ireland—oral stories, traditional music and songs, and the Irish language faded away with the deaths and emigration of so many Irish citizens only to reemerge during the early 20th century as part of a cultural nationalism campaign in the years before independence. While the current economic crisis is not the same level of catastrophe as the Great Famine, its mark will forever remain on Irish history, a definitive moment in Irish history that shaped the future of the country. The Irish people must now forge a new path in terms of their identity and their relationship to a government they no longer trust. While economists and world leaders watch anxiously to see how the Irish economy recovers and its impact on other countries, I will be watching to see how the Irish identity is reformulated in response to the latest struggle endured by Ireland.

Emma Kelsey (SFS), Spain, Spring 2011

Seeing the news of the death of Osama bin Laden on my computer screen, 3,000 miles away from my friends at the White House, felt like a completely different experience from that of those back at Georgetown. It was shocking to compare the “mission accomplished” reactions of my friends at home to the complete disapproval of my Spanish classmates, who understood that one triumph in a long war cannot undo the thousands of lives sacrificed on both sides, nor bring justice to the victims. This juxtaposition of American jubilation and Spanish inquietude underscored the differences in values that I have observed since I arrived. While Spain is no longer strongly Catholic, Catholic values, especially the value for human life, still shape the national character and morals. Not only is this value expressed in the reticence of Spaniards to celebrate a death, even that of a terrorist, but also in their vehement opposition to the death penalty and their denouncement of torture. Here in Spain, all forms of human life are fiercely protected.

Comment from Fr. Kevin O’Brien to Emma Kelsey

Kelsey points to a reality not only in Spain but throughout Europe—declining identification with the Catholic Church. Compared to the United States, Church attendance in Europe is significantly lower. The secularization of Europe is a particular cause of concern for Pope Benedict, a native of Germany. On his visit to the United States in 2008, the Pope praised the religiosity of the United States. While his predecessors in the 19th century condemned the separation of church and state as a threat to the Church, Benedict and post-Vatican II popes found in that separation a gift. The Church could be in a dynamic dialog with politics and culture, while enjoying a certain freedom from the power and prestige that can easily corrupt…As Kelsey notes, Catholicism is steeped in Spanish culture and history (as are Judaism and Islam). My hope is that the religious traditions in Spain (and elsewhere) can enliven the culture of today, and not become simply historical curiosities or relics of the past.

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- Caitlin Mary DeLaurentis, Ireland

“THE NATION THAT SAW RECORD EMIGRATION IN THE FACE OF THE GREAT FAMINE IN 1846 IS ONCE AGAIN FACING THE EMIGRATION OF THOUSANDS OF ITS CITIZENS, MOSTLY YOUNG ADULTS WHO CANNOT FIND EMPLOYMENT.”

- Caitlin Mary DeLaurentis, Ireland
Students reflected on the many nuances of personal, national, and religious identity during their time abroad. What makes someone Belgian in a country of divided language and government? How to explain the differences in Muslim behavior and dress in Jordan and Turkey? Why are Spanish culturally Catholic but rarely go to Mass? How do language and culturally laden objects, such as flags, contribute to a sense of national unity or division? Why might a city’s residents identify strongly with a seemingly negative part of daily life— packs of roving street dogs— as part of their unique culture? In their quest to understand as much as possible about their adopted countries, students put themselves in the shoes of their neighbors and opened fascinating conversations on the complex question of identity.

Andrew Marinelli (SFS), Spring 2011, Belgium

To say that Belgium is a “country divided” would be one of the biggest understatements ever made. The country has already divided itself regionally into the northern, Dutch-speaking Flanders and the southern, French-speaking Wallonia, with Brussels literally stuck dead center between them. The north-south divide is not only founded on linguistic differences but also differences in culture, religion, and politics as well. This blatant divide in regional identity arose early with the development of a political system. The Walloons were an obvious minority in the newfound Kingdom of Belgium after the Belgian Revolution in 1830, but they dominated the political system and viewed the Flemish as second-class citizens. French was declared the national language, but linguistic equality only slowly developed throughout the 20th century. Follies in World War I, a veritable division in economic sectors and productivity, and strong sense of linguistic heritage have continued to force these two regions apart. Many believe that surpassing Iraq as the longest running country without a government may just be the last nail in the coffin for this country’s already waning unity.

Xochitl Ledesma (MSB), Spring 2011, Spain

During Franco’s regime, restoring the Catholic religion was a priority. The teaching of the Roman Catholic faith was made mandatory, churches were subsidized by the government, and various privileges were granted specifically to the Church. Franco had found the perfect tool to use in order to keep control over the Spanish people, because if there was one power the people respected, it was the Church. That soon changed as people started to see the civil liberties granted to those involved with the Church. Citizens started to associate the Church as part of the Franco regime since they saw it only taking the benefits of the horror that was going around the country. The Church did speak against the wrongs of Franco’s actions a few years into the regime, but the harm of association had been made— in modern day Spain, one can see the effects that this has had on people’s perception of religion. The establishment that is the Church is no longer followed blindly by Spanish people; instead, they have learned about the mistakes and lost confidence in what was once to them an unstained image of righteousness. Today the generation that lived during Franco’s regime has kept their Catholic faith and
practices, still believing in the teachings of the Church, just not the establishment itself. The next generation learns firsthand of the terrible things that happened, acquiring mistrust of any control over the people as a threat. As a result, Spanish people are culturally Catholic, but not religious.

Rebecca Kissel (SFS), Jordan, Spring 2011

It can be seen in both the statistics found on development websites and in my everyday experiences in Jordan that life for women in the Middle East is very different from that of many Western countries. If you look at the statistics, you will see that women’s literacy is lower, their unemployment rate compared with men in their countries is higher, and many parts of the region are plagued with honor crimes, child marriage, and female genital mutilation. As for my everyday experiences, I see fewer women walking in the streets than men, and I have to be careful at whom I smile or what I say in a taxi so as not to send the wrong message. Many people in the West look at these issues and automatically blame Islam, citing them as evidence of the evils and backwardness of the most predominant religion in the Middle East. However, the prejudices behind these practices predate Islam and exist in every single society. While non-Muslim women in the United States may not wear a hijab, the same objectification and sexualization of women can be found in the media and on the streets, just not as amplified. Coming to Jordan has shown me that the issues are manifested on a different level, but the ideas and prejudices exist in the United States as well. Islam is not the problem that these societies face, and, in fact, many women are proving that it could possibly be the solution.

Marisa Edmonds (College), Fall 2010, Turkey

Nationally, Turkey is overwhelmingly Muslim, but this does not result in univocal faith and practice, or a binary of “real” and “fake.” Rather, vast pluralities of religious identities fall within this umbrella term. There are a myriad of intertwined factors contributing to the formation of an individual’s religious identity in Turkey—gender, geographic location, education, socioeconomics, ethnicity, etc. Turkey is seeking EU accession amidst strife over what it means to be European, and indeed, whether differing religious identities present a challenge to community. Even within Turkey, views range across a broad spectrum: some find Turkey’s Islamic identity to be overwhelming, others declare it is not Muslim enough. What univocal vision of Islam are these judgments based on? Defining one’s religious identity amidst these competing, often contradictory factors proves to be a significant challenge. In my experience, there are as many particularities in one’s religious identity as there are acceptances of their creeds and universalities. During Ramadan, some waited for Iftar to break fast while others drank Raki by daylight. In the Ottoman era, Sultans outlawed certain Sufi sects. Until September, the religious expression of some women was banned at university. All of these signify a tremendous difference in conceptions of religion— but rather than categorize some as “real” and others “fake,” or blanket them all under a common term without respect to intricacies, it is key to recognize the particularity of each individual’s religious identity, and the role that identity plays in informing one’s actions.

Paul Malandra (SFS), Fall 2010, Chile

The expression of language not only defines but also creates the world of the language that its speakers inhabit. In this way, every day I spend in Latin America, every word I learn and phrase I hear, I am involved in a process of opening myself to new interpretations of reality. This is why we learn languages, in order to discover in everyday conversations and to access and communicate with new cultures and peoples. Yet for the indigenous peoples of Latin America, the process of language learning is completely distinct. They learn their languages to preserve rather than discover and are fighting outside influence, rather than embracing it. If the Mapuche language, Mapudungun, is not the first language of children today, then the Mapuche people must, in essence, learn their culture instead of absorbing it. In this way, language learning is for the Mapuche an existential process through which they recreate an ancient culture and, in part, reject the culture in which they are immersed. The language native to the Mapuche people is not the native language of many modern Mapuche.

“MANY BELIEVE THAT SURPASSING IRAQ AS THE LONGEST RUNNING COUNTRY WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT MAY JUST BE THE LAST NAIL IN THE COFFIN FOR THIS COUNTRY’S ALREADY WANING UNITY.”
- ANDREW MARINELLI, BELGIUM
Today, there are an increasing number of people who hesitate to support the notion of a unified nation. Despite the festive music, waving flags, and red, white, and green fireworks on March 17th, they believe that the celebrations promote a false sense of unity that does not exist in Italy. In their opinions, religious, political, and economic divisions reflect a country that is far from unified. Groups such as the Northern League, a right-wing political party that denounces the poorer South, and the political division amongst opinions about Prime Minister Berlusconi are just two examples contributing to discord in Italy. The challenge for the European Union is to create its own definition of what it means to be an EU citizen, while its member states are simultaneously struggling with a similar dilemma about national identity. Fears of encroachment and intense feelings of patriotism among the citizens towards their city or region threaten the notion of national and continental integration. Unity is not something that can be imposed, but only encouraged. So while the tricolored flag waves proudly on March 17th, the real test for Italian citizens is to decide which flag to wave the other 364 days of the year.

-Zayan Pereborow, Spring 2011, Spain

During my first days in Barcelona, I remember my confusion with the political protests and waving of signs with “Adeu Espanya” which is Catalan for “Goodbye Spain.” Invigorated with Catalan pride, my host father addressed my curiosity of the events that I observed on September 11, which marks the day in 1714 that Catalonia surrendered its independence to Spain. After our dinner discussion, I had a new perception of Spain. The country is not defined by a single, national culture but by the distinct diversity of its regions. Spain is a nation of nations. Driven by an extensive Catalan history of struggling to achieve independence from Spain, the universal sentiment of Barcelona is to reject full immersion into the Spanish culture and preserve their Catalan traditions—especially their language, Catalan. Another reason for the prevalence of signs like “Catalonia is not Spain” is the fact that Barcelona gives more to Madrid in taxes than it receives in benefits even though Barcelona’s booming economy contributes 17% to Spain. To put the strong degree of Catalan pride in perspective, I was having a conversation with one of the locals and asked what his nationality was. With hesitation, he articulated, “I am biologically half Spanish and half Catalonian, but in my heart, I am 100% Catalonian.” It was so eye-opening for me to observe how Barcelona residents identify themselves because I would have unhesitatingly affirmed that I am American—not half American and half New Jerseyan.

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-Bethany Imondi, Italy

In 1992, a small group of Milanese judges started to investigate and convict politicians and businessmen on charges of bribery and corruption. The “Mani Pulite” (“Clean Hands”) operation spread throughout the entire peninsula and became so extraordinarily vast that every single political party in Italy was revealed guilty, and every single one fell from power. The branch of representatives was empty, open to the growth of a number of new parties, including Berlusconi’s. If practically every major representative of both political parties in the United States were found guilty of corruption, the resulting social unrest and disillusion would be unimaginably profound. In Italy, on the other hand, citizens were encouraged by the operation. They expected their officials to be corrupt. Italians did not expect their judicial system to work well enough to remove them from office. The judiciary became widely regarded as the most respected, venerable power in the country.

-Gary Li (MSB), China, Fall 2010

In the past three years, China has hosted three major international events: the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games. For each event, the government subsidized mass urban reconstruction in the host cities and constructed mammoth and extravagant facilities. The events themselves were bookended by lavish opening and closing ceremonies featuring spectacular performances. On the surface this may appear to be a mighty public staging of great nationalism, but in reality, it is nothing more than a façade. The Communist Party of China is highly paranoid, and it uses nationalism as a means to obscure the issues
that threaten to undermine its authority. In Beijing, the subtler yet still visible symbol of communist control manifests itself in “increased police patrols, roundups of dissidents and tapped phones.” In *Wild Grass*, Ian Johnson writes: “The signs are not always obvious, but once they are known, they are unmistakable: the triple-teamed soldiers that cordon off diplomatic compounds, late-night police roadblocks, roving patrols on trains heading for Beijing, the sealing off of the cavernous Tian’anmen Square, accessible only to those who present their identity cards for inspection…the message is clear: we are nervous, possibly even weak, but do not meddle; we can still crush you.”

**Ryan Maxwell (College), Chile, Fall 2010**

The overwhelming presence of “perros callejeros” (or street dogs) in Valparaíso isn’t simply limited to the crowded plazas and touristy squares, but howls throughout the whole city, from the base of the port to the very tops of the hills. In fact, a study in 2007 reported an estimated 25,000 dogs roam as strays throughout Valparaíso’s “cerros.” Not all in Valpo portray the city’s canine occupation in a negative light. Asking a local friend about her opinion of the dogs, I was surprised to hear her refer to them as “fellow porteños.” Like all of the old buildings that line our streets, the dogs are part of what make this city what it is; without them, this would not be Valparaíso. Such attitudes reflect the ever-present romanticism of Valparaíso’s identity. With firm belief in their city’s unconventional and unorthodox beauty, locals often reject the criterion of others, accepting and incorporating certain phenomena as fundamental to the city’s character that might puzzle others, such as the overflowing graffiti, the disorganized chaos of houses in the cerros, the aging buildings in the plazas, or in this case, the massive settlement of strays that live among the citizens. Seen in this light, the issue of stray dogs in Valpo becomes more than just a traditional problem found in a developing nation. It moves beyond the mere difficulties of financial allocation to public services, and strikes at the very core of Valparaíso’s identity and self-understanding.
As students at foreign universities, JYAN students found themselves adjusting not only to new languages and food, but also to often stark differences between university culture in the United States and their new schools. From pedagogical style emphasizing rote learning to student strikes that disrupted final exams, students were often surprised by the unexpected challenge of higher learning abroad. The challenge was also exhilarating, giving them a wide perspective on the privilege of education and causing them to adapt their talents to participate and contribute in new ways. The experience of being a global student—someone open, questioning, reflective, critical, and adaptable—will stay with the JYAN participants as they leave Georgetown and embark upon their new careers.

Martine Randolph (SFS), France, Fall 2010

In the U.S., it seems as though students look to constantly challenge whatever the professor is saying because that seems to be the way to distinguish yourself. Here in Strasbourg, that is not the goal. That is not to say that either is better, but that they lead to different learning atmospheres. In the U.S., you find a more skeptical outlook on knowledge, where central ideas are twisted and prodded to see how they react to different situations and perspectives. Students in the U.S. seem to take on knowledge creation as their own process to see if the knowledge passes the test of recreation. This constant recreation can be quite inefficient and egotistical. In France, what I tend to see is a society composed of people living more routine lives than people in the U.S. However, the reasons for those routines have been perfected over hundreds of years. Because of this length of history, constant reinvention would be taking a step back. So within the French classroom, students are mute transcribers of the lecture. Not because they aren’t without voice, but because their system of knowledge creation is based on a linear model, rather than a circular one.

Gina Bull (SFS), Academic Year, Senegal and France

A quality I’ve noticed from Sciences-Po is the French love for precision and standardization. The first thing thrown at us in orientation is the incredibly stringent attachment to methodology, namely in exposés, or oral presentations—down to the number of seconds of each part to the exact correlation of “parties” and “sous-parties” (two parts with each having two or three sous-parties, vs. three having parts with each two/three sous-parties: the age-old rivalry). Each class in Sciences-Po is required to include exposés, a fact I mention not just to summon your pity, but because I honestly believe it’s of integral sociological importance. Sciences-Po students are bred to be skilled orators and synthesizer/simplifiers, preparing them for their political careers. And moreover, it spreads into French culture as a whole— I’ll often see talk shows on television with large round tables, where each personality is required to give their own exposé. Even look at the French language itself: what is the subjunctive, but not a way of indicating opinions of doubt, opinion, or superlative as opposed to fact? The
French love to be precise, and they come from a position (contrary to many American universities) where there really is an authoritative fact that comes from the well-established process of study.

Ashley Bradford (College), Germany, Academic Year

Although recent educational reforms have brought the models of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees to Germany, there are still many ways in which the structure of study differs from the American university paradigm. Far from the four-year standard, the length of study is rarely defined at its beginning and often seems indefinite. The seemingly liberal structure of study is made possible, at least in part, by the staggeringly low (by American standards) tuition fees, which range up to 500 euros per semester. After widespread protests in reaction to the new student fees, I find it best not to discuss the cost of a private university in the United States. Somehow the topic arises, and usually results in an emotional gumbo with equal parts confusion, distaste, shock, and latent satisfaction.

Christopher Szurgot (College), Argentina, Fall 2010

During my semester here, a strike occurred in the Buenos Aires public school system that abruptly stopped classes for a period of six weeks. This was a strike started by students on behalf of the teachers and the conditions of the schools themselves. It is called a toma, a specific form of protest where the students occupy school buildings to prohibit classes until a specific request is met. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of the toma is the fact that it began with high school students with the goal of changing the poor conditions of their school buildings and low salaries of their teachers. The toma spread to the majority of public high schools in Buenos Aires, and the university students soon took up the cause to show solidarity. The whole experience was like a roller coaster ride that I never could have imagined while contemplating studying abroad in Argentina back in the U.S. It was frustrating at times and many peoples’ final exam schedules were negatively affected by the loss of class time, but looking back, it was exhilarating. I didn’t have just the chance to learn about political and social activism while here, I lived through it.

Comment from Prof. Heidi Byrnes to Ashley Bradford

Ashley, I was intrigued about your observations about how underlying structural (and financial) realities of the German university system affect life at contemporary German universities in comparison to private U.S. universities like Georgetown, and how these institutions are implementing the new courses of study. I would be curious to hear from you where you find the biggest differences between your experience of the LMU and GU in these two areas: student-professor relationships, particularly as those reflect the complex balancing act of teaching and scholarship; and student to student relationships, particularly with regard to topics of conversation that seem to be favored among students.
2010-2011 JYAN
Student Participants

Nafees Ahmed
Major: Government, Georgetown College
Hometown: Cambridge, England
Host Country: Turkey
Host University: Koç University
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Sarah Balistreri
Major: Spanish, Georgetown College
Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Host Country: Chile
Host University: Universidad Católica de Valparaíso
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

RJ Barthelmes
Major: American Studies, Georgetown College
Hometown: California, Maryland
Host Country: Italy
Host University: University of Loyola Chicago John Felice Rome Center
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Thaddeus Bell
Major: Regional and Comparative Studies of the Middle East, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Nyack, New York
Host Country: Jordan
Host University: University of Jordan
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Ashley Bradford
Major: German and History, Georgetown College
Hometown: Westford, Massachusetts
Host Country: Germany
Host University: Ludwig Maxmilians Universität
Length of Stay: Academic Year

Gina Bull
Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: New York City, New York
Host Country: Senegal and France
Host University: Suffolk University Dakar, Sciences Po
Length of Stay: Academic Year

Emily Cabanatuan
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Vancouver, Washington
Host Country: Dominican Republic
Host University: Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, Instituto Filosófico Pedro Francisco Bonó, Facultad Latinoamérica de Ciencias Sociales
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Deven Comen
Major: Government, Georgetown College
Hometown: Durham, Connecticut
Host Country: India
Host University: Alliance for Global Education, Fergusson College
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Caitlin DeLaurentis
Major: American Studies, Georgetown College
Hometown: Kensington, Maryland
Host Country: Ireland
Host University: National University of Ireland
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Hannah Dee
Major: Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service
Hometown: Great Falls, Virginia
Host Country: Senegal
Host University: Suffolk University Dakar
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Louis DiPaola
Major: Classical Languages and Government, Georgetown College
Hometown: Elizabeth, New Jersey
Host Country: Italy
Host University: Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Beth DiSciullo
Major: Government, Georgetown College
Hometown: Ijamsville, Maryland
Host Country: Italy
Host University: Georgetown University Villa le Balze
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Tiare Dunlap
Major: English, Georgetown College
Hometown: Malibu, California
Host Country: Italy
Host University: Georgetown University Villa le Balze
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Marisa Edmonds
Major: American Studies, Georgetown College
Hometown: Short Beach, Connecticut
Host Country: Turkey
Host University: Georgetown University McGhee Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, Koç University
Length of Stay: Fall Semester
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<tr>
<td>Meredith English</td>
<td>Major: International Business and Finance, McDonough School of Business&lt;br&gt;Hometown: West Islip, New York&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Spain&lt;br&gt;Host University: Escola Superior de Comer Internacional</td>
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<td>Lane Feler</td>
<td>Major: Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Memphis, Tennessee&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Spain&lt;br&gt;Host University: Universidad de Sevilla</td>
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<td>Beth Goldberg</td>
<td>Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Chapel Hill, North Carolina&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Kenya&lt;br&gt;Host University: United States International University of Nairobi</td>
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<td>Amy Guillotte</td>
<td>Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Lake Oswego, Oregon&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Qatar&lt;br&gt;Host University: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar</td>
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<td>Spring Semester</td>
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<td>Alyxie Harrick</td>
<td>Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Norwalk, Connecticut&lt;br&gt;Host Country: China&lt;br&gt;Host University: East China Normal University, Shanghai</td>
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<td>Brooke Heinichen</td>
<td>Major: Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio&lt;br&gt;Host Country: France&lt;br&gt;Host University: Sciences Po</td>
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<td>Caroline Holkeboer</td>
<td>Major: American Studies, Georgetown College&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Chicago, Illinois&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Czech Republic&lt;br&gt;Host University: Charles University</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
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<td>Spring Semester</td>
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<td>Wendy Hua</td>
<td>Major: Regional Comparative Studies of Latin America and Asia, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Houston, Texas&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Chile&lt;br&gt;Host University: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Universidad de Chile</td>
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<td>Bethany Imondi</td>
<td>Major: Government and English, Georgetown College&lt;br&gt;Hometown: North Providence, Rhode Island&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Italy&lt;br&gt;Host University: Georgetown University Villa le Balze</td>
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<td>Peter Johns</td>
<td>Major: International Economics, Finance, and Commerce, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Osterville, Massachusetts&lt;br&gt;Host Country: China&lt;br&gt;Host University: Beijing Foreign Studies University</td>
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<td>Ben Johnson</td>
<td>Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Lexington, Massachusetts&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Qatar&lt;br&gt;Host University: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar</td>
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<td>Emma Kelsey</td>
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<td>Rebecca Kisel</td>
<td>Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Jordan&lt;br&gt;Host University: University of Jordan</td>
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<td>Xochitl Ledesma</td>
<td>Major: Operations and Information Management, and Marketing, McDonough School of Business&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Santa Ana, California</td>
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<td>Seungah Lee</td>
<td>Major: International Economics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Plano, Texas&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Jordan&lt;br&gt;Host University: University of Jordan</td>
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<td>Gary Li</td>
<td>Major: Finance, McDonough School of Business&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Old Tappan, New Jersey&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Egypt&lt;br&gt;Host University: American University in Cairo</td>
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<td>Elena Lien</td>
<td>Major: Government, Georgetown College&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Portland, Oregon&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Egypt&lt;br&gt;Host University: American University in Cairo</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>Fall Semester</td>
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<td>Paige Lovejoy</td>
<td>Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Peru, Chile, Argentina</td>
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<td>Caitlin Mac Neal</td>
<td>Major: Government, Georgetown College&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Rumson, New Jersey&lt;br&gt;Host Country: South Africa&lt;br&gt;Host University: Stellenbosch University</td>
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<td>Sammy Magnuson</td>
<td>Major: American Studies, Georgetown College&lt;br&gt;Hometown: La Cañada, California&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Italy&lt;br&gt;Host University: Università degli studi di Firenze</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Università degli studi di Firenze</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Malandra</td>
<td>Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service&lt;br&gt;Hometown: Wayne, Pennsylvania&lt;br&gt;Host Country: Chile&lt;br&gt;Host University: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Universidad de Chile</td>
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<td>Fall Semester</td>
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Andrew Marinelli  
Major: Science, Technology, and International Affairs, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Montpelier, Vermont  
Host Country: Belgium  
Host University: Université Libre de Bruxelles  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Ryan Maxwell  
Major: Government, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Warren, New Jersey  
Host Country: Chile  
Host University: Pontifica Universidad Católica de Valparaíso  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Eileen McFarland  
Major: English, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Arlington, Virginia  
Host Country: Ecuador and El Salvador  
Host University: Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas  
Length of Stay: Academic Year

Bethan McGarry  
Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Natick, Massachusetts  
Host Country: Chile  
Host University: Pontifica Universidad Católica de Valparaíso  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Michael J. Meaney  
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Tucson, Arizona  
Host Country: Mexico  
Host University: Universidad Iberoamericana  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Julie Patterson  
Major: American Studies, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Orange County, California  
Host Country: United Kingdom  
Host University: King's College London  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Zayan Pereborow  
Major: Finance and International Business, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Avon-by-the-Sea, New Jersey  
Host Country: Spain  
Host University: Escola Superior de Comerç Internacional  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Martine Randolph  
Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Washington, DC  
Host Country: France  
Host University: Sciences Po, Strasbourg  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Lauren Reese  
Major: Sociology, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Raleigh, North Carolina  
Host Country: India  
Host University: Independent Program in Jaipur, Rajasthan  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Michelle Saks  
Major: Arabic and Government, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Kinnelon, New Jersey  
Host Country: Egypt and Morocco  
Host University: American University of Cairo, AMIDEAST Program, Mohamed V University  
Length of Stay: Academic Year

Jessica Schieder  
Major: International Political Economy, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Mays Landing, New Jersey  
Host Country: Germany  
Host University: Ludwig Maximilians Universität  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Mark Schmidt  
Major: International Economics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Wheaton, Illinois  
Host Country: Chile  
Host University: Pontifica Universidad Católica de Chile  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Sarah Sealock  
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Zanesville, Ohio  
Host Country: Qatar  
Host University: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Nick Shaker  
Major: Arabic and English, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Seattle, Washington  
Host Country: Jordan  
Host University: University of Jordan  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Samantha Sisskind  
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Marlboro, New Jersey  
Host Country: Jordan  
Host University: University of Jordan  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Anusuya Sivaram  
Major: International Economics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Saratoga, California  
Host Country: United Kingdom  
Host University: London School of Economics  
Length of Stay: Academic Year

Colin Steele  
Major: Culture and Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: Wellesley, Massachusetts  
Host Country: Turkey and Ireland  
Host University: Georgetown University McGhee Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, National University of Ireland  
Length of Stay: Academic Year

Chris Szurgot  
Major: History, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois  
Host Country: Argentina  
Host University: Pontifica Universidad Católica Argentina  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester

Paulina Velasco  
Major: International Politics, School of Foreign Service  
Hometown: San Diego, California  
Host Country: France  
Host University: Sciences Po  
Length of Stay: Spring Semester

Hannah Walker  
Major: English, Georgetown College  
Hometown: Montclair, New Jersey  
Host Country: Japan  
Host University: Sophia University  
Length of Stay: Fall Semester
“What really made JYAN a unique experience was that it forced me to look at my host country, city, and university through a religious lens. It was refreshing to use this perspective because my thoughts about my study abroad experience had been lingering in other areas such as culture, art, history, and politics. The use of a theological lens seemed to help complete the puzzle of viewing a culture from an informed yet foreign perspective.”

Ashley Bradford, Germany

“Being part of JYAN was one of the best decisions I made during my experience abroad. During much of my stay in Chile, I was so caught up in trying to make friends with fellow students, travel, spend time with my host family, and study that I rarely stopped to reflect. JYAN gave me the push that I needed to delve more deeply into the culture and history of the place I was living in.”

Sarah Balistreri, Chile

Junior Year Abroad Network Coordinators

Melody Fox Ahmed, Assistant Director for 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 Associate
Jamie Scott joined the Berkley Center as the Program Associate in June 2010. He graduated from Georgetown in May 2010 with a B.A. in Government. He is enrolled in the Masters in Public Policy program at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute.
“JYAN is a fantastic program for students to reflect on the religious and cultural traditions in their host countries. It affords students the opportunity to witness and contribute opinions on their fascinating and unique experiences that separate their semester abroad from their semesters at Georgetown. From participating in JYAN, I’ve returned from my travels with a collection of stories that take me back to the places I visited and people I met every time I read them.”

*Samantha Sisskind, Jordan*

“JYAN extends a scholarly conversation across continents. It allowed me to bridge the great distances separating myself from my peers, so that together we could reflect on broader questions of religion, identity, and politics. Learning about my classmates’ experiences with Catholicism in Argentina and Peru, for instance, helped me make sense of the differences I felt between the Chilean and U.S. Catholic Churches. Study abroad is hectic, stressful, and highly enjoyable, and JYAN helps you pause to think deliberately about all you have learned and observed.”

*Mark Schmidt, Chile*