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JUNIOR YEAR ABROAD NETWORK

59 HOYAS IN 28 COUNTRIES ON 5 CONTINENTS

The Berkley Center Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) connects Georgetown students studying abroad at universities around the world. Students share reflections on religion, culture, politics, and society in their host countries, commenting on topics ranging from religious freedom and interfaith dialogue to secularization, globalization, democracy, and economics. In the seven years since the program began, more than 350 students have participated, studying in nearly 50 countries.

Participating students write two academic blogs over the course of the semester and provide commentary on blogs from other students. Upon their return to campus, they participate in a panel discussion that explores common issues and challenges in their respective countries. JYAN is administered by Jamie Scott and Melody Fox Ahmed of the Berkley Center and is part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Program.

The map below shows the countries where these students have studied.
### About the Doyle Engaging Difference Program

The Doyle Engaging Difference Program is a campus-wide collaboration between the Berkley Center and the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS) to strengthen Georgetown University’s core commitment to tolerance and diversity and to enhance global awareness of the challenges and opportunities of an era of increasing interconnectedness. Doyle faculty fellowships support the redesign of lower-level courses to incorporate themes of cultural, religious, and other forms of difference, while Doyle Seminars facilitate in-depth explorations of similar themes in smaller, upper-level courses. In addition to curricular innovation, the Doyle Program supports the Junior Year Abroad Network, through which Hoyas blog about their encounters with diverse host societies, and Doyle student fellows, who engage intercultural and interreligious dialogue on campus. The program is made possible through the generosity of William Doyle (C’72), a member of the Georgetown University Board of Directors.

### About The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & 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.

### Georgetown University Study Abroad

Georgetown University encourages students to spend a semester, year, or summer session abroad as part of their academic experience. The Office of International Programs offers approximately 160 programs in more than 35 countries. The majority of Georgetown students enroll in direct matriculation programs, where they take courses in the language of the host university alongside degree-seeking students at the institution. The GU philosophy is that by fully integrating into the host university, Georgetown students are best positioned to gain the most from their overseas experience. In addition to direct enrollment, Georgetown offers a number of programs in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central Europe designed to facilitate the study of language, culture and area studies.
During their time abroad, many students wrote about the treatment and integration of immigrant and minority communities, socioeconomic disparity, and interreligious dialogue, often contrasting the situation in their host country with that of the United States. Bloggers offered insightful observations on both the challenges and opportunities of pluralism in a variety of contexts. Their reflections offer a lens through which to examine our own engagement with difference in the United States.

Minorities & Immigration

A NATION OF HERITAGES
DEREK BUYAN (SFS’14), GERMANY

Germany has only recently experienced any kind of large-scale immigration. They welcomed “guest workers” from East European countries since the Second World War, and the influx of Turkish immigrants is even more recent. This means that the vast majority of adult Germans did not have a kindergarten experience like mine. Most have never had to face the question, “Why can’t I just be German?” Upon closer inspection, it seems that the vast majority of Germans who ask this question [“Where are you really from?”] do so quite innocently. They are not being judgmental or racist, quite the opposite. It is simply their method of trying to engage difference. It might be clumsy and easily misunderstood, but it is a way of acknowledging that “being American” involves a fundamentally different self-understanding than does “being German,” and that this American self-understanding actively incorporates other heritages and nationalities.

WHOSE IRELAND IS IT ANYWAY?
COLLEEN CREEDEN (C’14), IRELAND

Ireland in 2012 is a fully developed nation, and a very wealthy one by global standards. To an outsider looking in, there seems to be little reason for anyone to want to leave this place, except maybe the dreary weather. But when my Irish history professor recently asked our class how many students were planning on emigrating in the next five years, numerous hands were raised. It may be perception more than anything that’s shifting the tide in Irish emigration yet again. During the Celtic tiger days of the early 2000s, Ireland became a net importer of people for the first time since the 1970s. Now that the economy is struggling to recover from the global recession and its own real estate crash, opportunity has declined.

LOS MAPUCHE
SARAH BARAN (C’14), CHILE

All cultures change with time, but the goal of intercultural education is to preserve the values and many traditional aspects of the Mapuche lifestyle within a Chilean, and even an American, context. While there are many fruitful benefits from intercultural exchange, the goal of this curriculum and these schools is to instill a pride in their students for their own heritage. Chol Chol, the high school we visited, hopes that by graduation the students will be able to recognize what it means to be part of their own culture and the beauty that is also in cultures distinct from their own. While these schools dedicated to intercultural exchange are rare, there are clearly signs of success in instilling pride for the Mapuche heritage. For example, I asked my younger brother if he knew how to do the cueca, the traditional dance of Chile. He looked at me and said “No, I am not Chilean. I am Mapuche. We are a different culture.”

DUMENA: LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND MINORITIES IN BOTSWANA
BEATA FOGARASI (SFS’14), BOTSWANA

Botswana boasts a fascinating fusion of its two main languages in everyday life; the malls are full of English while the
markets just outside buzz with salesmen advertising their wares in Setswana. The ease with which conversations bend back and forth between the two languages is impressive. But, the two-stepped dominance of these languages—English the international standard, Setswana the national—over the minority languages is worrying. I would love to return to Botswana in 15 or 20 years to observe its development in terms of political stability, economic diversification, and public health, but also to see its linguistic progress. Will these smaller languages, like Kalanga and Sekgalagadi, flourish or falter? Will Setswana gain ground in professional and academic circles, or will the separation between private and public language use widen?

**HAPPY GANESH CHATURTHI!**

**AMY ESPOSTO (C’14), INDIA**

India, although officially a secular democracy, in my experience is unofficially a Hindu country. During the festivals of the god Ganapati and the goddess Durga, signs appeared all over the city sporting the faces of local politicians wishing the people of Pune a “Happy Ganesh Chaturthi!” Local and national newspapers also contain information on how to conduct certain pujas (prayers). The entire city shut down last week to celebrate Dasara, the last day of Navaratri, a festival celebrating the goddess Durga, while Eid, a Muslim national holiday, was barely recognized by the city. Coming from Georgetown, a place that encourages interreligious dialogue and provides outlets for all types of religious expression, I was surprised at how difficult it is to openly practice a religion that is not Hinduism.

**GLOBALIZATION, CULTURE, AND ENGAGING DIFFERENCES IN SEVILLE**

**MARY BOROWIEC (C’14), SPAIN**

Our tour guide, Dani, pointed out one store that looked like your average convenience store. He explained, this is a *chino* it is open all day, everyday. We looked bewilderedly at him, a *chino*? He laughed and made a gesture imitating Asiatic eyes, clarifying the name. We gaped at him for a gesture that in the United States would be entirely inappropriate and insensitive, but he laughed amiably, explaining we would get to know the *chinos* when we wanted to purchase something during siesta or more specifically, buy alcohol after the Spanish stores stopped selling it 10:00 p.m. Unsure whether Dani’s description was his attempt at humor, or reflective of the general Sevillian population’s sentiment toward these establishments, I continued to inquire and listen as I heard other Spaniards discuss these stores. I discovered: yes, everyone referred to these stores as *chinos*. However, as I understood it, the name was not inherently imbued with negative connotations, rather it was an expedient way to describe their general merchandise and character.

### Engaging Difference at the Local Level

**ENGLISH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ABOUT CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN CHINA**

**JACLYN UDELL (C’14), CHINA**

In my first conversation with two employees, I asked them about their experience with community involvement, and told them about my duties as an intern. They told me they had never donated their time or money to organizations with a good cause, nor did they want to. They said, “Chinese people take care of their families, and the government should take care of the people who are without a family.” My excitement for creating a sustainable way for the organization to do good in Shanghai came to a screeching halt when I was faced with the reality of why corporate social responsibility is struggling to popularize in China. I wondered, how much good am I really doing if I am imposing the western practice of civic duty in a place where that is not their tradition?

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EXPEDITED**

**JASON THOMPSON (MSB’14), SOUTH AFRICA**

I was talking with my international orientation advisor before classes began about the difficulty of the classes at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She told me that classes were actually extremely tough for most of the student body, and as many as 30 percent of students do not continue after their first year. (…) When you actually investigate the cause of the relatively low retention rate you will realize that is not the fault of the students who drop out. It could very well be the system that the students are in. For instance, the students at UCT are expected to use the Internet and computer as much as any other college student around the world. However, some of the students have never seen a computer much less used one until they get to the university. This would cause a student to not only have to keep up with schoolwork, but master using a computer at the same time.
THE VAN: RIO’S TRULY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
BEN TALUS (SFS’14), BRAZIL

“The van”—the blanket term that refers to the ubiquitous white van/bus/truck borderline street worthy vehicles—graces the Rio streets 24 hours a day, seven days a week. On the surface, these vans seem to be just another form of transportation. However, after routinely riding in them, I have discovered a microcosm of that embracive yet elusive carioca culture. The van system initially began as a relatively inexpensive transportation service to and from Rio’s sprawling favelas, or slums. The routes tend to originate and terminate in the favelas and traverse the most affluent areas of the city, like the famous Ipanema and Copacabana beaches. They provide resources that city-funded public transportation fails to supply. By connecting socioeconomically disparate neighborhoods, they provide a forum for rather interesting cultural, political, economic, and even religious exchanges.

CUBA: A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY WITH FIRST WORLD INDICATORS
NICK DIRAGO (C’14), CUBA

“Cuba is a third-world country with first-world indicators,” said a guest speaker in my research course on Cuban demographics. Indeed, much about the nation of contradictions that is Cuba can be gleaned from her remark. The country is both an impoverished, import-dependent island that is isolated from many global economic nuclei, and one that keeps pace with some of the world’s most developed nations in categories such as literacy, infant mortality, life expectancy, healthcare quality and coverage, and educational access. Politics aside, that a nation whose average citizen earns $20 per month can make such strides toward quality of life is an impressive statement on behalf of Cuba’s social policy.

IN THE SHADOW OF A MOUNTAIN
MARY PAT BOYLE (C’14), TANZANIA

The crew of porters [who shepherd tourists to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro] can be seen in some of the most random t-shirts, ranging from a 1996 NFC Championship shirt, to a Ramones concert shirt, to an “I Bleed Hoyas Blue” shirt (my contribution). Although humorous and oddly comforting and homey, these shirts show the dependence that these men have on the tourists that pass through these companies. It is a sobering fact that these men, largely uneducated, live and die by the mountain and those who dare climb up it. Few regulations for the care of porters are carried out by the Tanzanian government, leaving hundreds of citizens at the
mercy of tourists from far away lands and their pocketbooks. However, on Kilimanjaro, these economic woes do not seem to impact the joy that the men have for their mountain, their office, as they call it. Kilimanjaro is an escape from the realities of the faltering Tanzanian economy, an oasis that soothes the wounds of Tanzanians, while fueling the problems that encompass the impoverished country.

THE SPANISH ECONOMIC CRISIS FROM THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE
LIZ LEMBO (C’14), SPAIN

I arrived in Spain with a minor understanding of what Spaniards refer to as “la crisis,” and was prepared to listen and learn more about it—as I figured such a problem would naturally dominate the topic of most conversations. Yet, having been in Spain for nearly a month now, the number of conversations I have had, or even heard, about “la crisis” is fairly limited. I have noticed a few small comments from my host mother or brother, usually after news of protests or unemployment rates come on the television during meals. Some of my teachers have made a few comments, one joking that we are always out of chalk due to “la crisis.” On many streets in Salamanca, there is at least one store with a big red sign reading “últimos días” (final days) in the window. Yet, besides small reminders like these, I haven’t heard many direct conversations about “la crisis.”

Embracing Religious Diversity

UNDERSTANDING THE REALITY OF INTERFAITH RESPECT AND MUSLIM BELIEFS IN JORDAN
BENO PICCIANO (SFS’14), JORDAN

On the streets of Amman, which I have found to be a relatively open-minded city, I have not once felt the need to mask any aspect of my identity when asked about it—whether that be my American citizenship, my political partisanship, or my faith. I reply simply, “No, I am Christian,” but it is the one-word follow-up question that surprises me: “Why?” asks my driver, who wears a cream-colored taqiyah (a traditional Islamic cap). Unaccustomed to needing to provide an explanation, I laugh in surprise as my companion—one eye on the road and one eye on me—earnestly awaits my answer. I decide not to pursue a technical discussion of beliefs in prophets and various holy happenings said to have occurred in this region over the past several thousand years, so I opt for the easy answer: “Well, I don’t know…my parents and family are Christian. I was raised Christian.” “Good, good,” my driver responds, as he turns off the radio and presses play on the CD player.

UNDERSTANDING SENEGALESE EXCEPTIONALISM AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE
GLENN OJEDA (SFS’14), SENEGAL

A great emphasis is placed on religion in Senegalese culture. Even though there is no sort of extremist religious movement and religious diversity is a part of society, everyone must be a believer, be it Christian, Muslim, or any other denomination. One must have beliefs and practice a religion; atheism is not socially accepted. Furthermore, most Senegalese Muslims are Sunni and follow the Sufi religious tradition as organized in religious brotherhoods. The Sufi tradition is one of external peace, which focuses the individual on what the Prophet Mohammed called the greater jihad, that is to say the struggle
within each of us as human beings, the struggle against sin and temptation. Thus, a tradition that emphasizes belief in the one god and internal reflection, brings forth another branch of power, that of the religious leaders at a national level. The caliphs of the respective Sufi brotherhoods and even the cardinal of the five percent Catholic population take strong stances in the national arena when needed and keep a check on politicians.

CHRISTIANITY IN AN ISLAMIC STATE
NICOLE FLEURY (SFS’14), QATAR

I have come to discover another important aspect of living in Qatar, namely the circumstances of Christians. There is an entire official process for allowing them to worship and operate churches within the state. An *al Jazeera* article written at the time of the first church opening captured the context of this historic event by noting, “after decades of worshipping in borrowed spaces, Qatar’s growing Christian community is celebrating—albeit quietly—the opening of the country’s first church since pre-Islamic times.” Clearly, the economic and infrastructural expansion of Qatar has set into motion more developments than just increased international familiarity and an expansive, sparkling skyline.

THEN AND NOW: ENGAGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN TANZANIA
KIERAN HALLORAN (SFS’14), TANZANIA

Just walking down the street one would find many women wearing hijabs or other forms of covering and men with *taqiyahs* on. Additionally it is not unusual to see long processions going through the city for weddings and funerals, typically accompanied by some musicians. While the government has attempted to downplay religion in Tanzania, people nonetheless place it front and center in their public lives. Fortunately, the public nature of religion, particularly in Arusha, has not fostered any division or tension but rather understanding and acceptance. Just one block up the road from the main cathedral in Arusha, you would find an equally large mosque with just as many people engaging their faith. By being forthright about who they are, the people in Arusha have been able to admit their differences yet still coexist and live together.
America and the West from a Foreign Perspective

The treatment of the West, and the United States in particular, in foreign media as well as informal discourse was a prominent theme among this year’s bloggers. Several students had the opportunity to witness the 2012 US presidential campaign from abroad, and their reflections provide a unique perspective on the event. Many others offered observations on cultural differences between the United States and their host countries on everything from norms surrounding food and drink to attitudes toward the state.

The 2012 Election

Compromise: The 2012 US Presidential Election in Denmark
Elizabeth Schiavoni (C’14), Denmark

Despite inevitable focus on individual Danish politicians in Danish media, university-aged Danes I have spoken with feel US politics is based too much on individuals and party feuds and not enough on policy. In Denmark, the prime minister chairs and sets the agenda for the meetings of the council of ministers (equivalent to the US president’s cabinet) and gathers support in the Folketing (parliament) for legislation. However, all processes must be based on compromise. Denmark has three major political parties, four or five significant parties, and a few smaller ones. A coalition is always needed to have enough support for the election of a prime minister and rarely does the prime minister’s coalition have the majority in the Folketing. When it comes to voting for prime minister there are not many choices, like in the United States for the president, but coalitions and majorities change frequently.

The US Presidential Election is Salient for Buenos Aires
Sophia Berhie (SFS’14), Argentina

This past Monday I watched the foreign policy presidential debate from Buenos Aires and witnessed firsthand the salience of our elections in Latin America. I used to think the maxim “leader of the free world,” was an overstated and contrived cliché. In Monday’s debate, Governor Romney even asserted a growing belief that the age of American exceptionalism is over and US global influence has decreased in the last four years. However, from my experience in Argentina, that is not the case. The person who occupies the position of president of the United States of America is an important and critical figure for Argentines and the rest of the world... The discrepancy between our government’s importance to Argentina and the reverse is unsettling. The same goes for our relations with the entirety of Latin America and the greater part of the globe. And although our massive southern neighbors, Latin America and Argentina, were left out of Monday night’s discourse, the significance of this coming Tuesday’s elections will remain.

What Do the US Elections Mean for Kiwis?
Merritt Moran (MSB‘14), New Zealand

I learned a lot about politics in New Zealand during the US presidential debates. New Zealanders are staunch Obama supporters and will not be swayed otherwise. During the first debate that Romney won, everyone around me hated the things that Romney said. They thought that he was complete rubbish and could not understand how he had any support at all. I was really taken aback by the failure of these people to recognize differing perspectives. However, I learned that the level of socialism in this country is a large contributing factor to underlying political opinions. Even the conservatives in this country end up seeming more like Democrats from the United States. The entire political spectrum is shifted to the left here in New Zealand.
Contrasting Culture in the United States and Abroad

TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND SECURITY CONTRASTS US AND RUSSIAN LIFE
JESSICA CRAIGE (SFS’14), RUSSIA

Maybe I am naïve and optimistic, but I think Americans have a certain level of trust in their government and in society as a whole… Talking with Russians about politics makes you realize just how defeated most of them are. Most Russians seem to be thoroughly indifferent, almost apolitical; they insist that nothing can be done, that this is just how things are in Russia. At first, this attitude seemed irritating and fatalistic. However, living in Russia has shown me that there is absolutely a kernel of truth in these sentiments. Just as democracy and rule of law are entrenched in American society, evasion of rules and authoritarian traditions seem to be enshrined with the Russian way of life.

YOUTH, FAMILY, AND VALUES: THE CULTURE OF DRINKING IN DENMARK
GALEN FOOITE (C’14), DENMARK

When I first met my visiting family, a Danish family I spend time with every couple weeks, I brought up my wonderment about the lax Danish attitude toward alcohol consumption with them. They confirmed that teenage alcohol consumption is hardly stigmatized the way it is in the United States and offered me an illuminating anecdote on the issue. My visiting parents told me that when their son reached ninth grade parents at the school were going to discuss how much and in what forms to let their kids drink. In addition to the obvious—that the teenage drinking is acceptable at a much younger age than in the States—I also found it interesting that the parents played a major role in their kids’ introduction to alcohol. In my experiences in high school, the parents’ expected role was to keep their kid away from alcohol. Thus, American underage drinking usually either occurred in (attempted) secret or under the blind eye of a parent. The way I see it is that for teenagers in America, alcohol is often a kind of forbidden fruit, whereas in Denmark alcohol is a standard part of life.

HOW DOES A BROKEN EDUCATION SYSTEM AFFECT CHINA’S ABILITY TO INNOVATE?
JESSICA ANN (SFS’14), CHINA

It’s fairly clear that by failing to provide students with opportunities to think for themselves, China’s students are left at a disadvantage. In an article from the Huffington Post, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University—a feeder school to the Chinese diplomatic corps—commented that while his students had an incredible command of geography, history, and many other subjects, their analytical and argumentative abilities were incredibly undeveloped. This kind of system creates huge consequences for the economy, as innovation requires engineers, designers, entrepreneurs, and artists to think beyond existing ideas. As a result, China’s economy could face hurdles in developing a sustainable future economy.

THE PARADOX OF AMERICA IN ARGENTINA
ADAM RAMADAN (SFS’14), ARGENTINA

(…) Even with this embrace of America in Argentina, further enforced by Batman: The Dark Knight being sold out for weeks, billboards displaying Miami and New York in all of their beauty, or Carly Rae Jepsen blasting at dance clubs every weekend, it was the resistance toward the concept of America that hit me even harder. From the outlaw of American dollars in Argentina and President Fernandez de Kirchner spending much of her Day of Industry speech essentially bashing the United States, to certain Argentines blurring out any English curse word at the sound of Americans speaking English, there is as much resistance toward America (or the concept of America) as there is embrace. Don’t get me wrong: I’m well aware that we are not as beloved as we may lead ourselves to believe. After three months though, what caught me so off guard was that even with all of the love we got as a nation here in Argentina, there was just as much, if not more, backlash.

LE BON VIVANT: UNDERSTANDING FRENCH CULTURE THROUGH FOOD
KATHLEEN SORIANO-TAYLOR (C’14), FRANCE

French people always surprised to hear that “American food”—burgers, hotdogs and milkshakes—isn’t food that most Americans regularly eat, because baguettes and cheese and wine really is French food, and have remained an important part of their culture as a result of historical events. And really, how is it that despite living in Alsace, the land of beer and tarte-flambées, the Strasbourgeois remain fashionably thin? However, the food cultures in the United States and France are very different. I know many families in America that always eat with the television on, and for mine, we all came home at such different hours, it was very common for us to eat individually. Food is fuel in the United States. We’re in love with hand-food, snacks, and eating at our desks. In France, a country where everything shuts down between the hours of noon and 2:00 p.m. for lunch, meals are sacred. You eat and drink because the food and company is good.
The complex, often tumultuous relationship between religion and the state was perhaps the most common theme among student writing. Whether blogging from Russia, Senegal, or Chile, students offered fascinating insights into the impact of religion on politics, civil society, and gender norms in their host countries. Many bloggers also focused on instances of political activism abroad, whether or not spurred by religious tensions.

**The Politicization of Religion**

**MORMONS IN CHINA**

**BENJAMIN OMER (MSB’14), CHINA**

At the start of each meeting, there is a reminder of the peculiar conditions under which we gather to worship. A statement approved by church leadership in Salt Lake City is read. It reminds us that proselytizing is strictly prohibited in the People’s Republic of China. Whether forward or passive, the sharing of our faith with local Chinese nationals isn’t allowed. Most members follow this guidance out of respect for the trust that has been built between the church and the Chinese government. It’s the integrity of the church, not just yourself, that’s at risk. Just not talking about our beliefs can be difficult in a faith with noticeably different habits and a strong emphasis on missionary work.

**PRACTICE UPENDS CLASSROOM TEACHING OF COSTA RICAN CATHOLICISM**

**MARIAH BYRNE (SF5’14), COSTA RICA**

The different manifestations of the Catholic faith within the physical church are also apparent in the issues currently dominating national politics. Arguably the most controversial topics on the national agenda are the curriculum of sexual education for both public and private schools as well as the constitutionality of in vitro fertilization. Both topics have been discussed in more than one of my classes and demonstrate incredible different manners of interpreting the Catholic faith. (…) Ultimately, the religious and political debate of the moment shatters a stereotype I wasn’t even aware I had until it was broken—that the Latin American theology I had been taught in the classroom is exactly how Costa Ricans express their faith on a day-to-day basis. Thus far in my experience, I can attest this is surely not true, and I am curious to see exactly how the Catholic tradition manifests itself in the development of the debate over both sexual education and in vitro fertilization.

**CATHOLICISM IN ITALY: ANTIQUITY INTERMINGLING WITH MODERNITY**

**EMILY COCCIA (C’15), ITALY**

Although the Italian government disestablished Roman Catholicism as the state religion in 1985, public schools still teach it to all children (except those who formally request an exemption) and crucifixes still adorn state buildings and classrooms, justified as cultural, not religious, ar-
Religion and Civil Society

**FAITH SIMMERS BENEATH THE SURFACE OF TURKISH SOCIETY**

AUDREY WILSON (SFS’14), TURKEY

In denying Islam’s fluid character on the political stage, the state pushes it further into society itself; there it splits and scatters bits of its influence everywhere, confusing the already complex question of Turkish identity in the process. In Istanbul, dozens of mosques attract tourists from around the world while also serving as vibrant social centers that unite the local community. Each night in my apartment in Alanya, I listen as the American pop music blasting from the clubs mingles with the call to prayer, creating an auditory identity crisis at once totally strange and vaguely beautiful. At the elementary school where I work as a teacher’s aide once a month, one student comes to class with her hands covered in henna as her grandmother prepares for the hajj, but no teacher can wear a headscarf nor grow a beard. My host family asks about my religious and political beliefs, curious to make a link between the two in my life as they struggle to find one in their own state. These vignettes offer little clarity, but they do characterize the wonderful duality with Turkish society—the lively tensions simmering just beneath the surface of stale political dialogue.

**ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND RELIGION IN FRANCE**

MATTHEW WESTLUND (SFS’14), FRANCE

In return for a higher tax rate, most French disclaim any need to go above and beyond what the government provides for others. For this reason, government administrators are given the best possible education, as they are expected to maintain this level of government structure over all aspects of society. This Rousseauean distrust of civil society extends to organized religion. The strict separation of church and state is considered essential to their education system, and religion is considered a strictly private affair. You will never hear a politician talk about the influence that their faith (or lack thereof) has had on their political stances or even know their religion at all. Any display of religion that is considered ostentatious is frowned upon, especially in schools, where students may wear...
a small cross under their shirt, but certainly not a kippah or a headscarf. Even the ash used during Ash Wednesday is a faint grey color, almost invisible to others.

**SPANISH HANDS: CLUTCHING CAMERAS AND CLASPED IN PRAYER**

**ALEXANDRIA SAN JOSE (SFS’14), SPAIN**

Sevilla has perhaps the largest *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) celebrations, which draw the most tourists and the largest crowds. Barriers separate the expensive ticketed seating areas from the standing-only sections. The processions march down the main street toward the cathedral all night long. For the most part, the individual processions are identical, except for the color of the participants’ robes or the statues on the floats. Despite having already viewed similar processions for hours, people still stood mesmerized until after 4:00 a.m. To me, the atmosphere felt more like a bizarre show than a religious procession, which reveals, in my opinion, the highly commercialized nature of *Semana Santa* at times. For some, *Semana Santa* is merely a historical tradition and cultural celebration that draws many Spanish and foreign tourists.

**THE PARADOX OF CHINESE CHRISTIANITY: IS GOD RED?**

**XIAOLU LIU (SFS’14), CHINA**

(...)But from my interviews and dorm room chats with college students in China, it seems as though Christianity is doing a good job of staying beneath the surface. Most students can describe some of the more universal attributes of Christianity—the cross, the weekly gatherings, and the sense of community—but I can’t help but feel as though most of them know very little beyond that. For example, they would not be able to distinguish the Holy Trinity from each other, and they’re not quite clear on, when trying to get into heaven, whether a person needs to be a believer, a devout believer, or just a good person in general. Surprisingly, most people seemed to have never (knowingly) encountered a Christian before. From my conversations with students I feel as though Christianity does not really have a strong presence in China. This, of course, disagrees with all the research I’ve read declaring that “God is Red.”

Each night in my apartment in Alanya, I listen as the American pop music blasting from the clubs mingles with the call to prayer, creating an auditory identity crisis at once totally strange and vaguely beautiful.

-Audrey Wilson

**BUDDHISM’S INFLUENCE ON HEALTHCARE IN THAILAND**

**MARY OEFTERING (SFS’14), THAILAND**

My discussion with Martin helped me recognize that striving for health, in its simplest definition, means striving for good relationships. Relationships with the plants and animals that provide nourishment, with the systems that bring that sustenance to you, with the doctor that can relieve your suffering, with the friends and family that suffer with you, and all the other relationships whose maintenance we depend on for survival. By entering a culture on the opposite end of the spectrum of individualism, I am starting to realize just which relationships I have been ignoring. Individualism can help perfect some relationships, while collectivism leads me to form others. A perspective from both sides encourages complete health. With this balance in mind, I may be learning all that the Buddhist idea of “walking the middle way” truly implies.
EL Papa ES ARGENTINE
LAUREN LECCESE (SFS’14), ARGENTINA

I once again saw an outpouring of emotion with the election of an Argentine as Pope. Walking by the cathedral just hours after the announcement, I saw a crowd gathered in front cheering, beating on drums, and waving flags. On the subway ride home, local musicians played religious music while everyone sang along. Surprisingly, the crowd that gathered to celebrate included more than just the Catholic population (while the majority identifies as Catholic, the percentage that practices is fairly low). It was not just a religious celebration of a new leader, but also a matter of national pride. Everyone was waving Argentine flags and wearing blue and white t-shirts, while others cheered, “We beat Brazil!” Plaza de Mayo, the city’s historical hub of political protest and demonstration, is still filled with signs and posters of Pope Francis (and if you’re interested, any sort of souvenir with his face on it—mugs, pins, shirts, and all).

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE IRISH CATHOLIC CHURCH
KRISTIN CUNNINGHAM (NHS’14), IRELAND

When we looked online to order take-out food nothing was open until at least 3:00 p.m. or later. Confused and frustrated we decided to ask one of the security men in our apartment building. He proceeded to tell us that all the shops and most restaurants are closed because of church on Sunday. The mornings are left for everyone to go to Sunday mass, and it is not expected that anything is open until at least 12:00 p.m. Even the convenient store across the street from our apartment was closed!

RELIGION AND THE RUSSIAN WAY
ALEXANDRA BUCK (C’14), RUSSIA

There is a sense of great pride and spirituality from those practicing in the church, as they pray in front of different icons or listen to the words of a priest. Contrasting my experiences of religion in the United States, the notion of practicing religion in Russia does not solely mean attending services. Instead, spirituality and religious sentiment take the form of icons, or other depictions, spread around the home. In a manner similar to the way family photographs adorn the walls, these religious images hang about, creating the feeling of an interlocking relationship between religion and daily life. There is no separation between the two, but a constant flow of both ideals.

MAROONED IN SCANDINAVIA: THE LIFE OF A CATHOLIC IN DENMARK
NICHOLAS FEDYK (SFS’14), DENMARK

I’ve talked to many Danes—fellow students, professors, bus passengers, my visiting family—about their religiosity, and I get a similar response almost every time. Either they are more “spiritual” than “religious” (we could debate for hours about what those terms actually mean), or they aren’t anything at all. I consider them atheist, agnostic, doubting, confused, indifferent. There are a lot of different words to describe their beliefs, or lack thereof. In fact, I have not met a single Dane who is religious. Not a single one. Given my expectations and research, I cannot say that my experience so far has been surprising. But given my background, it has been somewhat shocking. But my greatest revelation is not about Denmark, but America. In particular, I realize I have been very isolated over the past twenty years. I have attended Catholic schools my entire life, and while studying abroad I have become surrounded, for the very first time, by people with views completely foreign to my own.
POLITICS AND RELIGION IN TURKEY: FROM ATATURK TO HEADSCARVES
ERICA LIN (SFS’14), TURKEY

From a westernized point of view, headscarves and other coverings often symbolize to us suppression of female independence. I hate to admit that I was wary of entering into a more conservative society, afraid that I would be criticized for not conforming to these religious customs. As a foreigner and an atheist, however, I find that I have not received any form of harassment for not wearing a headscarf. Indeed, a large number of women I have seen in public do not wear any head coverings whatsoever. Granted, I spend most of my time on a college campus located on the European side of Istanbul, a very liberal environment. But I would venture to say that the amount of skin a woman can reveal in public is not necessarily equivalent to the amount of social freedom that she has.

FLOWERED HIJABS AND PINK HEELS
SAMANTHA LIN (SFS’14), JORDAN

Walking the 20 minutes from the south end of campus to the main gate everyday is like swimming through a sea of hijabs. I am at least a head taller than all the other women so I tend to focus on the bobbing, brightly covered heads surrounding me. Some are electric blue with big white flowers; some have fringe; some are silk; some women wear adjoined black niqabs and there are even one or two in the full black burqa. Even though, or perhaps because, they are all similarly covered, their personalities shine through in their choice of hijab and their often matching bags and shoes. I love looking at the women here because as irrational as it may be, I feel as if we have an instant connection. Despite being worlds apart, I know that they alone can sympathize with me the most here and sometimes I can almost guess their thoughts. They know what its like to be honked and hollered at, to be harassed daily, to be constantly aware of your modesty, to always be on guard.

ON GENDER ROLES IN SHANGHAI
KRISTIN D’ALBA (C’14), CHINA

A few weeks ago my host parents invited me to their nephew’s wedding. I was flattered and thrilled that they had invited me; I have never had the chance to attend a traditional Chinese wedding! My host dad is the eldest son of five siblings. As soon as we entered the banquet hall, his younger sister directed him toward a specific chair at a table. I later took notice that the eldest or most well respected man at each table was told to sit directly opposite the door. In China sitting across from the entrance is considered the most desirable position and symbolizes control. According to Confucian thought, a natural hierarchy exists within the family: men are dominant over women, and parents are dominant over children. The seating arrangement at the wedding directly represented this Confucian structure.
Carnival Reveals Much About Gender, Sexuality, and Culture in Brazil
Aamir Hussain (C'14), Brazil

While experiencing the lively Carnival on the streets, I was immediately struck by the number of sexually controversial costumes. It is very common for men to dress in drag (Disney characters and Japanese anime are popular choices), and even to wear body suits with exaggerated female anatomy. Women, on the other hand, are expected to dress in traditional female clothing, and commonly in revealing outfits or swimsuits. When women wear costumes, they nearly always dress as stereotypically feminine figures such as fairies, princesses, or butterflies. In other words, it is socially acceptable for men to violate traditional gender roles, but the same privilege is not granted to women. Indeed, after spending several weeks in Rio, I also realized that the strict division of gender identity is visible even in seemingly mundane aspects of life. For example, it is considered “feminine” to sit on towels at the beach, and men are expected to show their manliness by sitting on bare sand.

Political Activism

The Public Perception of Cristina Kirchner
Jesse Colligan (SFS'14), Argentina

Argentine President Cristina Kirchner dismissed the recent demonstrations as having been driven by people who were more interested in what happened in Miami than Argentina. It is her frequent brash decrees like this that really cause me to pause. She seems to create a narrative that distracts from legitimate criticisms of her policies and administration. Without missing a beat, she appears entirely serious in her pronouncements that seem, at least to a foreigner, exaggerated and, sometimes, utterly ridiculous. I cannot shake the impression that she is always trying to convince her audience of something that is not entirely true while obscuring the truth.

A New Political Generation is Pushing Senegal Forward
Isabon Thamm (C'14), Senegal

In January of 2011, Y'en a Marre (“We've had enough” in French) had emerged as a non-violent activist group frustrated with the Wade regime and would prove a crucial part of the outcome of the race one year later. Comprised of Senegalese citizens from all walks of life, the leaders of the group were primarily those who could most easily and most eloquently spread their ideals: the musicians, rappers, and poets of the nation. As the race began to heat up, so did the Y’en a Marre movement. The citizens of Senegal were called to “sharpen their blades” (daas fananal) and register to vote; in follow up, they were called on to pick up their registration cards. Flash poetry slams were held, and caravans of loudspeaker-laden taxis took trips across the nation in order to spread the word. After countless other campaigns, the chants of Y’en a Marre finally paid off; in early 2012, Macky Sall became the new president after a second runoff election.

Snapshots of Spain: Where Veganxs and Bullfights Collide
Heather Regen (SFS'14), Spain

There are certainly still old men drinking sherry somewhere in Spain, but as a student at Madrid’s public university, the culture I’m surrounded by is a more youthful, dynamic one. Two large strikes have taken place at the university since the semester began: one led by Complutense workers and the other by students. As a Hoyah accustomed to Georgetown’s focus on civil discourse, I was jarred by the sight of bike locks barring classroom doors and shattered glass blocking cars from driving onto campus. Spanish students use a strikingly different toolset to voice protest; however, their upset at education cuts and rising tuition is a familiar one.

Just as democracy and rule of law are entrenched in American society, evasion of rules and authoritarian traditions seem to be entwined with the Russian way of life.

-Jessica Craige
JORDANIANS SEEK A MEANINGFUL DEMOCRATIC VOICE
CLAIRE RASKOB (SFS’14), JORDAN

The desire to be heard brought 15,000 citizens of Amman to downtown on October 5. Photographers captured the images of protesters holding signs demanding a voice in the government and freedom from corruption. Although police arrested eight men for carrying knives, the majority desired a peaceful protest. Opponents of the protesters originally called a counter-demonstration to show their loyalty to the king, but this protest was rescheduled in fear that clashes between the two groups might become violent. My colloquial Arabic teacher taught my class the phrase “safe and secure” early in the class, and Jordanians take pride in the safety and security of their country amidst turmoil in the Middle East. Although some Jordanians use protests to voice their opinions to the government, there is no visible desire for these protests to topple the monarchy. The government practices caution in its response to the protesters as well, and it has made many concessions based on what the citizens demand.

ARGENTINE YOUTH DISPLAY POLITICAL FERVOR IN BUENOS AIRES
MARGOT “ANNIE” DALE (C’14), ARGENTINA

What is most impressive to me is that not only do the porteños, especially the youth, discuss the government in an educated and impassioned manner, but they do something about it! They are active. They act upon their convictions, rather than just discuss what they would like to be done. For example, two weeks ago Buenos Aires and other cities across Argentina were taken by storm by thousands of protestors and demonstrators marching through the main streets of the cities, banging pots and pans, screaming and displaying posters with harshly worded commentaries on the government.

UMM EL DINYA: DISCOVERING THE REAL EGYPT
FAHRA ABDALLAH (C’14), EGYPT

My friend’s phone being stolen at a protest, the one-hour long bus rides that had turned into three hour affairs, and almost being attacked by Bedouins in the Sinai Peninsula...
were among some of the things that helped transcend my naïveté in the second half of my study abroad experience. Despite these difficult situations, I came to realize that my discomfort there never made me miss the comfort of home. I always felt like I could confide in my Egyptian friends. It suddenly made sense to me why people of Egypt take on the phrase *Umm El Dunya* (“The Mother of the World”) and embody it in their everyday lives. They completely changed Egypt for me, and made me fall in love with her all over again.

**HOMAGE TO CATALUNYA**  
**AUSTIN CLEARY (MSB’14), SPAIN**

As a person of Jewish descent, I am used to arguments over historic claims serving as a backdrop for debating current political and economic realities. In Barcelona’s case, historic grievances have merged with anger toward the devastating budget cuts demanded from the regional government by the central government based in Madrid to produce demands for independence. My local friends had told me that there would be a protest on Catalan Independence Day (September 11), but I was not prepared for 1.5 million people protesting in the street for Catalan independence. I have never seen a widely attended political protest in the United States. It was not just the political activists at Occupy Wall Street, but kids, families, lawyers, government workers, and grandmas. The diversity in ages and backgrounds gave the protest a weight that I had never seen.

**STUDENT IDENTITY AND POLITICS IN CHILEAN EDUCATION REFORM**  
**ANDREW GREENOUGH (SFS’14), CHILE**

I decided to put my own complaints aside and honor the strike of my classmates. We met outside the classroom to talk to the professor and organize a new schedule. The mobilization and organizational communication among Chilean students drive their efforts for reform. Once we settled everything as a class, I asked a friend of mine what the student leaders hoped to get out of another strike. “A new agreement among CONFECH [a national organization of student leaders] and a new message to the Ministry of Education,” she replied. At that point, I realized that it was unfair to paint the student movement in terms of the conflicts or hooliganism that pop up on a newsreel every few weeks. Chilean students make their fight for educational reform a central part of their university identity. Through rallies, marches, and everyday conversations, Chileans use this movement to form a stronger community—a generational unity our own university students lack in the United States.

**THE CONFUSING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND MUSIC IN RUSSIA**  
**MARGARET PODA (SFS’14), RUSSIA**

I know some bands are politically motivated. To make an obvious, and perhaps overused, example: Pussy Riot. This punk-feminist band stated in the closing of its trial, "Pussy Riot’s performances can either be called dissident art or political action that engages art forms. Either way, our performances are a kind of civic activity amidst the repressions of a corporate political system that directs its power against basic human rights and civil and political liberties." The lyrics and actions of this band are undeniably political in nature. However, when I look at a composer like Shostakovich, I do not see a person actively opposing the Soviet Union. He was merely a talented artist who wanted to share his gift with the world. He was forced to curb his abilities and to join the communist party simply to survive. Clearly, times have changed. The Soviet Union has fallen, and Stalin is certainly no longer in power. Nevertheless, music is still a very important medium to subvert authority or make a political point, as Pussy Riot has demonstrated.
National Identity, Culture, and Society

During their time abroad, students paid close attention to cultural comportment and interactions, as well as historical legacies and their influence on contemporary daily life. Their reflections provide insight into the complex concept of collective identity on the local and national level.

Engaging Difference at the Local Level

Learning to Understand the Role of Culture in Danish Foreign Policy
Jacob Lee Michael Rosen (MSB'14), Denmark

The concept [the Jante Law] was created by the Dano-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose in 1933, and this “law” categorizes individual success, achievement, and recognition as inappropriate and in extremely bad taste. It is a cultural norm that still exists to a certain degree in Scandinavia today… Spending time in another culture undeniably opens your eyes to issues and allows you to approach the world around you from unexplored angles. In this particular case my time in Denmark sparked an interest in a type of international affairs I had never examined on a level deeper than reading the headlines of mainstream media.

Overcoming the Fear of Stereotypes to Feel at Home
Leona Pfeiffer (C'14), Austria

The other Georgetown students and I were invited to a student's birthday celebration in part because we were American—she'd heard that toga parties happened all the time at college and wanted Americans to come celebrate in their typical way. We told her that toga parties weren't really a huge thing, but of course eagerly accepted the invitation to join a local in her home, excited but really focused on making a good impression. The usual 20-somethings and their various vices surrounded us, and the Austrian students present picked us apart and made me feel more welcome in Austria than I'd felt before because, instead of the judgment I had been expecting about being from a different place, they were not only accepting of but excited about the fact that we were American.

Why I Don’t Wear Shorts in Jordan
Patrick Fogerty (SFS'14), Jordan

Islam, the vastly dominant religion in Jordan and the rest of the Middle East (with the exception of Israel), differs from Christianity in that it is has an externally enforced moral code. Instead of expecting guilt to keep followers in line, Islam relies on the community to ensure that everyone is within the moral code. To prevent men's sexual desires outside of marriage, the women cover themselves. To make sure this happens, community members will directly inform someone that it is necessary to follow this norm, something that would not happen in America (instead you would hear someone whisper, “She should be ashamed of herself”). Some of the American girls who are on this program with me have had the experience of people on the street telling them to cover themselves more.

It’s fascinating to me that a spaghetti-shaped country like Chile, with climates and geography that cover the entire spectrum of extremes, has managed to create and maintain such a strong sense of national identity.

-Alyssa Huberts
LIVING IN A CULTURE OF INTIMACY

Darren Espinoza (C’14), Brazil

In spite of my status as a foreign exchange student, it didn’t take long for me to find a sense of belonging and camaraderie amid the jeitinho culture of good deeds. As my last Portuguese professor described it to me, the system of relationships in Brazil is like a big onion with several concentric layers that represent degrees of intimacy. While some might be quick to stratify and distance a random stranger on the bus to school, acquaintances at work, or the doorman of their apartment complex, a Brazilian would likely take each classification one circle in: treating his elderly next-door neighbor as his dear aunt, the homeless man on the corner as his coworker, or his nephew as his own son.

DISCOVERING CURA PERSONALIS IN CHINESE TRADITION

Giuliana DeAngelis (SFS’14), China

Earlier this week our teachers brought us to a nearby park to experience the daily early morning activities that take place in the park. I couldn’t believe what I saw—from dancing to jazz music to doing stretches called out on a loudspeaker to balancing a water bottle with goldfish on one’s head. I have never seen so many seniors moving about with such grace, fluidity, and enthusiasm. It was heartening to see the energy and physique of the elderly in China. After talking with some of my Chinese teachers and friends about this, I learned about the ancient Chinese tradition of cultivating total body wellness through careful attention to body, mind, and spirit, a process called yangsheng. It is this deep rooted and ancient practice of nurturing the soul that has been responsible for the good health and longevity that is characteristic of the elderly in China.

EGALITÉ IN A HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY

Patrick Deem (SFS’14), France

When a disagreement arises, I have found that those with greater social status have had a distinct advantage over those with less. In my campus job, my supervisor has made sarcastic comments to other students and to me that the French would describe as “jokes to the second degree.” As students, however, we cannot necessarily respond in kind. More starkly, when discussing issues in the dormitory, the building manager has found it appropriate to disregard the opinions of some of my peers, on the grounds that they somehow lack refinement and manners or that they are in some way merely amateurs. In all, as is the case in most cultures, the French social hierarchy requires younger people to act deferentially toward their elders. However, it does not necessarily require older people to treat the younger generation with mutual respect. Rather, it allows for younger people to be treated as socially inferior.

LANGUAGE IN THE RAINBOW NATION

Sabrina Katz (C’14), South Africa

The Eezaad (Afrikaans for cafeteria) in Metanoia residence hall around dinnertime is abuzz with student conversation. Students crowd around the dining tables, exchanging greetings and comments about the food and weather. Grabbing my tray and silverware, I see a friend at a nearby table and greet her using a typical South African English salutation: “howzit?” After receiving my tray of food, I thank the cafeteria server in Afrikaans—“baie dankie”—and sit down at a table, where several of my friends are speaking Xhosa and others are chatting in Ndebele. I recognize only a few words in the language before they switch to English in my presence to include me in the conversation. In about two minutes, I have experienced three languages, and yet, in my four months in South Africa, I have still not heard every one of the country’s languages.

COLONIZERS AND COLONIZED: A BRIEF STUDY OF CULTURAL PRIDE IN ECUADOR AND SPAIN

Gavin Laughlin (C’14), Ecuador

[My professor] mentioned something I had never considered about the differences between Spanish Castellano and Ecuadorian Castellano. The Spanish are direct, use informal commands religiously, and consider the Usted form extremely polite. In Ecuador, she said, diminutives (from café to cafecito, for example) are used all the time and Ustedes are used even for intimates. While some people may see this as a way of being polite, her observation was that Ecuadorians lack the confidence to assert themselves in their speech.

LA CUECA: HOW CHILE DANCES ITS WAY INTO NATIONAL IDENTITY

Alyssa Huberts (SFS’14), Chile

Chilean students learn the cueca in high school, if not earlier, and so with the elderly couples dancing the classic huaso cueca with real handkerchiefs, you’ll also usually find teenagers waving their scarves and napkins around as they perform the figure-eight steps. It’s fascinating to me that a spaghetti-shaped country like Chile, with climates and geography that cover the entire spectrum of extremes, has managed to create and maintain such a strong sense of national identity. There is no country in the world that covers such a long north-south stretch, and the differences between the scorched Atacama desert in the north and the icy Torres del Paine in the south seem like they would divide a country into piecemeal regional cultures. To be fair, there are distinct cultural traditions as you travel up or down the coast. But it’s fascinating to see the way the country has nonetheless found a cultural common ground along which to develop its identity.
The Convergence of Past and Present

STRASBOURG: SURVEY OF A TOWN’S MULTIFACETED IDENTITY
JOELLE REBEIZ (SFS’14), FRANCE

I don’t know everything about my host mother yet, but from the month that I’ve been here I’ve learned that her father was a Jew of Tunisian descent, and her mother a German Protestant. She was once married to a Greek, from whom she picked up the ability to converse in the language, on top of which can be added French, Spanish, Italian, German, and some broken phrases in English. Though a melting pot of diverse heritages, ethnicities, religions, languages, and identities, my host mother invariably epitomizes what it means to come from Strasbourg.

A CITY’S IDENTITY MARKED BY HISTORY AND CULTURE
COLLEEN WOOD (SFS’14), TURKEY

When I set off for my travels this summer across Southern Ukraine and Georgia, I was initially excited to discover the essence and defining characteristics of several Black Sea cities. By the time I began my studies in Turkey, however, I had realized the futility of attempting to define cities with hundreds of years of history and myriad cultural influences. As cities were transferred from the control of one society to another, shifting between the Ottoman Empire, Imperial Russia, the Turkish Republic, or the Soviet Union, the diverse cultural habits of the contemporaneous regime left marks on a city’s physical structure and the way of life of its populace. A city’s identity is layered much like limestone, with different characteristics scattered about the city in design and tradition, which compels a visitor to explore winding roads, taste local street food, and stand in awe of monumental religious spaces.

TO BE “AMERICAN” IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
MARISA TERSY (SFS’14), DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In the United States, I identify myself as a biracial woman with a Cuban-American father and an African-American mother. (…) Here in the Dominican Republic, rubia essentially implies anyone that has semi-light skin. While explaining why I was confused at this new identity to my host brother, he could not fathom that I was black, or rather African-American, because I have light skin. It seemed as though it just didn’t make sense to him. Here, I cannot be black because my skin tone is light. Because I look more Latina than black, or so I have heard, people here identify me for my outward appearance and just assume that I am Dominican or some type of Latina and leave it at that. At first, I was incredibly offended by this new revelation but then it caused me to question why I value my racial and ethnic identity so much. In the United States,
it is a cause of pride for me and to be unable to express that here was initially incredibly frustrating. I feel like half of me is invisible in this country.

GREEN IS GOLDEN
SARAH HEATH (C’14), CHINA

In Chinese society there is a strong emphasis placed on history. I am who I am because of my parents. They are who they are because of their parents. Time is vertical, not horizontal. Consequently, when choosing a mate, the input of parents (and grandparents) cannot be flippantly ignored. A person must also consider his or her future children. Marriage is a social contract between two families, not just between two individuals. Americans also have these considerations, but there seems to be a greater emphasis placed on the implications for the lovers themselves. Thus, according to one of my Chinese professors, a financially stable and mutually beneficial relationship is preferable to one defined by romance. Romance is seen as more of a wish than a requirement. This appears to be at odds with the American preference for passion over practicality.

A GLOBALIZING IRELAND IS LOSING TOUCH WITH ITS CELTIC CULTURE
PATRICK MCCUSKER (C’14), IRELAND

While my economics courses are populated almost entirely by Irish students, my Celtic studies and folklore classes are much more international in their makeups. Is this a problem though? This is the central question I’ve been struggling with. For Ireland to prosper and flourish in the twenty-first century it does have to globalize. It has to have robust trade and connections with other countries in Europe and beyond. With only four and a half million people and a small land area of which not much is fertile, Ireland has done a commendable job of specializing over the past two decades to be competitive. Yes, they are struggling now with high unemployment and the aftereffects of a housing crisis, but they are better positioned to make a strong recovery than the Greek, Spanish, or Italian economies that have experienced similar issues over the last five years.

BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT AT OXFORD
JILL NI (SFS’14), ENGLAND

The students are as much a part of shaping the town’s identity as any other factor, and I’m happy to say that the students here are keen on preserving the traditions of the past as they are on starting new ones for future students to enjoy. The balance between past and present here is very subtle. Neither part has forced the other into being; rather, the two intertwine to form the fabric of life here, achieving an imperceptibly delicate balance between the old and the new. The same can be said for Britain as a whole. Britain has such a powerful past that its present identity could easily be overwhelmed by its history—a kind of national nostalgia. But Great Britain seems to have embraced an eclectic mix of the past and the present, achieving a balance between tradition and modernity.