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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 eight years since the program began, more than 425 students have participated, studying in 54 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 Erin Shevlin of the Berkley Center and is part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Program.

The eighth year of JYAN saw its largest level of student participation on record, as well as the expansion of the program into three new study abroad destinations: Nepal, the Philippines, and Uganda. As Georgetown students travel to a growing number of countries recently considered remote and functionally off-limits for Americans, the reach and focus of JYAN expands along with them. The program in many ways serves as a microcosm of globalization and the growing interconnectedness of the world. In fact, the political, cultural, and economic impact of development and globalization emerged as one of the preeminent themes among blogs from across the globe.
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 Global Education offers approximately 160 programs in more than 40 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.
The complex relationship between religion, culture, and the state remained a central topic of discussion among this year’s bloggers. Whether writing about the cult of the Virgin Mary in Seville, Japanese kami, or the presence of a Jewish rabbi at the Easter vigil in Buenos Aires, students offered thoughtful insights into the myriad ways that diverse religious beliefs impact daily life around the world. Interfaith encounters in countries ranging from the United Kingdom to Senegal also emerged as a more prominent theme than in years past. Many bloggers also focused on political activism, which was often closely (if not explicitly) tied to religious belief and culture.

The Politicization of Religion

WHAT THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF CHRISTMAS MEANS FOR DUBLIN
GRETA RIEBE (C’15), IRELAND

During my first weeks at Trinity College I was startled to learn just how much religious conflict has affected Ireland; in particular, how it was used to literally separate Ireland into what is now the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, which has caused violence into recent history. But it was in one of my first tutorials that the presence of this tension really struck me. The professor asked us to shout out words that we associated with Ireland and he wrote them up on the board. Most of our suggestions referred to traditional Irish stereotypes, such as rain, shamrocks, Guinness, and sheep. I don’t even think that we mentioned Catholicism, which is a large part of Irish culture, but not something that we, as Americans, were used to stating as a category of an entire nationality. The part of this that was remarkable to me was when our professor said that had anyone from Britain been in our class, Catholicism would have been one of the first characteristics mentioned.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN A SECULAR SOCIETY
ZOE MOWL (SFS’15), DENMARK

Denmark is the country that gave rise to the infamous Muhammad cartoons in 2005, whose distribution triggered protests at Danish embassies and boycotts of Danish companies across the Middle East. This crisis just highlights how a secular society like Denmark just does not understand the importance that religion can play in certain societies. Instead, the Danish government used this situation to highlight the importance of freedom of speech in democracy, even though the speech in question can be terribly offensive. More recently in Denmark, there is a brewing controversy as the first mosque is set to open in Copenhagen. The mosque has been preemptively prohibited from calling out the *adhan*, or traditional call to prayer, because such a call would be a public disturbance. This has caused questions to be raised about the acceptance of Danes when it comes to other religions, especially Islam. Yet, part of me understands the Danish perspective, which maintains that there is no role for ostentatious displays of religion in their secular society, which they have worked so hard to create.
THE FIRE RAGES ON
JENNIFER TUBBS (SFS’15), CHILE

I was a bit nervous to go to my first *Vía de la cruz*, a procession of the cross on Good Friday, since I have little experience with the Catholic faith. I had no idea what stations of the cross meant, how I was expected to behave, or what prayers would be offered, if any. The second we stepped onto the beach, we were engulfed by a crowd of hundreds of people. My host mother handed me a candle to hold and immediately a man’s voice resounded from a loudspeaker. He began to recite the Lord’s Prayer and quotes from the pope as we walked from station to station, recounting the suffering of Christ as he was crucified. *Vía*-goers started chanting as we walked, with the spray of the ocean at our backs. The candle lights melded with the lights from the hills and the stars to create a sea of lights against the night sky.

SPIRITUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
RAFAEL GO (SFS’15), JAPAN

Central to Japanese spirituality is the belief in kami or god. In contrast to the Judeo-Christian notion of a singular, omnipresent, all-powerful God, kami are countless, and usually only have power over small areas. Trees, mountains, rivers, and even sacred inanimate objects are said to be inhabited by a kami. As they are nature spirits, like nature, kami can be temperamental and wreak havoc on humans. Thus, in order to appease the kami, Japanese people provide offerings and throw festivals to show their respect. Although Japan today may not be a primarily shamanistic country, the belief and reverence toward kami has been preserved and continue to hold significant influence in Japanese society. This attitude, along with other political and economic reasons, has been a major factor in the adoption of environmentally conscious practices.

EVERYDAY CONFUCIANISM IN TAIWAN
NICHOLAS CLARK (C’15), CHINA

Confucian ideas can be debated based on classical texts, historical data, or other interpretations, but that stands separate from what Confucianism has come to represent in everyday Taiwanese life. Respecting family, serving society, and pursuing knowledge are the fruits of a virtuous attitude in one who is worthy of high responsibility. Based on my observations in the Taiwanese classroom and in Tai-
I have come to understand Confucianism as a warmer, more benevolent, respectful, understanding, and mindful set of values that manifests in an attitude that deeply pervades Taiwanese daily life.

In sharp contrast to Georgetown’s spiritual foundation, University College London (UCL) is deeply rooted in secularism—which is more palpable than one might initially think. (...) Many people may think that UCL’s secularism refreshingly removes religion from the classroom or prevents it from resulting in any conflict. Instead, I find that this secularism manifests in a kind of coldness or distance that permeates everything from student-professor relationships (at least from the perspective of an affiliate student) to student-student interactions. Even though I am not profoundly religious and have never availed myself of the religious support that Georgetown offers, I find that the presence of something of an invisible safety net kindles the warmth of the Georgetown community.

Coming to Argentina just months after the naming of Pope Francis, I was curious to observe the landscape of Catholicism here. Nicknamed “the slum Pope” by media outlets, Pope Francis is famous for his involvement in Argentina’s most marginalized communities. He often provided generous funding to priests and bishops working in the villas, and took the public bus out to provide support himself. From his initial installment, I was fascinated by Pope Francis; however, after witnessing firsthand the sharp social dichotomies of Argentina, I have gained an entirely different context for who our current Pope is, and what he represents. (...) Pope Francis, with his promises to work for a “church for the poor,” is a beacon of hope to many of the poor and marginalized in Argentina, who finally feel that in some small way, they have a voice.

From my first week at Oxford, I’ve been enjoying the depth and richness of the Anglican tradition from which the Episcopal Church borrows. And when I found out that Magdalen College, longtime home to C.S. Lewis and one of Oxford’s most illustrious and beautiful colleges, holds its own Compline Service on Sunday nights, I was sold. I dragged a friend along, promising her gorgeous music and a good time (as far as Episcopal services go, anyway), and we walked over one Sunday evening a few weeks ago. (...) The first warning sign came when we realized that by showing up, we represented fifty percent of the congregation in attendance. And the real sign of trouble came when the service began without the entrance of a...
choir, as the other two attendees stood up and began to chant. I realized in very short order that I was going to have to fake my way through a service I had only ever listened to and never dreamed of participating in.

**QATAR: TRADITIONAL GULF VALUES MEET THE WEST**

*ANDY LIN (C’15), QATAR*

We can see Qatar’s departure from its strict Wahhabi identity most clearly in the religious laxity present in order to accommodate non-Muslims. Consumption of alcohol and pork is forbidden in Islam, yet both are available in Qatar. These items are available at one location in the country, the Qatar Distribution Company. Non-Muslims who are employed in the country can receive vouchers for 10 percent of their monthly income to purchase alcohol and/or pork for personal consumption. Five-star hotels in the West Bay also serve alcohol, making them a popular spot for expats. Without passing any judgment, we can see that Wahhabism’s careful attention to fortifying the “lands of Islam” with zealous doctrinal purity is not felt as strongly in Qatar after its integration into the world economy.

**ONE HAND CANNOT LIFT A HEAVY LOAD**

*COREY STEWART (SFS’15), GHANA*

It should have come as no surprise to me that I would be asked by complete strangers to accompany them to church services, what with Ghana being the most religious country on the planet. Ninety-six percent of Ghanaians self-describe themselves as being religious. (...) Though Ghana still has yet to reach its zenith both politically and economically, it has fared well when compared to other African states. It lives up to its former name of the Gold Coast as it is one of the world’s largest producers of gold, not to mention cocoa, petroleum, and natural gas, all of which are salient commodities in the global marketplace. Interestingly, as economic prosperity grows, so does the number of Ghanaians choosing to identify with a religion.

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“Interestingly, as economic prosperity grows, so does the number of Ghanaians choosing to identify with a religion.”

- Corey Stewart

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**RELIGION ON THE EMERALD ISLE**

*PAUL HEALY (C’15), IRELAND*

Before this fall, I had pictured Ireland as a sturdily conservative and Catholic country. After all, Ireland had legalized abortion this past July, and only in very extenuating circumstances. I remembered that one of our
professors in a lecture during our semester startup program on Christianity’s development in Ireland had said, “We live in a definitively post-Christian Ireland.” Then, after searching for some data on religiosity in Ireland, I realized that my assumptions had been quite wrong. In a 2012 report by Gallup International, researchers found that 10 percent of Irish people consider themselves atheist, placing Ireland tenth out the 57 countries surveyed. For comparison, only five percent of Americans labeled themselves atheists in this survey. Even more importantly, Ireland experienced the second largest drop in religiosity (behind Vietnam) since 2005 among all countries surveyed: 22 percent fewer Irish people considered themselves religious in 2011 than in 2005.

**Political Activism**

**REWWRITING SCOTTISH HISTORY FOR A UNITED KINGDOM**
**NICOLE JARVIS (C’15), UNITED KINGDOM**

Most people in Scotland see themselves as Scottish first, British second. They take pride in their history, their flag, their heroes, and their poets. It’s much the same in the United States. After all, there are still those who refer to what is generally called the Civil War as the “War of Northern Aggression,” and I have found myself time and again identifying myself as specifically Californian instead of generally American to foreign strangers. (...) What is the most interesting about all of this is how these historical differences run far deeper than the English may care to admit. The United Kingdom may exist politically, but culturally speaking, there is no such thing as the United Kingdom. How these differences will continue to play out has yet to be seen, but with the Scottish ballot initiative to declare independence fast approaching, those who value the sanctity of the United Kingdom may want to take a hard look at how they talk about and treat their Northern brethren.

**THIRTY YEARS LIVING WITH THE CERTAINTY OF DEMOCRACY**
**KATIE MORGAN (SFS’15), ARGENTINA**

Every day on my way to class I pass a banner that celebrates thirty years of Argentine democracy, 1983 to 2013. I see the banner’s bright colors: sky blue, white, and yellow—the same as the Argentine flag—and a chill runs down my spine. Thirty years is not much time at all, certainly not in the life of a country only slightly younger than the United States. (...) As I look at the Buenos Aires skyline from the rooftop terrace of my building and try to distinguish new constructions from old I don’t just see fading scars of political atrocities, I see a society that has raised its political voice to a shout. I also see the rationale in doing so: once you have earned the right to speak freely, is there really any way you would want to be heard other than loud and clear?

**HOW DO YOU SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE MARIA?**
**ZOEY KRULICK (SFS’15), SPAIN**

It seems that the reverence for the Virgin here borders on obsession. My friend told me that there are people in her town, who while they don’t believe in God, do pray to the Virgin of Lora when they pray at all. And this phenomenon is not unique to Lora. Andalusia has an incredible popular cult to the Virgin, which manifests itself in several ways. My roommate’s phone background picture depicts one of the local Virgins. Also, my friend’s name: María Luisa. María Luisa’s best friend is named María Dolores. One of my roommates is named María Isabel. I can say with certainty that there is at least one “María something” in each of my classes.

**FACES OF DENMARK**
**TRISHLA JAIN (SFS’15), DENMARK**

The campaigning for the upcoming election did not confuse me; however I was slightly startled to notice glossy posters with people’s faces, names, and party affiliation on them covering every lamppost throughout Copenhagen and its suburbs as I walked to class the next morning. To be honest, the Danish campaign posters were off-putting. No matter where I turned in the city, the smiling faces of the candidates stared down at me from all directions. (...) While Danish campaign
posters are more unnerving to me than those I see in the United States, I am beginning to understand their logic. In 2011, Denmark had an 87 percent voter turnout rate for their parliamentary elections, and that is mostly due to the fact that Danes feel uniquely connected to their politicians in a way that many American citizens do not. If these posters are a contributing factor to Denmark’s extremely high percentage of voter participation in its elections, then I cannot be anything but supportive of them, even if it does mean seeing a few extra faces around town.

LEARNING TO NAVIGATE THE SPANISH POLITICAL CLIMATE

NOREEN SAJWANI (’15), SPAIN

The first day of class, I knew I was in for a ride when I embarked on a hallway filled with cigarette smoke, dreadlocks, and signs with phrases like “abortion is a right,” “against all authority,” and “fighting is the only way.” Knowing I would spend 10 hours a week for the next five months here, I decided it was finally time to learn about politics. (...) Spanish history has necessitated an increased critique of its current political structure, whereas the American political system was founded on an equal and corrected form of European-defined terms like liberty and freedom. This change in attitude helped me learn not only how to analyze politics here in Spain, but also in America.

ELECTION TIME IN ECUADOR AND A REFLECTION ON DEMOCRACY

REBECCA HONG (SFS’15), ECUADOR

In Ecuador, it’s compulsory for all adult citizens ages 18 to 65 to participate in elections. The only exception is made for the illiterate, which the CIA World Factbook indicates includes about 10 percent of the country’s population. Either way, polls will be bustling this Sunday, and liquor stores will be packed by Friday because in addition to compulsory voting, Ecuador has the ley seca, which prohibits the sale, distribution, and consumption of alcohol from 36 hours before polling starts to 12 hours after votes are processed. The idea is to ensure that voters are sober when they cast their ballots. It is no wonder that my friend doubts that anything fun will be happening this weekend. Voting in Ecuador is serious stuff.

THE ARTS AND THE STATE: PROMOTING MUSIC IN A STATE-RUN ECONOMY

SANKALP GOWDA (SFS’15), CUBA

If the Cuban government is the lone source of funding for the arts, what happens to freedom of expression? Is an artist’s work really his or her own? Or do they become another mouthpiece of the revolution? To these questions, I have
only the beginning of a response. The full range of Cuban music is incredibly diverse in its expression. Some artists genuinely love the revolution and proudly dedicate their music to it. Others avoid politics altogether and are just looking for the next popular hit. But most significantly, Cuban music has recently begun to give voice to dissident sentiments, without loss of government support.

DEMANDS FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE 40 YEARS AFTER CHILE’S MILITARY COUP
KENDRA LAYTON (C’15), CHILE

As a form of protest against human rights abuses, thousands marched in solidarity with families of detained or disappeared persons the Sunday leading up to the fortieth anniversary of the military coup. I was moved to tears watching the crowd go by, each marcher holding a picture of a missing person proudly above his or her head. An older gentleman watched from his balcony above; placing his hand over his heart, tears streamed down his face. His raw and genuine emotion signified to me that the dictatorship is very much alive in the aching hearts of the people. As Lorena emphasized, society cannot be healed without “verdad total y justicia plena a cada una de las víctimas [total truth and full justice for every one of the victims].” Rather than continuing to deny historical events and protect members of Pinochet’s dictatorship with impunity, history must be recognized and a diverse collective memory appreciated.

BETTER OR BITTER TOGETHER?
ALEX RALLO (C’15), UNITED KINGDOM

The Scottish National Party (SNP), which has spearheaded the independence movement, cites self-determination as one of its leading motivators. (...) However, much of Scotland (77 percent as of mid-2012) is still skeptical and holds that the two nations are better together. (...) As long as pro-Union support stays around current levels, it is unlikely that Scottish independence will become a reality. Honestly, this does not come as a shock. Political theorists point out that, despite the presence of separatist movements around the world, no major changes to country borders have been made since the post-WWI era. Declaring independence is a complex process with critical socio-politico-economic consequences, some of which may be unforeseeable. Therefore, voters should proceed with caution and think carefully about the consequences of their actions.

THE LEGACY WALLACE LEFT
ALEX WATSON (C’15), UNITED KINGDOM

Saturday, September 21 marked the Rally for Scottish Independence in Edinburgh, Scotland’s capital and home to nearly half a million people. So when Police Scotland estimated that just over 8,000 people were present—an accurate representation from my experience there—I was stunned. How could only about two percent of the city’s population attend such an event only a year from one of the country’s most meaningful decisions in a few hundred years?
Embracing Religious Diversity

The Rabbi at Easter Vigil
Molly Egilsrud (SFS’15), Argentina

After readings from the Old Testament, the traditional beginning of the ceremony, the archbishop stood up and introduced the head rabbi of Córdoba, who wished to give us an Easter greeting. A young, spry man, he stood up at the lectern, expressed his joy at hearing the scriptures shared by our two religious traditions and wished us a very blessed and happy Easter. He left the altar only after a hug from the archbishop. (...) From the perspective of Archbishop Náñez, as a leader in a country that is 90 percent Catholic, there is no obvious motivation to reach out to the Jewish people, who represent only two percent of Argentina’s population, except as a gesture of goodwill to a traditionally marginalized community.

Brazil’s Invisible Spirits
Brigit Goebelbecker (SFS’15), Brazil

Today, Brazil is the most Spiritist country in the world. With over 3.8 million believers, Spiritism is the third largest religious group after Catholics and evangelicals. In the city of Palmelo, for example, one in every seven people is a medium. The majority of followers are from my home in Rio de Janeiro, followed closely by São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Interestingly, most Spiritists are highly educated, middle to upper class elites (over 98 percent are literate). This can be attributed to the fact that Spiritism demands intense personal study and research to be truly understood, as well as a common sentiment that Spiritism is more refined than traditional Catholicism. (...) While the panorama from Christ the Redeemer shows a landscape littered with churches, a glance up from the streets reveals a shimmering community of souls, casually co-mingling with Brazil’s Catholic icon.

Khar Ak Kaliiss! (Sheep and Money): The Commercialization of Tabaski
Elizabeth “Hopey” Fink (C’15), Senegal

My host family’s Tabaski celebration actually showed me that real meaning is still entrenched in the rituals, both modern and ancient, of this holiday. As my host brothers held down the legs of our poor little lamb and my host dad brought the knife to its throat, uttering bismillah, I was overcome by the significance of this act for Muslims around the world. Many centuries after Abraham’s sacrifice, my Senegalese family was showing their devotion to God in a very tangible way. They used the day as an opportunity to ask forgiveness of their loved ones for their transgressions, and they cooked extra platters of roast mutton to share with their Catholic neighbors—who will apparently return the generosity on Christmas, a tradition that underscores the ease of interreligious peace in Senegal.

Decking the Halls, All Around Europe
Jaime Lunny (C’15), United Kingdom

The roots of Christmas and the traditions surrounding the holiday season show how this holiday represents the ultimate unification of differences; the Christian story of Christmas comes from a combination of the Gospels of both Matthew and Luke. In fact, modern Christmas traditions stem from a variety of sources, including Jewish practices and the festivals of Druids, ancient Greeks, and Romans. The traditional figure of Santa Claus (also known as Father Christmas) varies around the world and stems from a variety of different traditions, including the Scandinavian myth of a mystical figure being pulled by reindeer and the Turkish Saint Nicholas of Myra who was the patron saint.
of sailors. With this history in mind, it seems self-explana-
tory that despite the cultural variations, Christmas would help unify the world during the holiday season. However, it was not until I witnessed similar Christmas traditions all across Europe that I began to appreciate the true strength of the holiday season.

RACE VS. RELIGION: CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE IN GHANA
SARAH LLOYD (N’14), GHANA

We chatted a bit longer and he told me more about how Christians and Muslims make no distinction between themselves. A person’s religion does not define who they are here. People are respected regardless of which faith they choose to practice. Mosques are built a few blocks away from churches, and Christians simply walk around Muslims who stop and do their daily prayers on the sidewalk in the middle of the city. I was amazed at the camaraderie between the two religions, two religions that have for quite some time been butting heads, so to speak, in most other countries around the world. Ghana has certainly found the answer in religious acceptance, and it’s something I think the rest of the world could benefit from.

THE CULTURE OF ISLAM
SHAIESHA MOORE (SFS’15), JORDAN

During Eid al-Adha, many Muslims sacrifice a sheep, cow, goat, or camel and give about one-third of the meat to friends and neighbors (both Muslim and Christian) and donate one-third or more to the poor. Everyone gathers together to eat and give gifts. My family from America (all Christian) came to visit me in Jordan during Eid al-Adha. During their visit, we celebrated the holiday by watching the sacrifice of the sheep and engaging with my Muslim host family and friends at dinner. We also exchanged gifts from Jordan and America. Similar to Christmas, Eid is a cultural holiday celebrated by many people regardless of religious orientation. The spirit of giving gifts and being with family and friends to celebrate is embedded in the holiday of Christmas, and it can be observed in Eid al-Adha in Jordan.
The complexity and interplay of cultural identity at the national, regional, and local level was a common focus of this year’s blogs. Many students deconstructed their own conceptions—and misconceptions—about their host countries from a Western point of view and explored the omnipresent shadow of history and its impact on present-day politics, culture, and sense of collective identity. In addition, the intimate, often problematized, relationship between language and national and subnational identities was another frequent subject of writing in countries as diverse as Israel, Ireland, and China.

Engaging Difference at the Local Level

DECONSTRUCTING THE ORIENTALIST GAZE?
ALEXANDER CARTRON (C’15), TURKEY

As a traveler from the United States, I bring with me all of my preconceived notions about Turkey that have been brewing since I enrolled in the Maryland public education system at the age of five. I am the product of the history class that instilled in me the notion that the Crusades were “honorable,” the anthropology class that identified European conquest in the Americas as “Manifest Destiny,” and the psychology class that introduced me to the term “cultural relativism.” Unfortunately, it is only easy to deconstruct this gaze after my thoughts, words, and actions have already been solidified in the past; the difficulty lies in recognizing the Orientalist gaze the second it strikes.

A BRITISH EDUCATION: APPRECIATING A MORE FOCUSED APPROACH TO LEARNING
CATHERINE MAITNER (C’15), UNITED KINGDOM

While at first I thought the more open-ended British system of education was detrimental to my ability to focus and learn, after I became accustomed to the style of teaching in London, I realized that this form of learning can be quite extraordinary. I have been able to take command of my education in a way that was never possible under an American system like the one we have at Georgetown. While my Georgetown education is broad and all-encompassing, allowing me to know a little bit about a lot of varied topics, the education I have received in London is deep and focused, allowing me to know a lot about what may seem like just a little bit in the grand scheme of a semester.

COSTA RICA MEETS SOUTH ASIA THROUGH DANCE
AMANDA MAISONAVE (C’15), COSTA RICA

Of the over 1,000 courses offered at the University of Costa Rica (UCR), a mere three of them focus on India. These courses—“Indian Mythology,” “Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Mysticism,” and “Sanskrit I”—concentrate on the Hindu religious tradition in the context of ancient India, but they do not incorporate an analysis of the current issues affecting South Asia or the region’s cultural richness and complexity as a whole… Last month I decided to create a combination dance workshop/discussion forum at UCR in which participants learn about South Asia through dance. For me, dance has always been a fun, kinesthetic way of learning and exploring other cultures.
Bhangra is a style of dance that originated in the Punjab region of India but that is currently performed in many areas of South Asia, the United States, Canada, and England. However, it has not yet reached Latin America, a region that is also very proud of its traditional dances. Through a series of 10 free two-hour sessions over three months, my students are learning choreography, listening to Indian music, and discussing current issues in South Asia.

**Navigating Through the Development of Nicaragua**

**Sam Gyory (C’15), Nicaragua**

To be completely honest, I was incredibly nervous to use public transportation for the first time in Nicaragua. However, after many had reassured me that it was safe for a foreigner to take a bus, I worked up the courage (granted I was traveling alone) to take a *buzon* back to the city where I was staying. A kind stranger helped me flag down the bus with the *cobrador* (driver’s assistant) hanging out the front door yelling “*rivas, rivas*” in a singsong voice. As the bus slowed to a stop, the back door swung open and the other *cobrador* beckoned me inside. The bus was almost completely full, and I tentatively sat on the edge of the seat where the other passenger was leisurely spread out in the middle, refusing to move an inch. As the ride progressed, I became more relaxed and quickly amused by the pace of the journey. When a passenger wanted to get off, they would signal the driver, the driver would slow down—never stop—and the person would have to quickly jump off while the bus was still rolling.

**Language and Culture**

**Reflecting on Hong Kong’s Linguistic Heritage**

**Sari Frankel (C’15), China**

How did Hong Kong get the reputation of being bilingual? Hong Kong was a British colony from 1842 until 1997. There was a small, British ruling minority and a much larger population of locals. Until 1974, English was the only official language in Hong Kong, establishing its reputation as an English-speaking place internationally, even though 94 percent of the population is Chinese. Today, English is still primarily used in formal settings like university education and business. Interestingly enough, while all school-age children are required to learn English through secondary school, there are no standards for the quality or amount of English instruction. Some selective-admission high schools are taught entirely in English, while quality of English education in rural areas is poor. Since introducing Chinese as an official language in 1974, Cantonese has seen a rise in status, dominating news and pop culture. According to a 1996 study by Hong Kong Polytechnic University, it’s estimated only 29 percent of the population speaks basic English and only two percent natively. While people must speak English in order to be among the elite, Cantonese is more than good enough for the masses.

**Language in Israel**

**Aidan Dugan (C’15), Israel**

Today, however, English in Israel has almost all features of an official language, while Arabic, although an official language, has limited visibility. When walking around the streets of Tel Aviv I barely see any signage in Arabic. It is almost exclusively in Hebrew, with many having English translations. In Jewish areas, one cannot receive menus in Arabic at restaurants. In contrast, the minute one walks into an Arab neighborhood or area, the linguistic landscape immediately changes. Shop signs are almost exclusively in Arabic. The labels on Kit Kat bars are now in English rather than in Hebrew. It’s a completely different feel that one can experience simply by walking a few blocks.

**Delicadeza Portuguesa**

**Keegan Terek (C’15), Portugal**

Whether sitting at the bar of a *tasca* or leaning over the counter of a *pastelaria*, the Portuguese practice a strict form of *delicadeza*—politeness—that closely governs their interactions with servers and other employees. More than just remembering their please and thank yous, Portuguese speakers make use of a series of linguistic mechanisms to voice their requests in the least imposing way possible. (...
Whereas in the United States customers expect employees to meet promptly their every need, in Portugal, customers feel almost guilty for inconveniencing employees by asking them for service. Though we might not deserve to feel such guilt when interacting with service staff, we certainly might do well to learn from the courteous perspective of the Portuguese. In doing so, we accept gratefully the coffee that took two minutes longer to prepare than we would have liked and show that *delicadeza*, whether delivered in the past, present, or conditional, is deserved by customer and employee alike.

**THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE OF IRELAND, AND THE IRISH WHO DON’T SPEAK IT**

**FIONA MEAGHER (C’15), IRELAND**

I have not yet visited any Gaeltacht areas—designated Irish-speaking regions, mostly along the coast—so I’ve yet really to hear any Irish spoken outside of my Irish class. According to the most recent census, only about two percent of the Irish population speaks Irish on a daily basis outside of the educational system, and about 40 percent report being able to speak it at all. Irish students at University College Dublin, upon hearing that we international students are taking a beginning course in Irish, ask “Why?!?” Those who had to study it in primary and secondary school leave school without much of a working knowledge of the language, and seem eager to leave it behind. (…) Far from finding the Irish language to be useless, international students I have met find the language beautiful and worthy of study. Why is there not a greater inclination among Irish to study and use it, then?

**THE POWER OF GRAMMAR**

**ALEXANDRA MA (SFS’15), FRANCE**

I will certainly miss this about France—hearing when I am addressed or when I address others with a *tu* or a *vous* to determine the status of my relationships with them, or even hearing myself be addressed with a respectful *vous* on the street, even if it’s just the grocer selling me my chewing gum. Despite all the social, political, and economic changes that France must inevitably face in this increasingly globalized world, this is one of the things that will forever remain typically and definitively French, and it is certainly something to be proud of.
THE BRUISED LEGACY OF GERMAN REUNIFICATION
SU LYN LAI (C’16), GERMANY

Arriving here in Berlin, its recent history is hard to discern at first sight; look carefully, however, and you’ll realize that the East-West split of Berlin (and the rest of Germany) remains. (...) A week in Berlin and one may discover the differences in architecture and infrastructure, but one would have to dig even deeper to find the still bruised soul of a city, which was once the microcosm of the wider Cold War. Frustration and discomfort persist in the seemingly successful reunification of the economic wonder of Germany, hidden until a raw nerve is hit or an ambiguous answer repeatedly questioned.

“Warsaw, perhaps more than any other city, cannot westernize and modernize itself out of its history.”

- Katherine Rivard

THE PATRON SAINT OF SCOTLAND
ANGELA OWENS (B’15), UNITED KINGDOM

The Union Jack became the official flag from the Union of the Parliaments in 1707. However, while the red Lion Rampant is the official royal flag for Scotland, official heraldic decrees state the national flag and arms of Scotland are Saint Andrew’s Cross. The celebration of November 30 as St. Andrew’s Day began again with special significance to the country of Scotland. The value of an annual celebration of St. Andrew is in representing strength and curiosity, two qualities which are by tradition very much part of the Scottish psyche. As a nation with past and current history of national struggle, Scotland has a genuinely unique ambience to it that you can feel even as you wander the country’s capital.

FROM COMMUNISM TO CAPITALISM: PRAGUE BEHIND THE POLITICS
LINDSEY SHEA (C’15), CZECH REPUBLIC

Today, Wenceslas Square is a functioning monument to this transition, a shrine to the most recent and extreme shift of socio-political ideologies, from communism to capitalism. Longing after lacking the sumptuous ideals of capitalism, late twentieth century Czechs embraced the promises for greater personal opportunities, the thrill of ownership, and opened Wenceslas Square to storefronts of international mega-brands. Today, McDonalds, H&M, Debenhams, Starbucks, and other popular companies run parallel to the sidewalks that once echoed with political dissent. Prague now is a hub of travel and trade, enticing wealthy tourists with beautiful, luxury amenities from a previously off-limits location. Wenceslas Square is sometimes called “the Times Square of Prague,” as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the establishment it mimics.
PONDERING PARADOXES IN ROME
DAVID WARREN (C’16), ITALY

Upon entering the Eternal City, I found myself in the middle of more apparent contradictions; I entered a modern city that is dominated by ancient ruins, governed by an unelected prime minister, and simultaneously home to two men who have held the keys of Saint Peter. As soon as we exited the train station, we could see ancient walls and Roman baths. Forcing cars and other traffic to its edges, huge ruins inhabit parts of the city. Their presence removed any wonder I had about why the Roman civilization is so deeply set in Italy’s memory. Many of the ancient Roman forms still echo resoundingly throughout the architecture that follow it.

WARSAW: TOO MUCH TO FORGET
KATHERINE RIVARD (SFS’15), POLAND

Warsaw, perhaps more than any other city, cannot westernize and modernize itself out of its history. Eighty-four percent of the city was completely destroyed during the war. Bullet holes at chest level are left in the courtyards and on the walls of the buildings that did survive. The debate over who is to blame for the events that unfolded during the Warsaw Uprising continues even today. (...) Over half a century has passed, but the debate continues. Poland, particularly in recent years, has been optimistic and hopeful to become closer to the rest of Europe and the EU—a return to the fold that the Poles had never chosen to leave. They may have H&M, vegan coffee shops, and beautiful shopping malls, but beneath it all is a past that Poles continue to either keep alive or are simply unable to be free of.

COVETING THE HANDMADE IN FLORENCE
SHANNON GALVIN (SFS’15), TURKEY AND ITALY

In a time dominated by huge department stores that demand cookie cutter mass production, it is refreshing to find artisans who put time and thought into each work. Art requires a type of patience that seems increasingly hard to find in our automatized and factory line world. This makes handmade works even more of a treasure. Florence, after all, is a city of art. Every year, millions of visitors flock to the Uffizi, the Accademia, the Bargello, or one of the many museums in the city to gaze at the famous works of the Renaissance masters. Yet I found it surprising to discover how much the tradition continues to thrive. Globalization may be changing the kind of products we use and how they are made, but there remains value in the kind of handmade work that can never be replaced by mass production or factory lines.

SOUTH AFRICA:
A COUNTRY TRAPPED BETWEEN ITS PAST AND ITS FUTURE
CHLOE NALBANTIAN (C’15), SOUTH AFRICA

I am reminded once again of the freshness of South Africa’s freedom as I attend a concert held by the University of Cape Town celebrating 20 years of democracy. What I have learned through reflection during these elections is that the youthfulness of South Africa’s current political state places its future in precarious balance, a balance that is still incredibly influenced by the country’s past. For some, this would seem ironic, that the country is still restricted by the chains it shed twenty years ago. But for me, it is ominous. One can only sit and wait and hope that the balance tips in favor of the parties who will use their power in aid of their country’s future, and not in favor of the individuals who look to abuse that power.
This year’s bloggers placed a heavy emphasis on observed inequality—based on racial and ethnic groups, gender, and socioeconomic class—and the related challenges of development and globalization. Whether reflecting on the lingering financial effects of the Euro crisis, the dire state of refugees seeking security in Jordan, or the female healthcare crisis in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, students offered insightful, and often heartbreaking, depictions of economic and political struggle.

Challenges of Development and Globalization

**THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY:**
**POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN BRAZIL**
**STEPHANIE MUCI (N’14), BRAZIL**

I am lucky that I get to experience a part of Brazil that many people do not get the chance to. Through my internship at Fiocruz, I get to witness the “other side” and talk to people who do not always live the most ideal lives; the ones that live far away from the scenes depicted in movies and travel magazines. One of my fellow interns grew up in one of Rio’s favelas and often provides details and insight. Recently, she said, the government has forced many people out of their homes in order to build structures for the upcoming World Cup and Olympics. And more often than not, these people only receive a fraction of what they should or are relocated to housing complexes in inconvenient places as I have seen. She also shared other stories that revealed Brazil as a corrupt place, where those in power victimize the innocent, and where the poor have no room to escape.

**A STORY OF CHINA’S VILLAGES:**
**THE CLASH OF TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION**
**ELAINE LI (SFS’15), CHINA**

Darengou Village, at its peak, was home to over 300 inhabitants. Today, only approximately 80 villagers remain. This phenomenon occurs not only in Darengou Village, but also in villages across China on a much larger scale. As villagers migrate to cities, villages gradually shrink and ultimately disappear. In 1980, shortly after China’s reform and opening up, 80 percent of the population lived in villages. According to 2012 statistics, only 48.73 percent of the Chinese population lives in villages. For a country whose history revolves around villages and its inhabitants, this is a dramatic shift. It’s not just about physically losing the village and the farmlands. It is also about losing traditional village culture and all the associated values. Yet, for many, moving forward toward modernity trumps preserving the past. This begs the question of what modernity and development means for the Chinese. To the people, it means partaking in consumerism. To the government, it means increasing statistics and swapping out the old with the new.

“I often pass signs for a lottery whose grand prize is not millions or billions of CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) but a United States visa.”

- Philip Wong
I’m leaving on a jet plane, but I’ll definitely be back to Nepal again

Marina Zhou (SFS’15), Nepal

While I do believe that most of us in the School of Foreign Service want to do good, there’s also a tendency to want to do it in a context that’s comforting for us, while rubbing shoulders with all the right people. But when microfinance can be used by unscrupulous politicians as an excuse not to provide basic social safety nets because “the poor now have microcredit,” and when so many Nepalis distrust the work that NGOs do because “development” can be just another synonym for get-rich-quick schemes here, what does “doing good” even mean, at least in the context of future employment?

The Promised Land: Emigration from Senegal

Philip Wong (SFS’15), Senegal

USA, Spain, France, Italy, Canada—anywhere would be better than here, Senegal. I often pass signs for a lottery whose grand prize is not millions or billions of CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) but a United States visa. And for some who cannot afford air travel or for whom the visa process will yield nothing, the only viable solution may be a treacherous weeklong journey in a small, wooden fishing boat, with Spain as the most likely destination. (...) While the “promised land” narrative persists at a household level, what is the outlook for Senegalese emigration at a macroeconomic level? On the one hand, remittances can provide much needed financial relief to families in Senegal; on the other hand, the country may
lose some of its most talented and brilliant students and professionals to pastures that are perceived of as greener.

**CREATING AN ENEMY: THE WEST’S FAILED APPROACH TO THE SOCHI OLYMPIC GAMES**

**APRIL GORDON (SFS’15), RUSSIA**

While it is true that in some cases skepticism toward Russia has been well-earned, it seems to me that this Western trend of excessive criticism of Russia, however well-intentioned, is doing more harm than good. What the West needs to understand is that attacking Russia so relentlessly only exacerbates the problem. The more that we criticize, the more Russia feels isolated, the more hard-headed and defensive against Western pressure it gets. Complaining about the furniture in your five-star hotel room and playing up negative Russian stereotypes is not only petty and insensitive to local living conditions, but in fact dangerous—flooding Russia with the idea that the West is an enemy bent on eternal antagonism. As a result, the Russian people are inevitably goaded into adopting an antagonistic and anti-Western stance themselves. The worst part is that these feelings of helplessness and defensiveness toward the West have been consistently cultivated in the Russian people, not by the evil propaganda of the Russian government, but by none other than ourselves.

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**LET’S TALK ABOUT “AFRICA”**

**AUDREY DENIS (SFS’15), MOROCCO**

Morocco, like many countries, faces serious challenges for economic development and addressing social inequality, but as long as Western media perpetuates the idea that Africa is one stagnant, hopeless place in comparison to Europe, the majority of the Western world, who will likely never experience a country in Africa for themselves, will continue to misunderstand an entire part of the world. Within Morocco there is also diverse art, language, food, dance, poetry, religion, and families; to describe all of that as despair is the absolute opposite of what I have experienced in my time living with a middle class Moroccan family. (...) We need to develop a discourse about Africa outside of the narrative of what it lacks. We need to treat African countries for what they are, individual nations. We need to understand that poverty and social inequality alone do not define nations and peoples. And we need to leave the paradigm of Africa as despair and Europe as wealth in the past, because it’s inaccurate.

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**THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IS AT THE BALLOT BOX**

**SEBASTIAN SILVA (SFS’15), BELGIUM**

Globalization is a word that is thrown around a lot by the media, by the average citizen, and by academia. Eu-
Europe, on the other hand is going through its own process of “Europeanization” as it decides where it will be going in the future. In these upcoming elections, so-called “ Euroskeptic” parties—those that are wary of further European integration and a more centralized decisionmaking process in Brussels—are expected to increase their share of seats, which would make European action more difficult as the European Parliament takes on a bigger role in European affairs. (...) Europe is at a crossroads, and the upcoming elections show that more than ever. Young voters will hopefully get involved in a way that will show that they are ready to be part of the next generation of Europe’s leadership, or else risk getting left behind.

**DUST AND DEVELOPMENT IN KATHMANDU**

**ALEX O’NEILL (C’15), NEPAL**

National parks, community forest projects, and forest reserves are historically new in Nepal. But the land that they occupy is old and has a much longer, complex cultural narrative that is usually not considered during such projects. What does one do when his/her sacred geographies or culturally important resources are destroyed in the name of development? Thirty years ago people could swim in Kathmandu’s most holy river, the Bagmati. Today, it is so polluted with road dust and refuse that people do not want to go in it. Trash piles several feet high line its banks. But still, funeral services at Pashupatinaath, one of the most famous temples to Shiva in the world, still culminate with people entering the river’s waters and depositing their deceased’s crematory ashes in it. What happens when the river is so polluted that one cannot enter it without getting sick?

**NATURAL DISASTERS, POLITICAL CORRUPTION, AND A CULTURE OF RESILIENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES**

**NADIA THURA (N’14), PHILIPPINES**

What is so saddening about the situation is that natural disasters (though rarely of such destructive force as that of Yolanda) are essentially commonplace in the Philippines, a country that experiences more tropical storms per year than almost any other country on Earth. Further, being in the “Ring of Fire” region in the Pacific makes the Philippines prone to earthquakes. You would think that with all of this unfortunate experience, the country over time would have gotten better at anticipating and responding to these disasters—but for infuriating reasons, this just isn’t the case. Corruption is clearly an important factor that hinders the extent to which the country can prepare for, and respond to, natural disasters. The provinces most affected by Typhoon Yolanda, in the central Visayas region of the country, are some of the poorest areas of the Philippines. Proper infrastructure could greatly mitigate the devastating effects of disasters, but building codes are often not adhered to in construction, and issues with dam construction and water supply even within the capital of Manila are troublesome.

“What does one do when his/her sacred geographies or culturally important resources are destroyed in the name of development?”

- Alex O’Neill
NGOS IN GULU: OBSERVING THE ROLE OF FOREIGN AID IN NORTHERN UGANDA

ALEX POMMIER (SFS’15), UGANDA

While my semester in Gulu, Uganda is focusing on post-conflict transformation, I may actually be studying post-post-conflict transformation, observing how a community is recovering from an inundation of foreign aid. Although many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have done remarkable work in helping the Acholi people recover from decades of war and forced displacement, the economic and cultural effects of this amount of aid and the sheer number of NGOs still in Gulu (at one time numbering close to 500) raises provocative questions about the righteousness of foreign-led development programs in a post-conflict environment. (...) Emblazoned with their logos and with markings from different donors, a majority of the cars and trucks driving down the streets of Gulu belong to NGOs and UN agencies.

MADE IN ITALY USA

CHRISTINA MCGRATH (C’15), ITALY

America has come to symbolize both the positive and the negative of power, capitalism, and bounty. There are those that see our nation as gluttonous, capitalistic, and consumerist, but there are those that still see our country as an inspiration, a place where wealth can be earned and opportunities abound, a country of people unafraid to express their desires in order to gain liberty. I never thought coming to Italy would put me in touch with what it means to be an American, but now more than ever I have asked myself that question: how do other nations see us? What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States?

In these past few months I’ve of course come to learn more about Italian culture, but the Italians have pushed me toward a deeper consideration of my national identity, something that I think will remain with me long after I leave.
LITTLE KOREA IN BUENOS AIRES
JINYOUNG LEE (SFS’15), ARGENTINA

I felt proud of how vibrant this Little Korea was, although I also got the sense that it was a very tight-knit community somewhat closed off from the rest of Buenos Aires. Perhaps it is because of this separation that there is a lack of interest and awareness of Korean culture among native porteños. Even at a government-sponsored parade for multiculturalism in early March, I noticed that the Korean-Argentine community did not send a representative, despite having such a significant presence in the city. In my opinion, there should be a more conscientious effort made by both sides to encourage greater integration. If the Korean community opened itself up more to the rest of Buenos Aires, maybe more native porteños would be able to acknowledge Koreans as separate from the Chinese population and take greater interest in Korean culture.

ISLAMIC INFLUENCE IN LONDON
SAMANTHA FOGGAN (B’15), UNITED KINGDOM

Over a million Muslims live in London alone, making up a significant 12 percent of the population. However, this figure may be starting to decrease. The Economist featured a recent piece called the “London Effect,” which described the phenomenon of minority groups moving outward from the city of London to more rural or suburban areas of England, due to the increasing cost of city life and increased access to London through public transportation. Modernization of infrastructure will allow families to remain in the United Kingdom and live cheaper while allowing parents to keep jobs in the city, but it may create a reduction of diversity in the city, as minorities move into suburban England, and eventually a socioeconomic divide.

WE’RE ALL MIGRANTS
TRAVIS RICHARDSON (C’15), RUSSIA

I feel a certain connection with the migrants in St. Petersburg. Like them, I am a stranger trying to acclimate. However, I have the luxury of leaving. When I have a rough day, I take comfort in the fact that a semester flies by, and soon I will return home. Yet for the migrant, there is no home. Considering conditions which make it impossible to thrive in their homeland and attitudes making them less than welcome in Russia, I fear that migrants are stuck in a sort of limbo. Because of this, I commend the immigrants of this city. They made the decision to leave the familiarity of their homes to travel to an unforgiving land to create a purposeful life. The Uzbeks come for work and the Byelorussians come to escape dictatorship, but all come in the hope that Russia will provide opportunity.

THE WORLD’S MOST ABSURD NON-MELTING POT
NICOLO DONA DALLE ROSE (SFS’15), JORDAN

The crow’s flight distance from Amman, Jordan, to Jerusalem is no more than 44 miles. Yet, as similar as this may be to the distance between Washington, DC and Baltimore, the journey can take an entire day. The slow, multi-layered, and intimidating border is in itself an experience. A quite tragic one, too. On the Jordanian side, you are likely to witness terrible disorganization. On the Israeli side, sheer discrimination. While white Western men and women have a relatively easy time going through the checks and avoiding an Israeli stamp on their passports, Arab nationals, ethnic Arabs, and Palestinian citizens in particular are systematically subject to seclusion, rejection, and humiliation. Many do not make it through at all, even after multiple attempts and no reasonable ground for suspicion. In fact, it is harder for my host-father, who was born in Jerusalem, to visit his hometown, than it is for me, a random and uninformed foreign student.

CHILEAN MAPUCHE: LIFE IN THE VICIOUS CYCLE
DYLAN GAFFNEY (C’15), CHILE AND COSTA RICA

The Mapuche do not fight to become a vibrant part of the Chilean state; they just want to return to being themselves. The Chilean state somehow sees in the rise of Mapuche influence the opportunity to erase them even further from the national agenda. Recent policies have argued that a Mapuche who participates so actively in the dynamics of the
modern world has departed from his or her authentically indigenous identity, thereby justifying the government’s failure to respect Mapuche claims to land. Just like my immersion into a Spanish-speaking society, the Mapuche engagement with the modern world has caused a fundamental change in their existence. Unlike my voluntary transformation, the Mapuche have no other choice but to speak out for their dignity.

IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION AT THE THERMAL SPAS
PETER ARMSTRONG (SFS’15), GERMANY

After all this time, one would think that the Turks of Germany would by now be well integrated into the German culture. In fact, there is some proof of this—the Turks make up such a huge part of Germany that they are now an accepted part of German life, and one can see marks of this in many other ways than the all-pervasive döner kebab stands filling German stomachs with Mediterranean food. (...) Unfortunately, in spite of the abundance of Turks in Germany (or perhaps, because of it), as a whole, they remain the least integrated group of foreigners in all of Germany, according to a recent study. They came behind immigrants even from Yugoslavia and African countries; in some places in Germany such as Saarland, as many as 45 percent of Turks do not graduate from school. Ninety-three percent of Turks marry other Turks, and over 50 percent say that they feel unwelcome in Germany. Among Turks, unemployment is high, and many rely on state benefits as their only source of income.

THE INBETWEENERS: JORDAN’S STRUGGLE WITH IDENTITY
KABREYA GHADERI (SFS’15), JORDAN AND QATAR

With a population of roughly 6.4 million people, Jordan is a melting pot in its own right. The wide range of nationalities that I have found in my stay in Jordan—from my Palestinian barista, to my Syrian grocer, to my Circassian language partner—only serves as a reminder of how diverse the region is. Jordan’s reputation as a politically stable nation has made it a prime destination for refugees in the region fleeing conflict. Since 1948, Palestinians have become a sizable part of Jordan’s population. Moreover, the US invasion of Iraq and the current Syrian civil war have led to massive inflows of Iraqi and Syrian refugees into the country. While Jordan’s diversity has conveniently allowed a study-abroad student like me to explore other cultures within the region in one city, the changing population has put quite a strain on Jordan. Especially with the massive flow of Syrians into Jordan, there is more competition for limited resources such as housing, employment, and even for natural resources like water.

FRENCH VS. ARAB IDENTITY IN FRANCE
KATE WITCHGER (SFS’15), FRANCE

There is a mix of history, ethnicity, and religion at play in the relationship between the identities of “Arab” and “French”, which creates tension in the fabric of French society. Some of France’s former colonies in Africa were Arab, like Algeria, Morocco, and (partially) Mali. The country that left a lasting imprint, however, was Algeria. After a particularly bloody civil war and war for independence and secession from France, the relationship between the two countries was rocky. Pieds-noirs is a term used for someone who lived in Algeria and came back to France after or during the war. They are characterized as a cultural hybrid with a double alienation: no longer fully accepted in their native land of France or in their homeland of Algeria.

NOT EVERYONE GETS TO GO HOME
AISHA BABALAKIN (SFS’15), JORDAN

Most of the time, refugees cannot go home, because home isn’t home anymore. For Syrians, home has been reduced to rubble, and for the Palestinians, home is another state, another country, another people. Visiting the territories as a descendant of a Palestinian is a painful affair. At the border there is intense interrogation and vilification, almost to shame you about your heritage. In the end, the decision to let you in could be completely arbitrary, and then if it’s a “no,” there’s that sad journey back to Amman or wherever you came from.

NATIONALISM, THE RIGHT, AND THE EUROPEAN PROJECT
DANNY PIERRO (C’15), FRANCE

Unfortunately, self-reflection does not always connote forward-looking change. Often, it forces retreat in the institutional shell of our distinct differences that separates us from the “other.” And the left views Le Pen’s growth as the politicization of the “other”: those who have failed to integrate with French culture; those who France lets enter its
borders despite sky-high unemployment; those who potentially deviate French culture from its normal trajectory; and more importantly, those who chip away at France’s ability to democratically lead its people.

TWO PEOPLE, AND A BOLIVIAN: SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INEQUITY IN ARGENTINA

COLLEEN SCANLON (C’15), ARGENTINA

In my oral Spanish class we spent a week discussing discrimination in Argentina. We looked at many advertisements and public media to explore the topic as it manifests itself in daily life. One news headline took me completely by surprise. In 2006 there was a car accident in the Flores neighborhood of Buenos Aires that claimed three lives. The headline on the main news channel read, “Fatal accident in Flores, two killed, and a Bolivian.” The bold contrast between the Bolivian victim and the two other, presumably white, victims was startling. (...) Popular culture appears to consider a person of Italian or German descent as more Argentine than someone of Bolivian or East Asian descent.

Gender and Sexuality

REORIENTING MY IDENTITY IN DUSHANBE

JESSICA REMPE (SFS’15), TAJIKISTAN

Upon reading my acceptance packet for Dushanbe, I discovered that I would be granted honorary male status. As a cisgender female, I finally would be able to enjoy life on the other side of the gender spectrum, and I wondered if I would feel more equality as an American female living in Tajikistan than I do in the United States. (...) In the months counting down to the trip, I often found myself pondering this “foreign” concept of being an honorary male, only to realize it existed here at home: specifically, during my childhood as a tomboy. I remember being frustrated by the label because it stripped me of my identity as a girl in order for me to be considered “in” with the boys. Here in Tajikistan, I am not completely positive that my honorary male status is any better. Instead of being equal, I am pigeonholed into my own separate category that shifts in regard to the context. While it may allow me to continue acting in ways that I take for granted in the United States, I would not say that I am equal to a man.

WE CANNOT NEGLECT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN THE AFTERMATH OF TYPHOON HAIYAN

KATHLEEN KELLEY (N’14), PHILIPPINES

The World Health Organization (WHO) releases leptospirosis fact sheets, and the Red Cross crams rice, noodles, cans, and water into sacks. However, in the wake of amassing foodstuffs and delivering immunizations, all do not suffer equally. All are not equally affected by the disaster. (...) And when resources are limited, the first to be forgotten are the women. (...) In the impacted areas, three million women of reproductive age are left vulnerable. Two hundred thirty thousand pregnant women emerge from the wreckage. Twenty-five thousand births are expected in just the next month, which in this region means 3,000 obstetric complications and 1,200 births requiring cesarean sections. And in the calamity, without the safety of shelter, with tensions and stress and violence escalating, 5,000 women will be subject to sexual violence.
ARCHAIC GENDER ROLES IN TANZANIA
BINTA CEESEY (N'14), TANZANIA

Driving through the less developed areas of Dar es Salaam has opened my eyes to the archaic gender gaps that are present. Women are the ones vigorously pounding wheat in what is comparable to an enormous mortar and pestle. Women are the ones slaving over dangerous flames preparing meals for their husbands and families. Women are the ones walking the streets with large, heavy containers on top of their heads. Women are the ones vigorously scrubbing the clothing and hanging them to dry. Women are the ones doing the brunt of the domestic labor, and then some. However, women are not the ones appreciated, praised, or favored.

IRON WOMEN
LINDSAY FOUNTAIN (SFS'15), TURKEY

The modern feminist movement in Turkey was sparked by a 1980s court ruling refusing a woman a divorce from her abusive husband. The presiding judge proclaimed that a woman needs a baby in her belly and a stick on her head. The huge demonstrations that swept Istanbul in May 1987 following this announcement marked the beginning of the first homegrown feminist movement not sponsored by the state-led push for secularization. Its gains have been modest and seem frozen by a crisis of implementation. (...) The things I took for granted, like the enforcement of laws and reliable rulings from judges, seem like luxuries here. The women fighting this battle every day, from within the recesses of Istanbul's Beyoğlu neighborhood to the civil war-torn southeast, will never cease to amaze me.

BEHIND THE KIMONO
HIROMI OKA (SFS'15), JAPAN

While Sheryl Sandberg and the “Lean In” philosophy have gained in popularity, the dialogue on women in the workforce in Japan does not seem to have the same vocal lobby. Japan is a pacifist country, and in an aging society with a declining birthrate, the number of people who can speak up and who have the courage to defy social convention is too few. (...) The question of empowering women is not just economic, even though there are strong arguments to be made in that regard. Japan must change the way it views women and their role in society and transform their burden to become more equitable between both genders. No matter what country, women should be able to have their cake and eat it too, whether they buy it from a bakery or make it themselves.

**Socioeconomic Disparity and Economic Crises**

LIVING ON THE HILL: MY HOMESTAY IN ENKANINI
SARAH PATRICK (C'15), SOUTH AFRICA

An outsider, unfamiliar with Enkanini’s inner workings or community networks, easily could tour the settlement and come away with the perception that the residents are messy, inconsiderate of the environment, and contributing to environmental degradation. However, such a conclusion ignores the situation’s deeper, structural origins. The waste management set-up does not reflect the Enkanini residents’ characters, but rather emphasizes how social inequalities lead to physical and circumstantial distinctions that inhibit individuals from breaking out of a downward cycle. What would Enkanini look like if the municipality collected the trash the residents so carefully accumulate in a single location? While poverty forces the residents to live in the settlement, social inequalities—the perception of settlement dwellers as different and other—seemingly justifies the municipality’s lack of effort to provide services to Enkanini.

LOOKING AT THE ECONOMIC CRISIS THROUGH A SPANISH LENS
DANIELLE WEBB (C'15), SPAIN

On the first day, the professor randomly assigned all of the students into groups, and I found myself as the only American in a group with four Spaniards. He asked each group to discuss what they believe is wrong with society, economically and socially, from their unique perspective. All of my group members immediately stared at me, extremely interested in my American perspective, while I tried to discuss the income gap, student loans, and unemployment in the United States. Among the societal problems for the
young Spaniards, they discussed the fear and difficulty of finding jobs after graduation, an anxiety also felt by many Georgetown seniors. Since we attend Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, a prestigious private university in a country where public universities are respectable and low-cost, they explained that they feel less distress than students at other schools probably experience.

WHITHER EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?
Mina Pollmann (SFS’15), United Kingdom

Crises can spur changes that rupture the slow evolution of institutions, and the Eurozone crisis of 2009 offers just such an opportunity. At one extreme, there is the possibility of fiscal union, at the other extreme, dissolution. While dissolution is still hard to believe, the exit of key member-states from the EU/Eurozone has become increasingly likely, as disgruntled euro-skeptics have started exerting pressure on their elected representatives. From a political and policy perspective, AfD’s (Alternative for Germany) impact will most likely be minimal. Yet the AfD, along with UKIP (UK Independence Party), is contributing to a more open dialogue on an important issue for all Europeans. By criticizing the Eurozone and the handling of the crisis, the AfD highlights problems, and hopefully such attention will lead to improvements in the future. Now—while the memories of the crisis are still fresh—may be the best opportunity the EU has to make dramatic changes. If such debate is conducted with respect and rationality, in the liberal democratic tradition that the West has such good reason to be proud of, not only the United Kingdom and Germany, but also the EU will be better off for it.

CORRUPT SPACE: MUMBAI’S PROTEST SLUM
Sarah Mock (SFS’15), South Africa and India

From a ferry in the middle of Mumbai harbor, I couldn’t help but be enthralled by the paradox that is the Mumbai skyline. This global metropolis, home to 13 million people, from this angle looks like a mouth full of broken teeth. The stunted skyline illustrates the deep and corrosive corruption that exists throughout India, but which is on particular display in Mumbai. The wealth and holdings of politicians and the politically active are so unchecked that in a city where people live on 30 Rs. ($0.50) a day, flats fetch New York prices. On the surface, there is little evidence of serious social effort working against this corruption, but one particularly powerful movement lies right in the city’s heart, under the nose and yet somehow out of reach of the very politicians they protest. Welcome to Dharavi. Dharavi is most famous for being Asia’s largest slum, but in the time I spent there, I felt something much more important in its paradoxical existence. Dharavi is the natural outcome of the particular corruption that exists in Mumbai relating to property ownership and politics.
ECONOMIC DECLINE AND CULTURE SHOCK
TIFFANY LACHHONNA (C’15), ARGENTINA

In the last seven weeks, I have continued to adjust to my life in Buenos Aires, living alongside citizens who also face seemingly continuous adjustments around them as well. Both the official and unofficial peso rate change so frequently that businesses have updated their prices almost daily. At my favorite coffee shop, Ateneo, the price for my café con leche has shifted between three price points depending on how the economy is doing that day. (...)

What’s particularly remarkable in my experience here is that even in the midst of economic strife and understandable frustration, every Argentine I have met has been uncommonly friendly and incredibly proud of their country. They take time to sit and enjoy their friend’s company over a coffee, they are more than happy to explain a political aspect I or anyone is unclear about, and they possess the South American charm and hospitality I have long admired in this continent’s culture.

MEGAN ELMAN (SFS’15), CHILE

QUESTIONING STEREOTYPES IN SANTIAGO
MEGAN ELMAN (SFS’15), CHILE

When I met some Chilean college students from wealthier comunas, they described the term “pelo-líes,” which essentially refers to wealthy Chileans who might be compared to New York City’s Upper East Siders. Recognizing the problem and reinforcing it, they referred to themselves as pelo-líes and simultaneously described the inequality within the city. Their depictions of Santiago’s socioeconomic situation reminded me of Washington, DC. As in Santiago, a mere address ending in SE or NW immediately establishes a person’s background and stereotype.

HOMELESSNESS IN DUBLIN AND DC
MELISSA MABRY (C’15), IRELAND

In Dublin, the successes of the Celtic Tiger years and the hardships of 2008 have come together to create a “ghost
estate” wherein a surplus of housing complexes that were built to support the demand of the people are now left vacant and uninhabited due to the financial crisis limiting the ability to rent or buy a home. Several statistics claim that there are a few thousand empty housing developments in Dublin, and that makes me believe those of us who have benefited from an education, healthcare, and the love of family and friends are not effectively utilizing our intellectual, social, and monetary resources to solve the puzzle of how a major city has thousands of empty homes and hundreds of homeless people.

EXPLORING EL PARO: UNEMPLOYMENT IN SPAIN
TERESA GERUSON (C’15), SPAIN

Two days ago, my host mother’s closest friend, Almudena, was laid off. She had anticipated the layoff, and she knew that the majority of the other employees would be dismissed as well as the ownership of the company transitioned. What Almudena had not anticipated, however, was the job offer she received from the company taking over her own: the opportunity to do what amounted to the same job for slightly more than half of her current salary. Despite 18 years of experience in the hotel industry, her compensation would be that of an entry-level employee. What shocked me the most about the situation was not the offer, but the fact that it merited consideration.

EMPOWERING GIRLS AND WOMEN THROUGH SOCCER
EMILIA SENS (C’15), BRAZIL

Here in Rio, and all over Brazil, everyone loves his or her respective professional team. I always know when a team from Rio is playing by the yelling and cheering in the street that I can hear from my room. However, very few people actually play soccer among the middle and upper classes. The reality is that soccer players are typically from the favelas, or very poor neighborhoods where getting an education is not an option. In Rio, soccer players are associated with those who rob and assault. Shortly after I arrived, my host mother told me to “watch out for those soccer players, they are very dangerous.” I was very confused at first, but then realized the significance of what she said. In Brazil, unlike in the United States, one must choose between school and soccer, and cannot have both.

UBUNTU, COMMUNITY, AND DIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA
COLLEEN ROBERTS (C’15), SOUTH AFRICA

Despite the many negative stereotypes that are associated with black townships, residents have a strong commitment and love of their community. There is a southern African cultural term called ubuntu. Ubuntu refers to the interconnectedness of all humans. In the tradition of ubuntu, we should care for each person we encounter in life with the utmost love, respect, and recognition of his or her human dignity. From what I have perceived, this doctrine is an integral component of life within township communities. It is obvious to me that townships are so much more than what meets the eye. They are so much more than a community that has been negatively stereotyped by its crime rates and its blackness. Townships are not soil marks that ruin Cape Town’s essence and beauty, but rather they lie at the heart of it. Much like the city of Cape Town itself, the townships are complex realities that have incredible diversity to share and fascinating stories to tell.