Junior Year Abroad Network
Annual Report
2014-2015

A PROJECT OF THE DOYLE ENGAGING DIFFERENCE PROGRAM
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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), chair 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.
55 students in 23 countries across 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 nine years since the program began, nearly 500 students have participated, studying in 54 countries.

Participating students write three 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 Carly Henry of the Berkley Center and is part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Program.

During the ninth year of the Junior Year Abroad Network, Georgetown students studied in 23 countries. During their time abroad, participants encountered a common theme of evolving national identities in the midst of rapidly changing societies. While they learned how globalization and technological advancements are contributing to changing cultures, they also learned that certain traditional ideals remain. Students observed an unexpected community hallmarked by diversity, challenging them to consider how varying perspectives among religions, cultures, ethnicities, and genders can be used to build a multifaceted national identity—one that can help a nation overcome intolerance and violence. This resonated with students as they grappled with events felt around the world, such as the Charlie Hebdo and Michael Brown shootings, as well as other global issues.
Many countries are undergoing rapid transformation as changing demographics and debates over the role of religion in society shape new spaces in ancient cultures. In Europe, debates over secular versus religious identities and immigration are at the forefront. Painful tragedies like the murders at Charlie Hebdo forced academic conversations about identity into the forefront of student experience. In Turkey and Tanzania, students observed how unique legacies of religious pluralism impact modern life. Surrounded by rich religious history and traditions, students reflected upon their academic studies and new personal relationships to analyze the changes surrounding them.

**BEING MUSLIM IN LONDON**

**NOURHAN ELSAYED (SFSQ’16), UNITED KINGDOM**

As a veiled Muslim woman, my experience in the public sphere differs from Muslim men and non-hijabi Muslim women. While both can almost always keep their religious affiliation secret by donning “religiously neutral” clothes, my headscarf always gives me away and determines—both positively and negatively—the way people see me. Many would regard me and my actions as representative of my religion. Many would be prepared to make inaccurate assumptions about my cultural background through my hijab. For example, while discussing the lives of Muslim women with a scholar in London, I was a little disappointed to see the awe on her face when she discovered that I willfully chose—and was not forced—to wear the hijab. Her reaction reveals an underlying presumption that, by default, veiled Muslim women lack agency and are doomed to a life of coercion. Yet, being Muslim in London is an experience that made me, as a Muslim, feel at home in London and more connected to the transnational ummah (community of Muslims).

**GOOD SAMARITANS IN FLORENCE:**

**PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE TRADITION OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH**

**ALLISON ZACK (C’16), ITALY**

The Misericordia di Firenze, Italy’s first volunteer ambulance service, is rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition. The ancient, yellowed pages of its original constitution are dedicated to the martyr St. Peter da Verona. Inside the doors of the main offices in Piazza San Giovanni, Misericordia volunteers can sit in an exquisite chapel and reflect beneath a giant painting of St. Sebastian. The patron saint of the Misericordia also appears in the title of the organization’s official newsletter, approved and blessed in 1949 by the archbishop of Florence. Because of its conservative views on social issues, Roman Catholicism has fallen out of favor with many Florentines. And yet, in a city that is moving toward more modern laws to fit its diverse population, the spirit of the gospel lives on in the Misericordia and its volunteers.

**THE PATA NEGRA AND CATHOLIC DOMINANCE IN SPAIN**

**SAMANTHA GILMORE (SFS’16), SPAIN**

Although I find Spain’s porcine culture quite delicious, not everyone has the opportunity to enjoy it. Walking by specialty shops with “patas negras”—cured ham legs—hanging from the ceiling, my first thought was how authentically Spanish it felt. It wasn’t until a tour guide related to us the history of the hanging ham legs that I realized the frequent sight could be a bit unsettling to some. (…) In 1492, monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella issued the Alhambra Decree, which forced Jews to leave Spain, convert to Catholicism, or be killed; in 1501, they gave the same ultimatum to Muslims. After these decrees, religion was sharply monitored in Spain to ensure that people had truly converted and all traces of other religious practices had been ex-

“While both can almost always keep their religious affiliation secret by donning “religiously neutral” clothes, my headscarf always gives me away and determines—both positively and negatively—the way people see me.”

- Nourhan Elsayed
pelled. According to one Madrid tour guide, hanging ham legs became a practice not only in carnicerías (meat shops), but also in completely non-meat related businesses to demonstrate one's dedication to the Catholic faith because ham legs would not be acceptable in a business run by Muslims or Jews.

ITALY, A COUNTRY OF CHURCHES: SECULARIZATION’S IMPACT ON A HISTORICALLY CATHOLIC SOCIETY
TESSA BELL (MSB’16), ITALY

While Italy is undoubtedly experiencing some cultural and religious changes, its rich religious history will always be a part of its Italian identity. Among the stout yellow buildings, whose age has only made them more beautiful, one must only look upward to find a nearby church standing with dignity nearby. After spending only three weeks here, I have already stumbled upon six churches within the nearby area of Fiesole and Florence. Each of these churches has its own traditions and history to explore. With breathtaking ceilings and elaborate altars, their beauty reminds one of the origins of Florence. As secularization changes the social realm of the country, Italy’s churches will remain as constant reminders of the fundamental building blocks of society.

STUDYING THEOLOGY FROM A (SPANISH) JESUIT PERSPECTIVE
ALEXANDRA DANIELS (SFS’16), SPAIN

One of the most striking things I have encountered is how differently Comillas and Georgetown handle the study of theology despite their similar systemic approaches. Both universities share a Jesuit identity of which they are both very proud and which both universities integrate into everyday life at the university. Similar to students at Georgetown, all Comillas students must take a course in “Cristianismo y Ética Social” (“Christianity and Social Ethics”) regardless of their field of study. My class is with a group of students in the undergraduate school of derecho (law). On the first day of class, my professor impressed upon the students how important it is for lawyers to have a strong foundation in ethics and an understanding of religion and the role it plays, particularly in Spanish society. This seemed intuitive to me given the sorts of introductory philosophy and ethics courses students across undergraduate schools take at Georgetown. What I did not grasp, however, was my professor’s clear emphasis on understanding the function of religion in various societies. Although I knew Spain was a Catholic country, I did not properly understand what that meant for Spanish society and how it may differ from norms I have become accustomed to in the United States.

IN THE WAKE OF CRISIS, UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE OF FREE SPEECH IN FRANCE
KYRA HANLON (SFS’16), FRANCE

This week, I had my first real discussion with my host family about the consequences of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France. From their view, France is bouncing between extremes. On the one hand, supporters of the Front National (the extreme right of the political spectrum) have always been wary
(to say the least) of immigrants and Islam. On the extreme left, laïque fanatics have made a transition from a laissez-faire attitude about religion in the private sphere to the other extreme of fearing that Islam's structure poses dangers to freedom of expression. According to my host mom, France has already made “progress” by opening up discussion about religious topics that used to be politically taboo. However, these conversations seem to lack the nuance necessary to avoid the history of marginalization and radicalization bred by extremist positions. As France moves forward, I hope that we can shape a legacy of Charlie Hebdo that acknowledges historical, cultural, and structural context in all its complexity. As a foreign student just beginning to understand these contexts, I am reminded of the confusion my seven-year-old self felt in September 2001.

SECULARISM AND RELIGIOSITY IN TURKEY
ZONGXIAN EUGENE ANG (SFS’16), TURKEY

An expression of one’s religious identity need not be an affront against the freedom of religion or other liberal ideals. One can be both religious and secular at the same time. Turkey cannot risk alienating those whose religiosity is not opposed to life in a modern, liberal society. These people, many of them youths, add to the vibrancy of Turkish society and its economy. It would only be Turkey’s loss if a significant portion of its population were denied the opportunity to do so due to myopic ideological sectarianism. A young man I met in Van told me matter-of-factly: “I am a devout Muslim, but it doesn’t matter to me if you are an atheist.” His tolerance surprised me. (…) Nonetheless, this is a hopeful sign. If the Turkish youths can adopt such tolerance, they could put an end to the pitched ideological battles that have clouded much of the country’s history.

RELIGIOUS INTERSECTIONALITY IN DAR ES SALAAM
CHINMAYEE VENKATRAMAN (NHS’15), TANZANIA

According to the World Bank, the East African nation of Tanzania ranks as a low income country with a GDP per capita of $695 and a population of 49.25 million. The wealth of the country does not appear to be distributed equally though, as Dar es Salaam is significantly more urban than other parts of the country. Its health indicators are reflective of the wealth, infrastructure, and resources found in Dar as well. Tanzania’s population is roughly 35 percent Muslim, 30 percent Christian, and 35 percent traditional beliefs. In the two and a half weeks I have been here, I have witnessed elements of Islam and Christianity as well as my own religion, Hinduism. (…) I feel fortunate to have had experiences with multiple faith traditions thus far. I look forward to witnessing people from different faiths continue to peacefully coexist, while maintaining the depth and breadth of their traditions.

“An expression of one’s religious identity need not be an affront against the freedom of religion or other liberal ideals. One can be both religious and secular at the same time.”

- Zongxian Eugene Ang
Gender equality is a global priority, necessary to advance human rights and development. As they studied abroad, many students balanced this ideal with the reality of experiencing and observing gender bias in their host countries. From catcalling on the streets to restricted employment opportunities for women, students grappled with the global nature of gender inequality.

**Ideas of Space: Sexual Harassment on the Streets of Amman**

**Marie Beasley (C’16), Jordan**

As a woman who has lived in Amman for two months and is also frequently a target of verbal sexual harassment on the street, I believe that the men of the city are doing a good job of keeping ownership over their public space. I know many girls, both American and Jordanian that do not go onto the streets on their own because they do not want to be harassed. They do not feel unsafe with the harassment, but they still do not wish to deal with it on a daily basis. Even when girls go out in groups, men will still verbally sexually harass them, but the harassment is easier to ignore when you have someone to talk to. In order for this to change, the society as a whole needs to view public space as something shared between the genders.

**Confucius’s Glass Ceiling**

**Jessie Meier (SFS’16), South Korea**

One source of sexism in South Korea may be Confucian philosophy, which based all interactions of life on five different types of relationship, four of which, including husband-wife, are considered hierarchical. Most Korean women, when they marry, leave their jobs to be housewives, cleaning, cooking, and becoming mothers—a very difficult job, but it shows that Korean men are usually the sole breadwinners. The representative Korean woman, Shin Saimdang, a Confucian ideal, was a filial daughter, good wife, and the biggest advocate for her children’s education. Because there is not a need for women to have careers outside the home, the “trophy wife” is a more common reality in Korea.

**The Informal Economy in India**

**Cherie Chung (SFS’16), India**

Women are part of the informal economy—also known as the black market or the shadow economy—comprised of activities that fall outside of government protection and regulation. (…) The upsides to this system are patently obvious to any traveler in a developing country. In my travels, I’ve always been overwhelmed by the variety of cheap goods to be found in markets and on the side of the street. Buying from the informal sector is certainly less expensive and easier, not only for tourists but also for the urban poor. But the existence of this parallel economy, as ubiquitous and essential as it may be to everyday life, is endlessly controversial because of the costs to the workers who enjoy no protection under law.
PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS: SEXISM WITHIN ITALIAN CULTURE
JULIA CRIPPS (C’17), ITALY

Despite recent anti-femicide laws, it is estimated that one in three women experience domestic abuse in Italy, and over 90 percent of domestic violence cases go unreported. While the laws may be changing, the power imbalance between genders remains ingrained in traditional society. Until 1981, the criminal code provided for mitigating circumstances for honor killings when “he who causes the death of a spouse, daughter, or sister upon discovering her in illegitimate carnal relations and in the heat of passion caused by the offence to his honor or that of his family”. Italy has a history of treating women as sexual objects, and this cultural trait has a long-reaching grasp on contemporary Italian society. Some of this manifests in the harmless male attention that I witness on the street, but it is the underlying side effects of institutional sexism and serious violence that remain harder to eradicate.

“\nThe existence of this parallel economy, as ubiquitous as it may be to everyday life, is endlessly controversial because of the costs to the workers.”
- Cherie Chung

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ARGENTINA
NATALIE LUNG (C’16), ARGENTINA

The macho culture is rooted in a man’s responsibility to provide for, protect, and defend his family. The idea that the man is the primary breadwinner and the woman is a housewife, however, is no more applicable here than in the United States. In fact, after speaking to my host parents and many of my friends about their host families, I have noticed that the traditional family of a husband, wife, and their children seems much less the norm here than in the United States. For example, my host parents have been living together for the past eight years; both work and are financially independent but have never felt the need to be married. Moreover, many of my friends are living with single-parent families, usually with a successful woman supporting her family by herself. Therefore, the notion that women are financially dependent on men and reliant on them to support a family simply has not been true in my experience of Argentina.

SERENA GOBBI
CAMEROON
This year, the shootings of unarmed African Americans around the country galvanized a national conversation around racism and discrimination in the United States. During their time abroad, students followed events at home through social media and reflected on how racial differences were perceived in their host countries—from a celebration of diversity to government-imposed inequality. Students also encountered challenging questions centered around immigration and the search for national identity in an increasingly globalized and transient world.

IDENTITY, CULTURAL SENSITIVITY, AND RACISM IN INDIA
JENNY CHEN (SFS’16), INDIA

After having experienced an innumerable number of comparable interactions with Indian natives in the past few months, I have come to realize that many in India view race and identity as two inseparable and interconnected entities. Race and identity essentially go hand in hand. As such, the possibility of someone such as myself with distinctly Oriental features identifying as American is difficult for many Indians to comprehend because it clearly goes against their preconceived notions of race and identity. Although I was not used to and was frustrated with people constantly questioning my identity, over time I learned to deal with these questions in a calm and courteous manner. Whenever such incidents would happen, I would try to remind myself that many of the Indians that I met have not been exposed to the same cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity that is present in the United States as I have had.

THE PROBLEM OF BLACKNESS
JOY ROBERTSON (SFS’16), FRANCE

On Monday, November 24, I woke to the news that Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department in Missouri had not been indicted by a federal grand jury on the charges of shooting and killing an unarmed Michael Brown on August 9. I devoured my Facebook newsfeed, looking to gather every detail from the articles and videos shared by my friends. After a solid hour of reading, I put my face in my hands and cried. In that moment, Michael Brown stopped being an individual and became a metaphor for all black men in America. I thought about my dad, my uncles, my cousins, and my best friends and was so frustrated that I had the audacity to be studying abroad in the wake of a pivotal moment in American history! At the same time, I also had an earth-shattering realization: as a black person, I’m probably more respected here in France than back at home in the States. Now is that a polarizing statement? Yes. Is three months in a country long enough to make this kind of assessment? Maybe not. But one has to realize that no facts, figures, or examples in opposition to this claim can negate my lived experience as a black woman.

IMMIGRATION: LES ROMS IN FRANCE
ERIC ZEMMALI (SFS’16), FRANCE

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, France has been one of the largest European havens for immigrants and refugees of African or European origin. In the years surrounding World War Two, it welcomed thousands of refugees of war. In the mid to late twentieth century, France received an influx of immigrants from recently liberated French colonies. Today, due to the free flow of workers and migrants across the borders of European nations inside the European Union, people flock to France for its relatively stronger economy and social programs. The newest migrant group in France is les Roms, the French name given to the group of ethnically Romanian and Bulgarian peoples living outside their country of origin, often...
referred to in English as the Roma. (…) Thousands of Roma are living in deplorable conditions in France, and nearly every day I pass an entire family sleeping on the street. Many claim to be willing to work and ready to be educated, and they should be given the opportunity, as they have the right to.

ETHNICITY IN JAPAN
KRISTIN RONZI (SFS’16), JAPAN

Just as complex as the relationship between Japan and biracial Japanese are the relations between Japan and foreigners. There are still practices in Japan that continue to target foreigners. Stereotypes remain in the legislation that discriminate against foreigners. For example, stemming from an older belief that foreigners were more likely to engage in illicit behavior, foreigners are still banned from purchasing a cell phone without a cellular plan. It is not uncommon to hear stories of foreigners who were denied housing based on the fact that they are foreigners. In addition, foreigners are also referred to differently in the Japanese language. Most people will use the politically-correct term gaikokujin which translates to “foreign country person.” Gaikokujin is the preferred term to the more controversial term gaijin. While the term gaijin has largely been reclaimed by foreigners, the term remains controversial among the Japanese. The English translation is literally “outside person.” One of the problems of the homogeneous society is that non-ethnically Japanese people are still considered outsiders. The intent behind gaijin is still debatable, but there is a distinction that the language reflects.

“There are still practices in Japan that continue to target foreigners... One of the problems of the homogeneous society is that non-ethnically Japanese people are still considered outsiders.”

- Kristin Ronzi
A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT: THE SUBJECTIVE NATURE OF RACE  
CELIA SAWYERR (SFS’16), DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The “us versus them” nature of American chattel slavery can today be linked to the inherent need of our society to racially classify people. The United States is not a melting pot as we have been taught, but rather a salad bowl containing different ingredients that are not fully blended. During a presentation about race in the Dominican Republic and in the United States, I was explaining to my peers the concept of the hyphenated classification technique: for example, African-American, Indian-American, and Italian-American, among others. This technique is a way by which people claim their respective identities, which in turn reveal distinct cultural differences among the groups (food, religion, etc.). By contrast, this hyphenated terminology does not exist in the DR. Dominicans are just, well Dominicans. They share the same food, music, and love for merengue. I am in no way asserting that there is not a colorism problem in the DR or that this island society is a racial paradise. However, my experience there has confirmed the fact that yes, although the effects of a racial/color hierarchy are very real, the non-scientific, subjective concept of race itself is not.

SHADES OF THE PAST: IMPLICIT RACISM IN SOUTH AFRICA  
WILL EDMAN (SFS’16), SOUTH AFRICA

Although the segregation of Stellenbosch’s residents is not institutionalized, it is perpetuated through factors that are remnants of the apartheid era. Take, for example, transportation. Residents of Enkanini, whose ancestors were forcibly removed from the city proper, are at an automatic disadvantage because of the long walking commute needed to reach the city and train system. In a system where they are so disadvantaged, it is nearly impossible for these impoverished people to achieve social mobility through economic success. As a result, physical segregation persists. However, this physical segregation is not limited to the informal settlements. Even the university, which is reputed to be a liberal beacon in a conservative area, is tinged by racial separation. (...) Just as recent turmoil in the United States has confirmed that race is still an incredibly relevant factor of controversy and discussion, the issue of subconscious discrimination has been pervasive in my short time in South Africa.

“Just as recent turmoil in the United States has confirmed that race is still an incredibly relevant factor of controversy and discussion, the issue of subconscious discrimination has been pervasive in my short time in South Africa.”
- Will Edman

RACISM IN BRAZIL  
NICOLAS LAKE (SFS’16), BRAZIL

Racism in Brazil, like sexism in many ways, is still a volatile issue that manifests itself in different appearances throughout Brazilian culture. As our host in Blumenau described, the melting pot of immigrants and heritages can create tension. Blumenau, a city in southern Brazil infused with German immigrants, resembles more a traditional German village than a Brazilian town. The architecture, language, and culture all make you feel like you are in Central Europe; even the reason for our visit, Oktoberfest, is classically German. This, according to our host, has created problems for Brazilians with darker skin, who do not fit the German ideal of light skin and hair. Many were driven from the city, creating a strongly homogeneous culture in Blumenau. It was certainly noticeable walking around the town; almost everyone appeared European, while very few had the dark skin omnipresent in northeast Brazil.

PRAGUE AND PARENTS  
SHAMARA VALDEZ RUBIO (SFS’16), CZECH REPUBLIC

December was a huge month for me because I turned 21. It was the moment I had been waiting for all my life. It was also the moment my parents had been waiting for all their lives. Although most Georgetown students look forward to having a Tombs night and getting their forehead stamped, turning 21 meant I could apply for my parents’ citizenship. For me, turning 21 meant that the two most important individuals in my life would no longer have to live in fear or be “aliens” in this country. For me, turning 21 meant that my parents could not be taken away from me. (...) My semester in Prague is coming to an end. I will be taking all my finals soon, including my Czech language final. I will be leaving the maze of indoor corridors, medieval streets, and tunnels that make up Praha. I will embark on a new adventure called Senior Year at Georgetown. But more importantly, my parents will be “legal” in this country and watch me cross the stage.”
Students reflected on the interplay between tradition and modernity in their host countries. As textbook history lessons correlated with their current experiences, students noted important connections between a country’s past and present events. Some students reflected on how these customs helped enrich their host countries’ cultures, while others felt that traditionalist ideals were isolating segments of society.

**PASSIVE TOLERANCE IN ARGENTINE HISTORY AND CURRENT SOCIETY**

**MINALI AGGARWAL (RCS’16), ARGENTINA**

Seeing the passivity Argentines exhibited in their history made me think about how it might relate to society and politics today. It is strange to think this submissiveness could persist across an entire generation, especially when Argentines, particularly young members of society, seem so involved in politics and social change, even militantly so. In the University of Buenos Aires nearly every inch of every wall and stairwell of the buildings is filled with posters demanding social change, social equality, betterment of workers’ rights, and more. Some students will even chase you down the hallway to shove pamphlets in your hands and demand that you sign the petition they authored. Even outside the university sphere, a daily protest downtown of 20,000 or 30,000 people is normal and even expected. What I realized later, however, is that the seemingly politically active society is actually an illusion. For example, many of the large protests I mention are organized by the President Kirchner administration and paid for with public funds to create a semblance of favorable opinion of her administration. Each of these 20,000 people is paid 30 to 40 dollars an hour to walk around the city and pretend that they support the current government. The corruption is disconcerting enough, but worse is that everyone knows the truth and does nothing to stop it.

**CONFUCIAN HIERARCHY IN MODERN DAY KOREA**

**CAROLINE YARBER (C’16), SOUTH KOREA**

As fun as it has been to embrace this culture while studying abroad, this hierarchical structure contributes to several societal problems faced in Korea. The Confucian emphasis on men above women has resulted in a pervasive sexism and gender-defined society. Additionally, the responsibility of juniors to obey seniors combined with South Korea’s complex drinking culture can result in dangerous situations. It is considered rude to reject a drink and seen as disrespecting the group atmosphere. Korean office outings often involve drinking large quantities of alcohol, and rejecting a drink from your superiors can have real consequences. Participation in these group outings is essential to developing a successful work reputation, and straying from the collective identity can impact your work relationships. Despite the negative implications, this hierarchical system is an important part of what makes Korean culture unique. Its modern day influences are rooted in a long history of Confucianism that has influenced every aspect of Korean society for centuries. Ultimately, Korean values are not so much different from the values back at home. Americans value respect, generosity, and friendship just as much as Koreans. In my opinion, the difference between our two cultures is the degree of self-awareness of these values and the effort to implement them in the smallest of actions.
THE CZECH MENTALITY: ASTRIDE TWO IDEOLOGICAL HORSES
EDWARD PERCARPIO (SFS’16), CZECH REPUBLIC

That’s the beauty of Prague: the gradual symbiosis of old communist culture with new post-1989 Western capitalism. I was initially upset upon my arrival in Prague that everything seemed far too westernized and familiar. I was expecting a post-communist, Eastern European environment bedecked with Stalin statues and hammers and sickles galore, and instead found Costa Coffee and Tesco at every corner. But if you look a little deeper you will find old gems like the cold public face that betrays nothing, or the incredible patience with waiting in line at the grocery store that remains unheard of in America. However, this dichotomous balance creates striations within Czech society. My homestay grandparents feel nostalgia for the order, security, and tradition of the communist past. My homestay parents feel a satisfaction with the present, and that the “only good thing about communism was that beer was dirt-cheap.” My homestay brother feels dissatisfaction with both the past and the present and wants to move to America where he feels he can have greater opportunities. For Czechs, history is only too vivid, yet every generation perceives it differently.

THE FIGHT FOR FREE, QUALITY EDUCATION IN CHILE
LIVIA MATTEUCCI (C’16), CHILE

I once more turned to the teacher, and asked him why he thinks Chile has such a broken system. He told me that the outdated education policy coupled with a culture that lacks appreciation for education is the harmful formula at play. When Chile was under the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, a new constitution was written that privatized all education, meaning that families were now the main financiers of their children’s schooling. This implied that families with fewer resources were not afforded quality education. This created the notion in Chile that still exists today, that good education is a privilege, not a right.

HONORING HISTORY, THE HUNGARIAN WAY
RIO DJIWANDANA (SFS’16), HUNGARY

From an outsider’s perspective, I initially did not understand why the construction of a WWII monument was such a big deal, but then I remembered what my Hungarian study abroad director had said to us on the first day of orientation: “We Hungarians proudly wear our history on our sleeves,” a sentiment that has defined my study abroad experience. My semester in Hungary has essentially been one never-ending history lesson, and if I’ve learned anything in my time here, it is that remembering Hungarian history is an extremely important part of Hungarian culture. Although I am technically not enrolled in any history classes, the amount of Hungarian history I have covered in each of my five classes is tremendous. Additionally, I volunteer as a teaching assistant at a local Hungarian middle school twice a week, and I am constantly amazed by how much the middle school students are able to teach me about Hungarian politics and history through simple conversation.
Before arriving in Edinburgh, my ideas of Scottish culture were simplistic at best. My image of a traditional Scot was someone wearing a kilt, playing the bagpipes, and searching for the Loch Ness Monster in his spare time. These are accessible elements of Scottish culture, yet it seems as though these are incredibly inadequate representations of a complex and multifaceted culture. After spending over a month in Scotland, I have come to the realization that these obvious elements of culture are often exploited for the benefits of tourists alone. Walking through Edinburgh, it is likely one will see multiple street performers playing bagpipes wearing the traditional Scottish dress, kilt and all, collecting money and posing for photos. This does not in any way diminish the significance of these elements of Scottish culture, yet it highlights the importance of delving more deeply into the true meaning of being Scottish. The Kingdom of Scotland was established in the early Middle Ages and existed as an independent nation for hundreds of years before uniting with England in 1707. As a result, the people of Scotland have a strong national identity and a Scottish pride that is distinct from any feeling of British pride.
How are cultures shaped and community bonds formed? Students learned how culture powerfully expresses national identity in a variety of contexts, such as through music or sports. Many students observed language as both a unifier and a divider, connecting some groups while isolating others.

**ENGLISH, ENGLISH EVERYWHERE**

**CHARLOTTE CHERRY (SFS‘16), DENMARK**

In the United States, I have encountered the attitude that if someone comes to America, they should speak English. However, many Danes ask me, “Why bother learning Danish? There are not many who speak it anyway.” I think this only perpetuates the stereotype that Americans only speak one language. It is important to study other languages, and, so far, I have studied three. Danish is one of the hardest to practice because, despite being in a Danish class, I find little need to use it. If I speak badly in Danish, no one will understand me, but if I speak English, I will be understood perfectly. Not all languages are created equal, and I was privileged to be born into one that allows me to converse in my native tongue while abroad.

“Not all languages are created equal, and I was privileged to be born into one that allows me to converse in my native tongue while abroad.”

- Charlotte Cherry

**ENGLISH ACCENTS: MARKERS OF REGIONAL IDENTITY**

**LIZ TEITZ (C‘16), UNITED KINGDOM**

Even as I’m preparing to leave England, I still usually can’t match places to sounds, though some are more obvious than others. My classmates can generally identify fairly quickly the general area where someone is from, gaining more information from an introduction or a short conversation than I can. This information, however, can be problematic, as class-based assumptions come with certain regional pronunciations and terms. While these haven’t played out in my own classrooms, they do shape certain ways in which people have historically and continue to interact throughout the country. Received pronunciation, sometimes referred to as “Queen’s English,” is perhaps the accent most commonly reproduced in international media representations, and is considered region-less. This “posh” way of speaking indicates private education—and the financial resources to afford it. In business, law, academia, and other fields, this tends to be considered the most professional and “correct.” In contrast, prominent regional variations such as Geordie (from Newcastle upon Tyne) or Brummie (West Midlands) have historically carried perceptions of being less educated and less intelligent, as well as deceitful and untrustworthy. For this reason, modifying speech in professional settings to more closely match received pronunciation was not uncommon, even among people who still maintained their regional variations in familial situations.

**KEEPING ITALIAN SHOEMAKING ALIVE ONE STEP AT A TIME**

**CAITLIN DESANTIS (C‘16), ITALY**

The “Made in Italy” stamp on the bottom of Bemer’s shoes represents the cobbler legacy in Italy. A part of the L’Art dei Calzolai guild in Florence, cobblers were well respected in Italy and had a level of prestige in Renaissance society. Cobbler had strict guidelines—they could not sell poor quality leather, they could not barter, and they had to work in the front of the store so customers could see their work…but it seems the practice of and respect for this profession is slipping away. To me, shoemaking is the heart and “sole” of Italy because it represents the Italian culture’s fixation on artistic excellence and respect for tradition. I will leave Italy with shoes still on my brain, but I
will now be thinking about the endangered cobbler and how Italy can keep the craft culture alive.

A LINGUIST ON THE “ENGLISH-IZATION” OF EUROPE
NICK CORTINA (C’16), SPAIN

Language is not just a vehicle for verbal expression. It also conveys culture. I believe you can tell a lot about a culture by its refranes, or sayings, and every night at dinner my host father Agustín teaches my apartment mates some Spanish ones. An apt one for the dinner table that has come up frequently is *oveja que bala, pierde bocado* (a sheep that bleats loses its mouthful of food). This underlines the importance of cuisine in Spanish culture. (It really means ‘don’t complain or tattle or you won’t survive’, but ok!) What if English’s increasing predominance in the younger generation crowds out such unique sayings, these seemingly innocuous but revealing windows into culture? I also fear that English’s boom across Europe discourages Americans from learning foreign languages themselves. “Why put in the effort studying when I can most likely go abroad and find people that speak English?” This attitude is anything but productive. I strongly believe that learning another language is incredibly enriching. It lets you experience a different perspective and opens you up to a whole new world of possible connections and friendships.

A CITY OF ART
RAQUEL ROSENBLoom (C’16), ARGENTINA

In Buenos Aires, artwork overflows in the streets. There are artisan markets throughout the city every Saturday and Sunday and no matter what the neighborhood, there is always graffiti. This graffiti goes beyond illegally spray-painting words or designs on a wall, though. Many people elect to commission their homes for murals by local artists. In the northern part of the city, colorful graffiti covers vast walls and is known for being tied to a movement of artists who endeavor to paint purely artistic graffiti. In the city center and the south, graffiti is more often used artfully
to make political or social statements. Even at most public universities, the walls are covered. In my experience before coming to Buenos Aires, the arts had always been somewhat of a separate genre, a side endeavor, which, while worthy, did not always fit into the main event. There was always talk of supporting the arts or paying more attention to the arts as if the arts were something important, yet happening on the side. But one of my favorite things about Buenos Aires is that here, the arts are not a “thing”; they just are. Art is not something only artists pursue or work at; it is integrated into daily life as a part of the entire city and is accessible, regardless of who or where you are.

ELGIN MARBLES: WHAT DO THE BRITONS THINK?
FILIPPOS LETSAS (C’16), UNITED KINGDOM

The Elgin Marbles comprise of a wide collection of stone objects—sculptures, inscriptions, and architectural features—removed in an ambiguous manner by Lord Elgin from the Parthenon between 1801 and 1805, while he was serving as an ambassador to the Ottoman Empire. The objects were purchased by the British Parliament in 1816 and have been on display at the British Museum ever since. (...) It would be cliché to go on describing the astonishment and pride that surrounded me, in regard to my ancestors’ senses of artistry and creativeness, when encountering these archaeological ornaments.

REGIONALISM IN PARIS:
LANGUAGE POLICIES
CAMILLE REISFIELD (C’16), FRANCE

Even though wandering the streets of Paris daily may not bring to mind the multitude of languages France has to offer, there are many linguistic outposts in Paris. Basque and Catalan are taught at the university level in Paris. I had the chance to take a course on Basque history with a focus on linguistics while studying at Paris III. It was one of my favorites during the semester. I wish I had been able to fit in another course my second semester as it reminded me of the strong Basque, French and Spanish alike, community I had back in San Francisco. There are quite a few ways to learn about the France outside l’Ile-de-France without even having to leave Paris—Maison Basque, the Breton Diwan schools, the Alsation schools, and other institutions and their communities. Part of learning about French culture, history, and society while in Paris should include learning about the regions spread around this capital city. There is no better way to do that than to look at their languages.

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN STRASBOURG
ZARA RABINKO (C’15), FRANCE

At its base, Les Sacrées Journées really is just a music festival, and by its end, I had seen talented performers of the world’s major religions share that music with their eager (admittedly slightly older) crowds. On November 11, the last day of the festival and anniversary of the end of World War I, religious leaders came together to contribute their unique perspectives on “Faire la Paix.” Given the conflicts that continue around the world today and their often religious bases, the pieces all shared a somber undertone—a recognition that misunderstanding and violence still shape the world today. Yet, the belief that peace is possible expressed in these reflections conveyed a strong message of hope for the future, accentuated by Alsace’s turbulent historical background since the end of World War One. Les Sacrées Journées is not meant to solve all of the world’s problems related to religion, but rather to celebrate how far the region has come in terms of making peace, and look to the future with the attitude that such a message can reach people of all religions today.
Many students quickly discovered that life in their host country was vastly different than they expected. They learned to redefine their opinions about their new environment and to reevaluate the positive and negative aspects of American culture, interaction, and outlook. From study habits to leisure time to navigating daily life, students reflected on how to tease out the unwritten rules for living in their new settings.

(NOT) SURPRISE, STILL ALIVE!
REFLECTIONS ON A SEMESTER IN THE MIDDLE EAST
ELIJAH JATOVSKY (SFS’16), JORDAN

I decided to try taking public buses a couple months ago as a way to save money, but mostly for the adventure. And adventure it has been. Getting on the bus requires flagging down the driver who slows, but doesn’t stop the bus, running alongside the moving vehicle, and jumping aboard just before the driver accelerates again. Assuming you make it on, then comes the payment. The first time I successfully made it onto a bus I did not have change to pay the 35 qirsh (about $.50) fare, so I handed the money collector a one-dinar bill (about $1.50) expecting change in return. He nodded, took the bill, and then kept on walking to the back of the bus. I assumed I had just been ripped off, but I was not about to make a fuss over 65 qirsh. To my surprise, though, the man came back a couple minutes later and handed me the change. It turns out the way the payment system works is that all the money is collected first and only then is change distributed. Passengers and the money collector are expected to trust one another to remember how much change is honestly owed. There is no app saying when the next bus will arrive, no safety standards for boarding, and no guarantee to ensure proper change will be given, but somehow Amman’s public bus system works—and somehow so does the overall system.

SELF EXPRESSION IN CHINA
MIKE SLIWINSKI (SFS’16), CHINA

My conversations with Chinese people have, at times, taken me aback. A Chinese friend once casually remarked, “You must love (American) football, you’re very strong-looking.” I awkwardly smiled, not sure how to accept the compliment. Another time, somebody overheard a song in passing and shared that they thought it was “beautiful,” with a “moving” melody and “heartwarming” lyrics. My Chinese friends’ colloquial use of powerful words like these are not mistranslations; they are quick to compliment and do not hesitate to express their feelings honestly. It has made me realize that though I may think another person looks strong, I may not tell them, because I worry how it would be perceived—or even because such a compliment may imply my own insecurity. I may think a song is beautiful, but I won’t say so because of how that comment would reflect on me. American society often seeks to express positive feelings indirectly or not express them at all. I have slowly begun to embrace this new, Chinese form of expression; I am trying to be less worried about how my opinions may be perceived, so long as they are honest and earnest.

SERVICE-LEARNING IN JORDAN
YASMIN FARUKI (SFS’16), JORDAN

Following the meeting in the principal’s office, all the project coordinators toured the school. As a charter school with very few resources, the Al Ruhail Basic Mixed School had crammed 200 students aged 6 to 12 into eight tiny dilapidated classrooms. In addition to the clear lack of space, classroom conditions left much to be desired. Unusable chalkboards, splintery wooden desks and chairs, jammed windows, broken doors, and lack of storage for teaching materials presented a seriously bleak and impractical learning environment. Despite their misfortunes, I was incredibly impressed by the level of enthusiasm and curiosity displayed by all the students in each class we toured. By the end of our initial visit, I headed...
back to Amman feeling partially shocked, disheartened, and very humbled. (...) By the end of the month we had painted the entire exterior and interior of the school, added a new classroom, repaired most of the class furniture, installed storage units, cleaned the windows, and transformed the courtyard into a playground. Though I am confident those changes created a more positive learning environment for the students, I realized their prospects for receiving the same career-oriented and rigorous education I have benefited from remained dim. Paradoxically, children like Mariam imparted more “learning” onto me than I could ever reciprocate with my “service.” I remain deeply humbled and grateful for the opportunity to have met them.

FRANCE

ISIL IN BRITAIN

NICOLAS LUONGO (C’16), UNITED KINGDOM

In the United States, we feel a sense of unity and shared identity, despite having a great diversity of ethnic and religious background. Indeed, diversity is itself a defining feature of the American national identity. This allows even second-generation and mixed-race youth such as myself to enjoy and fully participate in the state surrogate community. The British state also seeks to fulfill this role, but it does so in a manner very different from that of the United States. Typical of European countries, which tend to have more specific ethnic identities than the United States, the British state

“Indeed, diversity is itself a defining feature of the American national identity... The British state also seeks to fulfill this role, but it does so in a manner very different from that of the United States.”

-Nicholas Luongo
creates a sense of community primarily through the provision of welfare and social services. What this means in practice is that those who are materially underserved by the state do not enjoy its benefits of community. Such is the scenario I see playing out in Britain today.

FAITH, FERGUSON, AND TRUSTING STRANGERS IN FÈS
MADISON ASHLEY (SFS’16), MOROCCO

It is no less than a disembodying experience to watch images of Midwestern America erupting in protest on Arab satellite television. While physically I may be thousands of miles away from both epicenters of Ferguson, Missouri and Staten Island, New York, respectively, the same feelings of anger, confusion, and injustice have reverberated across the Atlantic as well. In the wake of this societal failure, when Americans of every race, sex, and ethnicity are reconsidering their trust in the police force and American judicial system, on social network forums and news media outlets alike we as a country are coming to the realization that we have divergent and sometimes competing ideas about trust. After three and a half months abroad, it seems timely to reflect on the nature of trust that I have found here in Morocco, a lived experience in many ways different from my own in America.

THE MECHANISM OF LEISURE IN SALAMANCA, SPAIN
LAYANNE MALLUHI (SFSG’16), SPAIN

In Salamanca, Spain, you go the library and what you see is so much different. Most of the people there seem to be there for the pleasure of reading. People are reading comics, novels, and poetry. They are learning about the things that interest them. There aren’t as many students looking for sources, or cramming for exams in a coffee-induced frenzy: people are genuinely there for leisure. In most cultures around the world, leisure is something in which one engages after the work is done. Leisure is “free time.” It’s not compulsory, and it’s not essential. In Salamanca, leisure is, in many senses, compulsory. That people have free time is something that is actually legally imposed. There are no classes from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. There are no shops open at that time either. This time is expected to be spent having lunch with families. Also, shops are not allowed to be open on weekends. There is very, very little homework. All of the homework I have received so far only took 10 minutes of my time per day. I have so much free time, more than I could ever dream of having in any other country I have lived.

SAMBA AND STREAMLINES: NAVIGATING DAILY LIFE IN BRAZIL
KELSEY BROWN (SFS’16), BRAZIL

Brazilians can flourish in a messy system for the same reason that the professional sambistas can simultaneously improvise and coordinate their dance moves. It is because they are able to easily adapt to whatever situation they are thrown into. They take in their surroundings and adjust their movements accordingly, all while keeping in time with the music, completely unfazed. That is why they can effortlessly traverse a complex system, while I still stumble along. Brazilian culture may lack the rules and rigidity that enable the efficiency of American society, but what they lose in efficiency they gain in the ability to easily accommodate change. In today’s dynamic world, this type of flexibility could prove invaluable. While the United States travels in straight
lines, Brazil swirls, loops, and pirouettes. The end result may not be streamlined, but it is colorful, exciting, and uniquely Brazil—just like the samba.

THE CULTURE OF STUDENT LIFE IN HONG KONG
SAUMIK RAHMAN (NHS’16), CHINA

The lives of college students in Hong Kong are very different from those of their American counterparts. For example, at Georgetown, my experience has been that students approach their academics very passively. Students tend to skip class often, and procrastination is endemic. However, this is not the same in Hong Kong. Most students here at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) deeply value their education; almost every student I have spoken to here values their education at CUHK more than extracurriculars, social life, or relationships. Since the first day I arrived at the university, I noticed the same trend; study spaces are at maximum occupancy every hour of the day. Students frantically prepare for exams and homework weeks before the assignments are due. This type of pressure on students creates excellent graduates at the university; however, it does come with consequences. Students often complain about the pressures of school and family expectations. Just last semester, an engineering student committed suicide on campus due to the pressures of his academic program at CUHK. Academics is engulfing here compared with student life in the United States. University here is almost entirely about academic rigor, whereas in the United States, it is about learning to balance education and personal responsibilities.

SUNDAYS, SIESTAS, AND SPANISH VALUES
ALEJANDRA BAEZ (SFS’16), SPAIN

In the United States, time is a commodity. We Americans live fast-paced lives; the idea is that if we complete our tasks faster or arrive at our destinations sooner, we will have more time to do more things later. It is a very Georgetown (if not American) notion that doing nothing (literally, as in relaxing, meditating, taking naps, et cetera) is the equivalent of wasting time, which is already a scarce good. Here in Spain, there is great value placed on the siesta and meal times. These hours of rest are a break from the workday and represent a time for reflection and an opportunity to bring the family together. It is rare to see Spaniards taking food “to go,” or, as it is commonly translated here, ordering “take-away.” Instead you will find coworkers and friends getting together for a midmorning café or an afternoon tapa or pincho. The concept of a lunch meeting would probably be met with strange looks, as there seems to be a strict separation between home and work life.

CAFÈ, MATÈ, AND LATIN SCHEDULES: THE ART OF TAKING YOUR TIME
JESSICA UY (SFS’16), ARGENTINA

In what seems to be a lifetime ago, the first time I went to a café here in Argentina I ordered a coffee para llevar (to go), and the waitress looked at me incredulously. To me, the thought of having to sit down, to wait for my order to be served to me, and to drink my coffee out of a glass cup was such a foreign concept at the time. To be truthful, I was still in my Georgetown mindset, in which leisure time was nonexistent, days were scheduled from morning to night, and where coffee always came in a to-go, almost-instant plastic Saxby’s cup. But now as I sit here from a café just around the corner from my barrio in Buenos Aires sipping my coffee out of my glass cup, I have realized that maybe the porteños are doing it right. Starbucks, though present here in the city, cannot compete with the Italian-style café culture (thanks to the large number of Italian immigrants) that is almost like a refined, lingering art here in the city. It is common to sit down for hours at one’s local café, unhurried and passing time, in stark contrast to my life at Georgetown.
ECUADOR’S PLURALITY OF CULTURES
LINDSAY HORIKOSHI (NHS’16), ECUADOR

While many study abroad students interact with the middle and upper-middle classes through school or home stays, I have spent more time with people on the furthest ends of the spectrum. Income inequality in Ecuador is noticeable, particularly in the city, and comparable to the United States. The Gini coefficient, a commonly used index that measures income inequality, is 46.6 for Ecuador, just higher than the US at 41.1. The difference is that in the United States, the per capita income is nearly 10 times as large as that in Ecuador. As part of a service-learning seminar, I volunteer at a day-care center located at Quito’s main garbage dump that cares for the children of dumpster divers. By working with one of the poorest populations in Ecuador—where families live in homes made of corrugated steel and cardboard—I have taken a step toward understanding the lives of people with the fewest resources. Admittedly, the impact and sustainability of my actions are limited, but I still find immense value in interacting with a culture and society that bears little resemblance to the one with which I interact at home or school.
Students reflected on how they found national pride and core values expressed through the bonds of strong community relationships and hospitality toward others. Often surprised how their host countries’ ideals differed from the independence and individualism emphasized in the United States, students wrote of the benefits of maintaining a strong communal identity in the midst of a global culture that prioritizes rapid, technology-based interactions over truly knowing and caring for one’s neighbors.

COMMUNITY IN CAMEROON: MORE THAN A CLICHÉ
SERENA GOBBI (SFS’16), CAMEROON

Here, “the community” is not a phrase thrown around by affable politicians giving stump speeches or earnest preachers during Sunday sermons. Instead, it’s a near-tangible net that orients and sustains the individual. When you talk to someone, the other person is “my sister” or “my brother,” “my aunty” or “my uncle”—even “my momma” or “my dad.” A child’s last name is not often the last name of his father or mother. Instead, another family name is chosen—perhaps his uncle’s name or a cousin’s. Yet if a Cameroonian hears your last name, she automatically knows where you are from in Cameroon. Family is important, but it’s a much larger, broader family than the Western nuclear family. ... If hard times come (a very real possibility), and you can’t care for your child, who will step in? It’s certainly not the state. Either your family or a kindly neighbor will keep your son from starving, so it’s better not to say too loudly “my son”—it’s better to call every boy son.

MARABOUT POWER IN DEMOCRATIC SENEGAL
SAMANTHA MACFARLANE (SFS’16), SENEGAL

Senegal, nicknamed the country of teranga, is famous for its hospitality. They’re extremely proud of it, even naming their national soccer team les Lions de la Teranga. The importance of family is evident when you learn that everything you buy is meant to be shared, so you should buy a few more snacks than you would eat on your own. The respect for community and neighbors manifests itself in the style of eating meals communally out of one large bowl, because you never know when people might stop by and join in. These values have stood in stark contrast to my American values, such as independence and productivity. However, despite many
differences, one thing that we can agree on in principle is democracy.

SCOTTISH NATIONAL PRIDE
KATHERINE MCINTIRE (C’16), UNITED KINGDOM

There has been no shortage of coverage surrounding Scottish national pride in the past year. The people of Scotland narrowly decided to remain part of the United Kingdom in a referendum in September 2014. Most people here cite economic concerns as the main reason they decided to vote against independence, and there is no wonder why. Many of Scotland’s five million people rely on support and jobs resulting from the Westminster parliament, and there were concerns that such a small nation could not be financially viable on its own. But these same people who air their economic concerns, like my bus driver, often express a desire to have independence simply because they want Scotland to be its own nation. … Curiosity about America, as well as Scottish national pride, has reinvigorated my own national pride. Regardless of their failings, the Scots are generally proud to be Scottish. They recognize the problems of their country and laugh at the stereotype of Scots as kilt-wearing, bagpipe-playing, haggis-eating ruffians. Their open acceptance and love of being Scottish, whatever that entails, has given me a chance to reevaluate how I feel about being American. For the first time, I truly feel like being an American is exciting, and I am grateful to the Scots for showing me how fulfilling it is to be proud of your identity.

A HAGGIS IS A HAGGIS: INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF SCOTLAND FROM ST. ANDREWS
SCOTT GOLDSTEIN (SFS’16), UNITED KINGDOM

Since arriving in Scotland, I have come to the conclusion that the Scots are unfailingly nice. Though St. Andrews is, admittedly, overrun by Americans, the Scots I’ve met in Edinburgh and Glasgow went above and beyond in offering
their help and recommendations. I found this to be true with the sole exception of one shop owner who, when asked (for kosher-related reasons) whether the haggis was cooked in pork fat, answered quite unhelpfully, “A haggis is a haggis.” For the most part, though, Scots are remarkably sociable.

My trip to buy shaving cream consisted mainly of me waiting for the two elderly women in front of me to finish their engaging debate with the cashier about the benefits of various perfumes. Somehow, I don’t think the self-checkout machines in grocery markets would work well here—people enjoy chatting too much.

AGGRESSIVE HOSPITALITY
RACHEL RODGERS (SFS’16), MOROCCO

When I told a family friend that I was spending the semester in Morocco, she told me to expect French food and Arab hospitality. It’s definitely true that the level of generosity is staggeringly high in this country—at one point, when a friend and I ducked into a shop to avoid some people who seemed to be following us through the crowded medina, the shopkeeper insisted that we stay with him long enough for a cup of tea. Or, as my host mother stated at dinner one night, “If you see someone who is hungry, you feed them. If you see someone who needs to go somewhere, you drive them—or, at the very least, you give them enough money to reach their destination.” Although this is the ethical code with which I, too, was raised, Moroccans seem to take it to the extreme. One woman explained to us that were someone to come visit her in her one bedroom apartment, she would not think twice about letting him or her sleep in her bed, while she slept on a mat on the floor. The level of hospitality that I have encountered cannot be overstated.

LENDING A HAND IN DENMARK:
THE SUBTLETIES OF HAPPINESS
SARAH MADOFF (C’16), DENMARK

This willingness to help others extends beyond the state and into people’s daily lives, which is what gives Copenhagen such a pleasant atmosphere. While people on the street may not smile or seem to take note of those around them, they are always quick to lend a hand if needed. In the weeks since I’ve arrived in Copenhagen I’ve experienced the lengths to which Danes will go in order to be accommodating. … The Danish belief in helping others is what gives Denmark its reputation as the happiest place in the world. The subtle actions Danes take in their daily lives, such as pausing to help a stranger out, contribute to the feeling that everyone is on the same team. The Danes joke that no one comes to Copenhagen for the weather, and I’m starting to find the reasons one does in the little ways that Danes choose to brighten someone else’s day.

EDUCATION THROUGH EATING
ANNA O’NEIL (SFS’16), CHILE

The feria is a good place to make friends. Back in the United States, we get most of our groceries by pushing a cart down the aisles of a supermarket. This impacts the global economy and environment, but on a more immediate level it means a different way of interacting—or not interacting—with other people. We can find everything we need without speaking to a human until we reach the cash register. In Chile, enclosed superstores like Jumbo are the closest thing to that isolated shopping experience, and even then many items have to be fetched by an employee from behind a counter. I think this perpetuates or reflects a friendlier culture (also higher crime rates, but that’s another discussion). From a New Englander’s perspective, Chile is a country with more conversations between strangers and less personal space between friends. This can be intimidating, especially after a long day of crossing language barriers, but when I venture away from Jumbo to buy dried fruit from a bustling mercado or cheese from the deli counter of a small shop, the resulting interactions are nothing but positive. A confused facial expression usually attracts immediate offers of assistance in a store or on the streets.