

EXL 300

Cross Cultural Learning: Theory and Practice

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Quick Flashback: A selection of thought provoking, funny, and insightful posts from Allegheny College students in the Fall 2007 Study Abroad/Study Away programs.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS:

GREAT EXPECTATIONS: So, you've finally taken off for new lands. I want you to reflect here, on what you hope to get out of your semester abroad, both academically, and personally. Explain why you feel that study abroad is important to your development.

ONE BIG LESSON: If there is one big lesson that you would like to share with folks at home about cultural entry, what would that be? Use a personal example to make the point.

CULTURE TRADE: Describe an encounter with someone from your host culture that you feel reflected what you would describe as a meaningful and reciprocal cultural trade. What did you learn about your culture *as well as* the host culture from this exchange, that you were unaware of before? I want you to obviously select an experience that would not be part of the stereotypical tourist exchange.

DEFINING DIVERSITY: How would you characterize diversity in your new space? What have you learned about yourself through this awareness of diversity that you were not appreciative of before? Please make sure you define how you are using the term diversity before you venture deeper into the blog.

BLOG ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS (Contd.):

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: For this blog, please select a photograph or image that you have captured/created, and post it, with a brief note about its context and significance. The picture should really say it all. The photograph/image should capture some aspect of the host culture that you find fascinating, disturbing, humorous, or unique. Your text should briefly explain why.

WHAT'S HOT AND COOL?: In the course readings, Friedman suggests that American prowess in the global market will be affected by three factors: the numbers gap, education gap, and ambition gap ("The Quiet Crisis" 256). Some may note that while Friedman's argument definitely has weight, it is still a fact that U.S. culture is seen as the standard to aspire to, and is therefore the cool/hot commodity on the global market. What is the definition of "cool" and "hot" in your host culture? Where does it come from?

YOUTHSCAPES: In her piece, Sunaina Maira (see course readings) describes her concept of *Youthscape* as not just a geographic or temporal location, but as a social and political space, "a 'place' that is bound up with questions of power and materiality (210)." Explain how the youthscape of your particular location is constituted.

COMING HOME: So, as this semester comes to a close, I'd like you to think of a couple of things. First, what is the one stand-alone memory of this trip that you will be taking home with you? Second, do you believe that study away programs at other institutions are beneficial in a non-academic sense? Explain your answer.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS:

Studying abroad is the opportunity of a lifetime. It gives you the chance to experience new things, meet new people, join a new culture, and become a part of something greater than yourself. So

obviously, I am a big fan of studying abroad. But why Germany? Again? Academically, studying abroad in Germany fulfills some of the requirements for my major. Classes are offered here that aren't available at Allegheny. Living

...here also gives me the chance to be surrounded by the language as well as to be embraced by the culture, which will enable me to write a better comp. The most important academic expectation that I have is to return home able to communicate better in German, especially through my grammar. (*Meghan Fatzinger, Germany*)

Not going home for a full year is more momentous for me than going to college my freshman year was. At Allegheny, I have an existing support system, most of which has been there my entire life. Along with this support come expectations about who I am and what I should do. Angers marks a new era in my life. I'm speaking a new language and learning a new culture, and at the risk of sounding cheesy, I get to re-discover myself. I'm

not re-inventing or completely changing my personality, just exploring those sides of it that have hidden themselves over the years. A fine-tuning, if you will. Yes, there are the obvious scholarly goals. For example, I want to become as fluent in French as possible, and I want to learn more about France and it's culture and people. I want to study not only in school, but also in the real world (where else can you watch a Frenchman eat a baguette, make awkward gestures, and have an intense cell-phone conversation at the same time?) In taking time to experience a new culture and a new language, I'm taking time to truly experience and uncover who I am. I get to revel and bask in all of my shortcomings and qualities, and find new ones. It may sound unpleasant and pedantic, but it's what I'm enjoying the most so far. It's at

the top of the list of what I hope to get out of this year of studying abroad: a new language, new experiences, and the real "me." What a souvenir. (*Susannah Bender, France*)



Change. It's the only word that I can think of to describe what I expected to find in Australia. Change of scenery, change of faces, change of classes, and change in myself. After already being here for two months, it is hard for me to remember exactly how I was feeling before I came over, because so much change has already occurred. I wanted to leave everything behind, and start over. I wanted to see big mountains that end into the

...ocean, not just rolling hills with brick roads. I needed to redefine myself with new friends, because after a while, you become a part of what you are used to. I wanted to break out of the Allegheny bubble I was living in, and see for myself how other people live. Academically, I wanted a break from Allegheny. I wanted to learn things that no one at home would know. And what a perfect opportunity for me to test the knowledge I have learned so far in a new place.
(Theresa Clem, Australia)



Wow, I can't believe that I've already been here for three weeks! I'm having a wonderful experience living and studying

in Cologne, and the time just seems to be flying by. Every second of every day I am presented with the chance to learn something new, and I have been seizing every opportunity to do so. It is a challenge to constantly force myself outside of my comfort zone, but I know that I am growing from this experience. What do I hope to get out of my semester abroad? Why is this experience important to me? From an academic standpoint, I came to Germany in order to advance my German language skills and learn more about the German culture, both of which have been occurring since I first stepped foot off of my plane. From a personal standpoint, I wanted to see and learn about the country of my heritage. I also wanted to find out not only who I am, but also what makes me who I am, and I

have been slowly answering these questions everyday.
(Brandon Goeller, Germany)



I decided to come to Costa Rica with hopes of better finding out who I am. I know this sounds kind of corny, but honestly, I want to leave here with a stronger sense of place. Being so far away from my friends and family is just as much a learning experience, if not more, than my actual classes are. Not only that, but it's extremely difficult being in a situation where I have an extremely difficult time decoding what these Spanish-speakers are saying, and they seem to be having just as difficult time understanding

...me. It is helping my Spanish skills quickly improve though. I am becoming more independent, more confident in myself, and I am learning that I am capable of living my life on my own. I don't have to be a follower; I can lead my own life, and control my own destiny. Along with that, I am hoping that all these environmental classes and experiences here will help guide me in what I want to do in the environmental arena. There are so many fields that I have the option to lean towards, but I haven't made that decision yet. Whenever I tell someone that I'm an Environmental Science major, they usually answer with a "Oh, and what are you planning on doing with that?" Right now, I don't have an answer for them. By the end of the semester I'm hoping that I will have more of an idea.

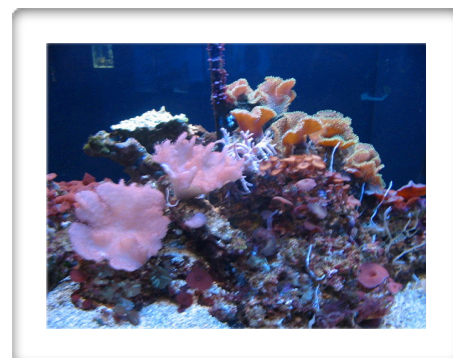
Already I feel like I am a different person from the girl I arrived as a week and a half ago. I can only imagine the person I will emerge as when I return home at the end of the semester. *(Eliza Czolowski, Costa Rica)*



I had many expectations when I came down to the Duke Marine Lab. The main reason I came down here was for the academics. I wanted to know if marine biology was something I wanted to pursue after graduation. I also was looking to gain experience in the lab. I knew this place offered many field trips and opportunities to expand my knowledge in the marine field. Another expectation of mine was to get

a feel for how graduate schools run. A friend of mine was here last year and she talked a lot about how the classes here have a graduate level feel. I agree. Classes here are very independent, as are the labs. It's a lot of independent thinking and reasoning on your own. We do a lot of canoeing out to a neighboring island to collect crabs and snails for experiments. I also wanted to meet people who were interested in the same things as I was. Knowing I was going to be living on the beach wasn't that bad either!

(Katherine Kump, Duke Marine Lab)



This city is a lot of fun! There are so many places to explore and events to go to. A big personal goal I have for myself this fall is to really take advantage of all the things to do in this city. I have already been to some great restaurants, a political rally, a jazz festival, an international fair, a few museums, and I found the coolest bookstore/cafe ever, among other things. I love that there's always something going on here. As much as I love Allegheny, there's just not much to do in Meadville. Besides how great the city is, the program I'm enrolled in at American University is pretty incredible. I'm in the Peace and Conflict Resolution program, and I've already learned so much. The coolest part is that much of what I've learned hasn't been from books or

articles -- it's been from first-hand accounts of experts in this field of study. My class has listened to some amazing guest speakers that have come to talk with us, as well as attending various forums and panel discussions around D.C. and visiting 2 foreign embassies. As my class is traveling to the Balkans (Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia) in 16 days, we are now focusing on the wars that occurred there in the 90s. My academic goal for the semester is to make the most of all this experiential learning. I want to learn about everything I'm studying, as in-depth as I possibly can. (*Rachel Jurkowski, Washington, D.C.*)



ONE BIG LESSON:

Entering into a new and different culture can be difficult, although some are harder than others. I didn't think coming to England would bring much of a culture shock, and perhaps it wasn't as much as a shock for me as it was an increasing awareness. Before coming here, I was told the British love Americans, and that I would have a very easy time fitting in and making friends. While becoming adjusted may not have been as hard as say, entering into Africa or France, it has been a little hard finding my place in this culture. There have been times when I have been in a store, restaurant, or bar and upon hearing my American accent the clerk, waitress, or bartender has gone from a cheerful smile asking "how may I help you?" to a blatant

..."what do you want?" While traveling on my break and meeting many new people in hostels I came to find that a lot of Europeans are not fond of Americans. (*Ashton Kohler, Britain*)

I think that before coming to France I knew that this experience would be really hard at first, and I thought that I had accurately predicted the difficulty of this transition. But I found that after the first 24 hours, I was sorely mistaken, and that this was going to be much harder than I had ever imagined. I never imagined how hard it would be to try to understand directions from a Frenchman on the street, or even try to explain to my host family what sledding is. I knew before this experience that the French in general aren't huge fans of Americans, but I never realized how some of them

would be blatantly rude to me. And while I have met many Frenchmen who are very nice, it was still shocking to have people do that to me. Most French kids our age that I've met ask the same questions like, where are you from? Do you like France? Do you like Bush? Did you vote for him? It is also hard to get used to people staring at you. In our culture that is considered rude, but apparently not here! Even if you don't speak English on the streets, somehow they know that you are American and will stare at you. It has been one of the most awkward cultural experiences to understand and accept. And the French "bisous!" The bisous is the French cheek kiss that they do to each other instead of hugging or shaking hands. It has been quite interesting trying to understand when it is

acceptable to shake hands or when it's acceptable to do the bisous! (*Erin Geiser, France*)

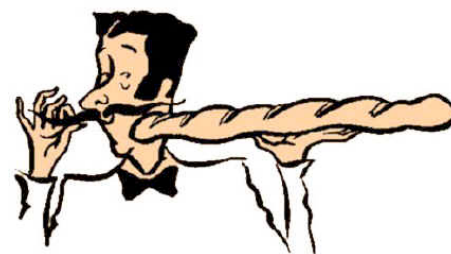


I think that entering a foreign culture for the first time, and not as just a short-term visitor, is one of the most personally challenging experiences. The first few days I was here everything was completely overwhelming and exhausting. Even though I have been studying German since high school, the language sounded completely foreign. I was afraid to make mistakes and didn't talk very much, and everything surrounding me was so unknown. It took me several days to relax and really begin to enjoy the experience. I think the biggest lesson I have

...learned is to be open to new experiences. Living and traveling in a foreign country will never be as comfortable as home and things won't always go perfectly. Every mistake I make when speaking and every time I get lost is a learning experience. This is something I still have to remind myself as I try to fully enjoy Germany and make the most of my time here. Studying abroad is something that many people never have the opportunity to do and it is certainly a once in a lifetime experience. That is why I think really trying to be open to the whole adventure is so important; because I know it is something I will never get to do again. Don't stress about little things, don't dwell on the bad stuff, look around and remember how lucky you are to have this chance! (*Lauren Winberg, Germany*)

Bread, bread, and more bread. That's what I eat here—white bread. The French love of baguettes is not an exaggeration. However, I've also tried many different meals—I've had black pasta from Italy, colored by squid ink. I've eaten part of a fish plopped on the table, complete with skin and bones, eyes staring and mouth flopping open. I've tried pears from Anjou, grapes from Nantes, and even olives and mushrooms, two things I already know I detest. But I tried them, and that's what counts. As much as I miss peanut butter and my Coldstone ice cream, I realize that this is not America. This is France. It's a completely different country, on a completely different continent, with a completely different language and a completely different culture. I've found

that my number one pet peeve is not about the French—it's about other students in our program refusing to leave American food behind. They complain every day about what we eat / don't get to eat, and insist on smothering everything in ketchup and salt. The people at my table don't try anything we're served until I try it first, waiting to see if it tastes okay. When you vacation to another land and refuse to eat the cuisine, you're missing out on a large part of that culture and way of life. What's the point in going to France if you want to eat McDonalds the entire time? You might as well just stay in the States and speak French to your dog. (*Susannah Bender, France*)



CULTURAL TRADE:

My host mother bought her first computer the Saturday I arrived. She also just got Internet. However, the Internet was not so easy to come by and the company screwed up her phone line and didn't send her the modem—we were without Internet AND phone for over half a month. She'd called them over 9 times and they still didn't fix anything. I was completely appalled—I couldn't imagine a company like that lasting more than 5 seconds in the US, especially since apparently it's a problem that a lot of people experience with this particular company. Customer service in France, I have discovered, is barely existent. I have the sneaking suspicion that whoever came up with the motto that the customer is always right was killed in France. I thought that getting Internet at my home



here would be the biggest relief in the world, but has been the exact opposite. Now that my host mom has Internet, she won't let me use it. She insists that switching out her Ethernet cord with mine will break her modem, and she refuses to use the wireless because she's convinced that someone will steal confidential information off her computer. This is all very frustrating for me, seeing as I know better, but no matter what I say, she will not budge. However, it's also a little amusing, as I'm not the only student who has had this problem. The French, it seems, are afraid of technology. I find this comical because it's

something I would expect from a third world country, but this is France we're talking about. This is the country that developed the civil code that is used throughout most of Europe and has one of the best health care systems in the world. They're no more third world than the States.

(Susannah Bender, France)

In Spain, we have something called intercambios. They are people around our age, from Spain who have an interest in learning English. I am lucky enough to have two intercambios, one 22 and the other 20. My experience in culture trade occurred with my intercambio Ana who is 20 years old. Now age is what is of key importance in this. While talking to my intercambio in a bar, I used the phrase "Cuando yo era muy joven...." which translates in

...English to "when I was very young. She immediately and without doubt corrected me, stating that this was not appropriate since I am indeed still very young. For a good 20 minutes, we talked about what it meant to be young. (*Thomas Rodgers, Spain*)

On my recent spring break trip to Sydney, my friends and I went out on the town. All of us have become obsessed with Australian fashion and each of us were wearing outfits bought in an Australian boutique. As we were leaving a club down an escalator, a group of Australian men were entering the club and yelled out to us, "Americans! Where are you girls going?" Each of us looked at each other dumbfounded. None of us had even opened our mouths to say a word, all of us were dressed in Australian clothing, and we

were leaving a popular Australian hangout. How in the world did they know we were Americans? When arriving back to my Uni in Townsville, I asked a group of my male Australian friends if they could tell just by looking at me that I was American. Their instant answer was yes. As our conversation continued on, I learned a lot about body image in the Australian culture. While both America and Australia are westernized societies, there is large difference in how we view beauty. For me personally, when looking around during my walk to class, I could not tell the difference between an Australian and an American just by looking. (*Theresa Clem, Australia*)

From October 6-27, I was traveling through the Balkans, which was the case study for



my Peace and Conflict Resolution class at American University. One of our stops was in Novi Pazar, a small city in southern Serbia that is near the border of Kosovo. While in Novi Pazar, we spent a few hours one afternoon talking with students at a university. A few girls from my class, myself included, spent most of the time talking with a girl named Hanna, who was a few years older than us. She was born in Bosnia, lived most of her life in Pristina, Kosovo, and now lives in Novi Pazar. She is part Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim), part Macedonian, and a few other things. During our talk, she told us how hard it was for her to grow up in Pristina as a girl

...who wasn't ethnically an Albanian or a Serb. Kosovo's population is 90% Albanian and 10% Serbian. Even when she was a young child in school, she felt pressured by both ethnic groups to "take their side." She didn't want to choose one side and hate the other, so she tried to be neutral and get along with both. As a result, she never felt like she fit in. She never felt comfortable or accepted in Pristina, simply because she wasn't Albanian or Serbian, and she wouldn't pick a side. (*Rachel Jurkowski, Washington D.C.*)



One night I was talking to my host father about what I want to do in my future and we got onto the concept of marriage. He was shocked at how I, and most people in the United States, approach marriage. I explained to him the typical man proposes with a diamond ring, and either the bride's family or the couple pays for the wedding. He explained to me how it works in Kenya. The husband-to-be has to pay a dowry of however

much the girl's father says. It is usually 13 cows that is paid and the father can ask for up to 50,000 US dollars in addition to the cows. The man's whole community comes together to help him raise the needed funds and he goes to the bride's father's house to present the dowry. The father has the right to accept the man and allow his daughter to get married, or to reject him. I learned from this how traditional a culture this was, and how the family plays a very large part in someone's life. I also realized in my own culture how independent people are, and how an individual in the United States has absolute control over their lives. One reason this conversation was so special and enlightening was because we were not supposed to talk about it. Significant others are a very controversial matter,

...and most families are not willing to talk openly about relationships. So through this, I learned about the host culture and also about the effects of westernization. If westernization had not taken place in Kenya I probably would have never had that conversation because it would be considered too taboo especially for a girl and her father to talk about. (*Caroline Lewis, Kenya*)

DEFINING DIVERSITY:

I think diversity is the same anywhere, in that no matter where you go, things and people are different than what is normal for yourself. For me, diversity is the opposite of who and what I am. Living in Germany has given me a greater appreciation of myself. Through recognizing the differences in others, I have come to see myself in a new

light, especially in terms of beliefs. Living in Cologne, especially, has allowed me to experience diversity in a city of millions of people. This is something that, until now, was outside of my comfort zone. If someone had asked me before I left what I thought of city life, my reply would have been negative. But since I moved here, my opinion of city life has changed. I still wouldn't want to spend my whole life here, but as a student it is not half bad! (*Meghan Fatzinger, Germany*)

Rarely does one find much extensive diversity in any given town in America. Most of the diversity seems to come from the large cities, where people of other nationalities, races, cultures, and religions seem to settle. True, Allegheny College and some small cities in America offer some



diversity, in terms of individual lifestyles, religious beliefs, cultures and backgrounds but it doesn't seem to offer the same diversity that even this small town of Lancaster, England offers. Diversity is the norm here. Walking to class, I will usually hear several conversations spoken in different languages. There are social clubs and groups dedicated to a vast array of different hobbies, talents, religious beliefs, cultural activities, etc. I have met people at Lancaster University from all over the world, from California to Australia, that have offered me an insight into diversity. Coming from a small town in the U.S., I don't get to

...see much diversity. Sure, I see many races - Caucasian, Asian, African American, etc. America is known as "the melting pot," so while we may all be different races, we are all still Americans. However, over here, you will meet people who live in Asia, the Middle East, or Eastern Europe, who have come here to study and that bring with them their culture, beliefs, and lifestyles. It is not all melted into one nation with differences amongst it, but it is many different nations coming together to share with each other while learning. Diversity to me is the ability to have many differences (other than the color of your skin) and coexisting with other traits and characteristics, while sharing a mutual relationship of learning and understanding and enjoying. (*Ashton Hohler, Britain*)

As a society and culture, Seville and Andalucia are not very diverse. The majority of Seville's population is made up of dark skinned people originally from the Moors, including Morocco. The majority of people are Catholic, with some practicing more than others. Additionally, most people come from a similar socio-economic level. As American students, because of the differences in our physical appearances, it is difficult to blend into Seville's culture. We look and tend to dress American, and most of the Spanish citizens can tell we are American students because of the way we act, dress and look. Although it is not the diversity that I was used to this summer in inner city Boston, I do see Asian shops and restaurants. When I visited Cordoba, I saw an ancient Islamic Mosque. It was very interesting learning

the Arabic influence on Andalucia. This past weekend I went to Barcelona, which is in the north of Spain. As a larger city and a city with a seaport, the cultural population was very mixed and diverse, including people of all skin types. For the first time this semester in Barcelona, I felt as if I fit in and belonged there. (*Alexandra Papa, Spain*)

There is so much diversity in Washington. What I mean by diversity in this context is the abundance of international families living here. Whether you are on Embassy row and meet the ambassador's family from Denmark, or walking the corridors of a Smithsonian Museum, not a day goes by that I do not hear a foreign language being spoken. I have always been interested in learning about other cultures and meeting people from

...around the world. I have had the opportunity to do so in the Washington Semester Program because of the large number of international students enrolled in the program. I love just sitting down with these students over lunch or coffee and learning about where they grew up and see how their upbringing was different from American life. My mother is from Germany, making me a German citizen. I was not always so appreciative of this because I did not like being different as a kid. I did not like how my mother would speak German to me in front of

my friends or bake German cookies for Christmas. I wanted to be American. But as I got older, I realized how advantageous it was that I was German. I could travel to Germany any time I wanted and visit family. I could speak another language, and I was able to experience another culture. Over the years, I have come to terms with my heritage and have totally embraced my German ethnicity. I realized that being different is not a bad thing and I actually like being different. I think it makes me the unique person I am today. *(Elizabeth Andrews, Washington D.C.)*

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS:



This photograph was taken in Grasmere in the Lake District near William Wordsworth's house. Wordsworth said that his writing was inspired by the views from his house and the

beauty of the nature surrounding his home in the Lake District. The English countryside is an aspect of English culture that I find fascinating. It brings a sense of calm over you while at the same time eliciting feelings of inspiration and wonder in the fact that everywhere you look in England there is so much history. When I have been homesick or just needed a lift

throughout my time here I have journeyed into the countryside and have felt connected to something, as if there have been others just like me throughout time that have walked where I have now walked and felt wonder, ease, excitement and inspiration that I have felt from the beauty of the English countryside. *(Ashton Kohler, Britain)*



This picture was taken during the anti-war protest that took place on September 15th. Protesters marched from the White House to the Capitol Steps, where they were greeted by hundreds of police officers. This picture is symbolic because while America is called the land of the free, hundreds of people were still arrested that day during the march. I think this picture is ironic in a way because the capitol building is

supposed to be an embodiment of our democratic values, yet people were detained for voicing their pacifist beliefs that day. (*Elizabeth Andrews, Washington D.C.*)



This is the landscape of Kianjokoma taken from the edge of Mount Kenya forest. Most of the people have tea farms and grow most of their own food. The fact that this area is extremely fertile is what most impacts the people here. Many people do not get an education because the way they see it, as long as they have land they can make a living and support their family. Since many people work in their farms all day, many people do not leave Kianjokoma, This means that

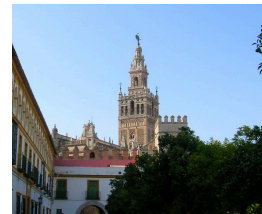
most people have never seen a white person and it becomes a big deal. The farms have a large influence on the upbringing of the people here, which effects how I am treated and viewed. (*Caroline Lewis, Kenya*)

This photo was taken directly outside my dorm on the lawn where seven wallabies set up camp at least three times every week. They take a huge patch of grass between our walkways and lounge for hours on end. These wallabies aren't stupid: they know there are tons of students walking all around them within arms reach but they don't panic about it. I think they exemplify Aussie culture because wallabies seem so inherently laid back. Within the student culture, people don't stress as much about exams as we do at home: first of all, they don't have as many, and second, they're content with passing the class instead of trying to beat everyone else out



for the best grade. I've also held a job while I was here and even my employer had a laid back vibe. His favorite phrases are "no drama" and "no worries mate!" I think the Aussies and the wallabies got it right - it certainly makes for a more fun and stress free life. (*Erin Horning, Australia*)

Sevilla's Cathedral is the third largest in Europe and it is in the center of the city. Religion is practiced and considered something different to everyone. The cathedral has services as well as many tourists. The small chapels in neighborhoods are filled with people who go for devotion to pray. There are also cultural Catholics, like my host mother, who have crosses in their houses but only go to mass occasionally. Everyone celebrates fiestas, which are holidays such as Christmas and Semana Santa. Even to people who aren't religious Sevilla's cathedral is the pride of this city. (*Alexandra Papa, Spain*)





This is a picture of Cologne, the first place I saw in Germany and now my home. I will never forget this city and this view from the top of the cathedral is a good visual explanation of it. We were fortunate enough to get a tour through the seldom seen parts and onto the roof and it offered an unforgettable view of the city. It shows the Rhine and the train station, both the transportation hubs of the city, and also a spire of the cathedral, an unmistakable mark of tradition. Both of these aspects of Germany are very clear explanations of the culture here and this picture captures them. (*Andrew Busch, Germany*)



This picture was taken in eastern Croatia, in the town of Dakova. It captures the main elements of many towns and cities in the region, especially throughout eastern Croatia and much of Bosnia-Herzegovina. There's beauty in the picture, in the warm color of the building and the graceful branches swaying in the breeze - the entire region is extraordinarily beautiful. But as you look closer, you will see bullet holes and shell marks in the side of the building. There's so much damage and destruction evident here, as there is throughout the Balkans. There is so much evidence remaining of the war in the early 90s, and

so much healing that still needs to occur. (*Rachel Jurkowski, Balkans*)

WHAT'S HOT AND COOL?

Living in Germany not only allows for the experience of German culture, but European culture as well. It has become cool to be a world citizen, rather than just a citizen of your own country. Since the creation of the European Union, Europe has become more and more dependent on its neighbors, especially for trade. It is not surprising then, that the fashion industry has become a part of that. Through my travels here I have seen many different countries and their peoples. Teenagers in Germany are dressed the same as teenagers in Amsterdam. This has all been made possible by a Swedish clothing store, H&M. H&M has some of the



..."coolest" clothes and the "hottest" trends.

And what is popular here now, will be

popular in the US in just a few months. The teenagers of Europe are setting the style for the world. *(Meghan Fatzinger, Germany)*

In terms of England, the trends and popular mindsets seem to be attained from somewhat backward influences. As a culture known for its propriety and diplomacy, it shocks me to see the effect American culture has had here. The fashion world is constantly striving for the glamorous "LA look" and every magazine I have read here includes some bit on how to achieve some version of the American dream. The hot, new trends are almost always based on something straight out of Hollywood. Even the food and linguistics of the country are changing rapidly. The cheap supermarkets and fast food chains are booming, as everyone looks for the easy meal. I hear an increasing

amount of American slang being spoken by the students as well. It's truly eye opening to see how a country like America, essentially the much younger offshoot of the UK can quickly over turn years of tradition. England and the UK still maintain distinct identities though, with their extreme focus on political activism and activism for a green society. The issues at the core of the nation still stand strong and from what I have seen, uninfluenced by the ways of America. Hopefully, what is considered hot and cool in the States will only leave its mark on the lesser aspects of British lifestyle. *(Caroline Hilty, England)*

I am glad that I got to spend the semester in Townsville, a smaller Australian city because I don't feel that it was as affected by the U.S. culture. When I traveled to larger cities, such as Sydney and Melbourne, there were many more American influences (Starbucks, Coca-Cola, American Eagle clothing, McDonalds, etc.) While Townsville had McDonalds (aka Macca's), there were no other brand name American places. However, Hungry Jack's fast food was exactly the same as our Burger King and The Big W was almost identical to Wal-Mart. Kentucky Fried Chicken was a favorite among the students and I doubt that most of them even know what

...Kentucky is. The ideals of American culture are overwhelming; however they find ways to make American ideals into Australian items. Like others have said about European fashion being ahead of American fashion, it is the same in Australia as well. People are able to wear what they like. One thing that is hot or cool is being environmentally friendly. Everyone uses cloth grocery bags, and the stores refuse to give out plastic bags if someone buys less than 3 items. Even clothing stores give out reusable cloth bags with their store name printed on them.

Australians carry these bags to class, the beach, and the store, almost everywhere they go.

(Theresa Clem, Australia)



This is one of the things that actually really bothers me about Costa Rica. What's hot and cool is exactly what's hot and cool in the US. I came here expecting to see all this fabulous culture and individualism, but what I saw was an extension of the US. I walk along the streets

and see people my age clad in Billabong, Roxy, Independence, and all the skating brands of the US. This is what my kid brother at home wears and not what I was expecting. The music on the radio was another shocker. Many of the most popular songs were American. Fergie's hit "Big Girls Don't Cry," and Sean Kingston's "Beautiful Girls" were gigantic songs here. The people that I got to know here are practically obsessed with the US. They think it's the ultimate in cool. They're perfectly willing to give up all they're culture to become just like us Americans. What is the world coming to? *(Eliza Czowlowski, Costa Rica)*

The American Pop-Culture is very popular in Germany. American movies, songs, and Hollywood gossip are just are very popular among the German youth. American fashion, in some regards, is also "cool." But of course the Germans have their own music, films, and fashion. Night Clubs, Discos, and Bars are "hot" places to hang out in the city, and there are a many of these to suit everyone's individual tastes. Personally, I have found some popular trends among the German youth in Cologne to

...be quite absurd, such as mullet hairstyles, high school-style varsity letter jackets, and baseball hats worn so small, that they sit on top of the head. One "cool" popular fashion that I do like and is very different from in the US is the absurdly stylish dress shoes that men wear whether going to work or to the bar. (*Brandon Goeller, Germany*)

The definition of hot and cool is basically westernization. People seem to be attracted to a western style of dress. Also lighter skin is seen as better. There are creams to lighten their skin so they will be light brown instead of black. People in Nairobi are seen as cool if they dress in western clothes and act in a more westernized way. Westernization is what everyone here seems to be striving for, to be individualistic and rich. One

thing I noticed by watching television here is that Miss Kenya, the beauty pageant winner, has very European features. So traditional Kenyan features usually involve a flat wide nose, while Europeans have skinnier more pointed noses. Yet Miss Kenya could have looked like a European if she was white. While I spent six weeks in a rural village near the base of Mount Kenya so many of the people I worked with commented on my hair, because it is long, straight, and soft. They all played with it and said how they wish that could have hair like mine.

(*Caroline Lewis, Kenya*)



What I've noticed that is different between here and Allegheny is awareness. People here, especially at the Marine Lab, are much more involved with protecting the environment and promoting awareness of it. Everyone's bumper sticker has to do with saving some aspect of the environment in one-way or the other. I guess that would be expected at a marine lab.

However, it is interesting how much more people seem to care about our environment. People don't care as much about politics, just the environmental part of politics. Being cool here is not worrying about your outward appearance, it's not about formality, it's about being who you are, being comfortable, and learning in one of the most relaxed atmospheres. It's about caring about and respecting the environment and promoting

...awareness to others. It's about being involved with the community and receiving input from them. It's a great environmental community and I think that other places could really learn from this lab.

(Katherine Kump, Duke Marine Lab)

YOUTHSCAPES:

Youthscapes in Angers definitely exist. I think that the youth here feel that it is there right to express their opinion in any way they feel fit. I don't believe that the youth here feel that they need to be "socialized into adult norms of political involvement." One of the things that struck me the most about "the Youthscapes here" was that they seem to congregate on the street. Yes, they congregate in cafes, at school and in restaurants, but where I live the majority of the youth congregate outside.

When they want to be heard, they go to the streets because that is where they seem to be the most comfortable and feel they can have the most impact. For example, right now in France there is a possibility that laws will be passed in the next few years that will make entrance into university harder and they will privatize more public universities. This poses a major problem in France because all public universities are, for the most part, free. All of the students in the Lycees have been fighting this idea for weeks by protesting at the schools, organizing student marches through the streets of Angers, barricading the doors to the Lycees, etc. Because of their sentiments, the students have literally taken this to the streets because they know this is where they will be heard. Being a bystander of this and seeing it firsthand, I don't think

the youth of France at all feel they will be molded into anything they don't want to be. They will congregate and discuss politics, globalization, religion etc. where they want. Where they seem to want to congregate is the street because no one influences them when they are in their element. Frankly, to sum "youthscape" up for me in Angers, for them it's the streets. *(Kristin Isabelli, France)*



The youthscape of Nairobi is very westernized and with that they are fighting against the problems of the older generations. The youth are very politically active and working hard towards their

...future. They are trying to fight against tribalism by befriending and even marrying people from different times, which, in their parents' generation, would have been completely unheard of and is still looked down upon. Many youth understand the power of education more than their parents. Therefore most youth are very ambitious. This is partially due to the schooling system. All school in Kenya are extraordinarily competitive and if you don't make the grades on the exams you don't go on, and if you don't make the grades on the final after form four (US equivalent is 12th grade), then they just don't get into university. Since most of the youth especially those without a land inheritance, know that the only way to survive in life it to achieve a good education, the youth work extremely hard in

school. One thing that showcases part of the youthscape of Kenya is the matatus. The matatus are colorful with "youth like" sayings on them, playing loud music and having colored lights in it. Many youth will not get into a matatu that does not look "fun." So although they are very into their education and trying to improve their country, it seems like they are trying to almost run away from their parents generation and the conservativeness of it. Thus creating interesting looking matatus. *(Caroline Lewis, Kenya)*



German youth tend to congregate almost any night of the week in clubs, bars, and discos. German culture is in many ways much more open than American culture. For example, teenagers can drink legally and parents often encourage their children to go out into the city and have fun. Bars, clubs, and discos might be popular locations for youth in Germany to gather, but I think youth will gather almost anywhere. My pictures shows a group of teenagers I saw gathered in front of the Dom, the famous cathedral in Cologne. The Dom is in the center of the city and is a popular gathering place among the population, especially at Christmas when there is a Christmas market right next to the Dom. *(Lauren Winberg, Germany)*



Youthscapes are not hard to come by in England. Following in the footsteps of the US, England and the rest of the UK has become very youth oriented. Restaurants, stores, ads-everything is targeted at the younger generations. The focus of attention on young adults is even more apparent in Lancaster, as it is a "university area." Most locations and attractions cater towards the university population. Although

there is a plethora of places that can be considered youthscapes in Lancaster, the most frequently visited establishments are the bars and nightclubs. *(Caroline Hilty, England)*



In some ways, I think Australian youth are forced to take up political power in their youthscape. After they turn 18, Australian citizens are required to vote. If they do not, they face a fine. Though some choose to cast a "donkey" vote, or one that is invalidated because of errors on the ballot, many of the students I knew thought critically about who they were voting for in the

national election in November. The money of Australian youth also shapes their power. Minimum wage for a 20 year old is \$18 per hour. Even with the higher cost of living, that is a good wage. If Australian youth choose to work, they have the money to dictate portions of the market and when they vote they can make large impacts on elections. Their youthscape is defined only by the limits they impose on themselves. *(Erin Horning, Australia)*

COMING HOME:

The one memory that I will never forget about this trip to France is this view. The first day I came, when I finally got out of the airport, off the train, lugging around over 120 pounds of luggage, after being up for almost 48 hours straight, not eating for about 12 straight, stepping out of the train station and seeing this sight made me cry. The only thing I could think was, "I'm home." It was a knee-jerk response, and I knew it was right. It's for this reason that I know study abroad programs are valuable non-academically. I have learned how to properly pack for a year abroad. I have learned more French. I have learned about cultural differences. I have learned how to stand up for myself, even when dealing with language barriers. I have gained more pride in my own

country. Most of all, I have learned how to be an adult. And this picture will always remind me of my first adult "home." (*Susannah Bender, France*)



On an academic level, I had an incredible experience. I had the opportunity to study at a large university with a multitude of classes in subjects I never knew existed, and I got to experience what a foreign education system is like. However, on a social level, I wish I had known more about the university before I arrived. Perhaps then I wouldn't have been as shocked by the incredible amount of binge drinking that takes place

every weekend, or the fact that there isn't much else to do in the area. Maybe I would have realized how much more expensive everything is in Australia, and I might have been able to raise enough money to leave Townsville more than once. I never appreciated Allegheny's Late Night program until I attended a school where the "late night" program was listening to drunk people fall down the stairs. (*Rachel Clark, Australia*)

The most concrete memory that I have brought home with me this semester is the difference of mentalities between one country and another. I had always been told that French professors don't consider their students to be "gifted and special" like our friendly American professors. Rather, they believe that no one is good enough to get a 100%

...let alone an 80%. As much as I already knew this, the reality of the situation never really hit me until I got a grade back in one of my classes and was horrified with my evaluation. While being in France was fantastic, it really made me appreciate the U.S. You never really realize what you miss until you don't have it; kind of the grass is always greener type thing. While being away people always ask me if I miss my school in the states. And I reply: "yes, I really miss the people." I have had some really great professors at Allegheny, and I believe it is important to have a good student-teacher relationship, and having French professors made me realize that they have a totally different mentality in regards to this situation. And that's alright, it's their method, and it is good to experience different teaching methods, because it's another preparatory device for the future even if it can be a challenge to accept. Study-abroad is an opportunity that is incomparable to anything else. And not just in an academic sense. To truly understand a country and its people, one has to live there and learn the customs and habits of the citizens and find out what's popular and what's taboo. I had a pretty good grasp of the French culture when I first got to Angers, but after having lived there for a semester, I started to

notice regional differences I had never picked up on before such as the variety of accents, people's natures, and just little details that an average tourist might not catch on to right away. I would definitely recommend study abroad to anyone, and that they go into it with an open mind and an open heart. (*Carolyn Kuzell, France*)



I think the greatest learning and growing experiences come in a non-academic form from studying abroad. The most amazing thing that I have learned from my overall experience is



...that fundamentally,
we are all the same,
living on the same earth,
hoping for the same
general things. Yes, each
region of the world has
its own unique culture
and way of life, but no
matter where you go at
the core we are all very
similar. Even though
people are living in
different time zones all

over the world, time is essentially relative and we're all living in the same time. Even though people are scattered all throughout the world and are adapted to their own environment, way of life, culture, etc., we all share a commonality as humans living on this earth in relation to it and each other. (*Ashton Kohler, Britain*)



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