Students Study Abroad

By Alaina Berry

During the 2012-2013 academic year, Ashland University students and Honors Program members, Larissa Berry and Abbie Carle, partook in a Student Exchange Program offered through the Schar College of Education. They spent the fall semester taking classes in Brazil and learning the Portuguese language. While they were studying, they befriended Brazilian natives and students Leticia Carvalho, Patricia Macedo, and Aline Inacio Decker Souza who then had the opportunity to come to Ashland and take classes for the spring semester. Abbie and Larissa took classes in which the professors spoke only Portuguese, and Leticia, Patricia, and Aline took classes in English.

I asked Larissa, a junior Integrated Math major, to describe one aspect of her experience in Brazil, and she elaborated on being a minority in a different country: “I never thought much about the experience for an international student in a foreign country... Once the Brazilian students discovered we were there, they were beside themselves. Everyone wanted to know the Americans! At first, it was really exciting and flattering, but as time went on, I felt less like a person and more like an exhibit... The friends that I did make got to know me for me, and that was so gratifying... I guess I would conclude by saying that Brazil has changed my perspective in understanding diversity and how to embrace our differences. It’s important to realize that while superficially nationality, race, and culture define us, each of us has individual interests and aspirations that really tell who we are.”

All of the students have embraced the customs of their different environments both in the United States and Brazil, but still had to make adjustments. Leticia shared what she liked and disliked most about the culture since she arrived here in Ashland, “One thing I like American culture, is that people are always very polite, anywhere always ask: how are you?, or good morning, good afternoon. One thing I do not like and is not yet accustomed to the food because I always in my country ate, for example, rice, beans, meat, every day and customs are different here.” [sic] Despite any setbacks, homesickness, or differences, all the women had a positive study abroad experience. When asked whether or not she would want to study abroad again, Abbie Carle, a sophomore Intervention Specialist major, replied, “I would 100% study abroad again. Studying abroad opened my eyes to the rest of the world, and to the lack of cultural and worldly experience we have here in the United States. Everyone should study abroad, no matter where or for how long. It’s a life-changing experience!”
By Jeni Dodd

I’m sure that when you picture the Honors Program here at Ashland University, the following scenario pops into mind: It’s a quiet room, classical music flows in the background as students reread classroom notes while drinking fresh coffee and debating concepts from the classroom... but this isn’t completely accurate. While studying is an important aspect of any college student’s life, there is much more to each of the students in the Honors Program. Each semester, the Honors Society plans outings to bring the members together for pure fun. With the recent Hunger Games hysteria, in March a group of Honors students went to the midnight premiere of The Hunger Games. The Honors Society sponsored the event for the students, and took control of the ticket purchase. Sophomore Katy Higaki attended the premiere and reflects, “Everyone who came was really excited for the premiere! You could feel the anticipation from everyone waiting in line. It was a fun experience!” And it truly was a captivating experience. The crowd cheered as the film began, and was delighted with how the film portrayed the first book of the three part series.

Thankfully the mania doesn’t stop there! To add to the Hunger Games mania here at Ashland University, junior Hailey Sult has taken the initiative to start an Honors Book Club, which will be featuring the Hunger Games books by Suzanne Collins. The Honors Book Club will meet monthly to discuss popular as well as classic literature. Look forward to hearing more information about this new feature to the Honors Program!

By Amanda Mayes

“We Are the Warrior Apes; We Are Going to Fight”

Has mankind always practiced warfare? Do we have the capability to move from aggression toward empathy? In the Honors Program Spring Lecture co-sponsored by The Department of Biology/Toxicology, guest speaker Thomas Hayden, currently a visiting lecturer in environmental journalism at Stanford University, gives his opinions on these questions.

Hayden begins his lecture by insisting that in prehistoric times, the human race was peaceful. However, warfare inevitably set in—but not just for humans; chimpanzees, in particular, fight wars amongst themselves. The fact is, both humans and chimps “have always found ways to be brutal to each other.” But here is the rub: “how can one brain manage to both be compassionate and to be indifferent” to the suffering of others? Neither humans nor chimps are fully brutal, so Hayden proposes the idea of an “empathy switch” that both species turn on or off depending on the situation. Humans, in particular, have the ability to “demonize” other humans—humans not in their “in group”—in order to turn off compassion. Fighting wars is not simply a cultural trend; it “goes deep into our biology,” perhaps once for survival.

Hayden’s admittedly dismal conclusion is that “all of us are the descendants of aggressive warriors, rapists, and people who carried out genocides.” This does not mean that there is no hope...for the point of Hayden’s lecture is to say that humans have the capacity for more than brutality. For example, this past century has been the least violent in all of human history. The death rates are significantly lower, and it is possible now that the “human abilities that make wars possible can be an instrument of loyalty, not brutality...we come together in war.” Soldiers today are no longer dehumanizing the enemy, which is meant to say that these soldiers are “going into war without flipping [off] the empathy switch.” True, there is almost no possibility of eliminating war completely, but these future wars will possibly be evolving into something almost peaceful. Humans will find areas of commonalities and make it their “moral decision to change the behavior on the battlefield.”
By Lindsey Grudnicki

Out of Ashland: A Year Abroad

I can tell how long I have been away from home because I have reached a place where I use new vocabulary unawares. A ‘rubbish bin’ or ‘biscuit’ will crop up in my conversation and the terms are no longer chosen deliberately but flow naturally into my speech. That is what seven months in England will do. I have been at Queen Mary, University of London since September and am currently two months away from completing my academic year abroad. I have picked up more than just the proper English words for ‘trash’ and ‘cookie’ during my time in London: I have a collection of train tickets stacked a few inches high on my desk, thousands of photographs, loyalty cards to my favorite coffee houses and bookshops, programmes from various theatrical performances, receipts from restaurants in four different countries, maps of a dozen cities, and most importantly, a group of friends that I have gotten to know as well in just a few months as those I have spent years with at home. This is the evidence I offer from a year of new experiences, exciting travels, and indescribable personal growth.

As Honors Program students, we are encouraged to challenge ourselves, to take our university education to a higher level than is expected of us. While there are opportunities in Ashland and on the short trips the Honors Program offers around the globe, it is a completely different experience going abroad for an extended amount of time. Being outside of the Ashland bubble forces you to face difficulties and joys that you can hardly imagine from the comfort and familiarity of the Midwest. Living abroad is an adventure in the fullest sense of the word: you encounter obstacles you never had to face before as well as amazing moments that fill your life with stories and memories that you will cherish forever. You may deal with the stress of delayed flights, missed coaches, crowds, languages, and frustrating cultural aspects, but a longer stay in a foreign country will give you the chance to explore, to genuinely grasp the character of a place and its people, and to travel to wonderful sites with histories extending much farther back in time than anything Americans come into contact with. Your education expands beyond the classroom to everyday life as you manage your time, navigate new areas, budget your money, plan your own itineraries, make friends, and keep yourself healthy. While you may dabble in some of these things during a summer or semester study-abroad program, a year abroad will challenge you to maintain the balance between the person you were and the one you are becoming, and truly adjust to a different way of life. In doing this, I have found so many blessings and my view of the world has been widened and filled with color. I hope that my fellow Honors students will be encouraged to find out just what the world outside of Ashland has to offer: I can say from personal experience that you will discover a diverse, lively place and, more importantly, you will learn more about yourself by living outside of your comfort zone.
Senior Spotlight:
Five Complete Capstone Projects

By Sarah Guarino

Ashland University’s Honors Program provides students with the opportunity to create a Capstone Project within their discipline to present before graduating. This year, five students have completed all of the requirements for the Honors Program. The students, Mariah Dunsing, a History and Political Science major; Todd Frank, a Business Management major; Victoria Goudy, an ACS Certified Chemistry major; Rebecca Civittolo, a Social Work and Philosophy major; and Alex Jones, an Economics and Philosophy major, will defend their Capstone Projects this spring.

The students have all had different experiences with the Honors Program and share some of their thoughts on the benefits of being a member of this organization. Mariah Dunsing shares, “The biggest benefit to the Honors Program is being able to take core classes with high-achieving students from other academic disciplines—it allows us, as students, to grow intellectually.” Todd Frank also commented on the Honors courses, “For many of my core classes, there seems to be hesitation from students to participate, however, in the Honors classes, there are always comments or questions, and I think it makes the classes more enjoyable.”

This group of students highlights how the Honors Program truly helps students to have a positive and academically fulfilling experience. Victoria Goudy shares, “It is nice to broaden your horizons past your major”, and Rebecca Civittolo adds, “[The Honors Program] gave me a chance to work with other Honors students in an enriched classroom.

Senior Mariah Dunsing completed her Honors Capstone, “The Constitutionality and Necessity of the First Bank of the United States”

Honors Version of Marriage and Family Relations Class

By Chris Beisel

Every semester, different courses are introduced to the Honors Program. One of the courses offered as an Honors section during the spring 2012 semester is Marriage and Family Relations (FCS 340 HN) taught by Dr. Jacqueline Wilkins. Conveniently, FCS 340 qualifies as a required social science credit in the University core curriculum in addition to being an Honors core class.

Dr. Wilkins has taught at Ashland for three years now in the Family and Consumer Sciences department. Prior to her time here, Dr. Wilkins taught at OSU and was a state parenting specialist there. She also serves as a professional mediator focusing primarily on high-conflict divorced couples. For about eight years, Dr. Wilkins has owned her own consulting firm which offers grant writing, research, and management consulting.

“The Honors course gives me an opportunity to methodologically approach the content in a different way,” says Dr. Wilkins. “I really enjoy working with the Honors students in this class. They are highly motivated, engaged, and well-prepared when they come into the classroom. I am able to follow up more on interesting lines of inquiry from class discussion.”

Students in the class enjoy the discussions that are generated, and Dr. Wilkins continuously entices conversation and sparks students to critically think about different family trends present within our society. Since the start of the class, Honors students enrolled have established different mindsets of a family’s structure; the complexities of marriage, cohabitation, being single, exploring gender roles, interracial marriage, following family traditions, polygamy, same-sex marriage, and other family practices are often discussed in Wilkins’s course curriculum.

“A lot of core classes you can take here don’t always apply to you and it’s hard to relate to the subject and really get into it,” says sophomore Katy Higaki, an Honors student enrolled in FCS 340. “The topics of Marriage and Family will hit home to all of us somehow whether we choose to get married and start families one day or not.”

“I want every student to understand the complexities of American families and marriage,” Dr. Wilkins explained. “When a student leaves my class they should: 1) have a very thorough understanding of the various definitions (both formal and informal) of family; 2) know and understand the changing demographics of marriage and family in the U.S.; 3) be aware of various family forms, structures, and challenges faced by families; 4) understand characteristics of strong family and marital relationships; 5) know the factors associated with families and marriages at-risk, and 6) understand how to apply this knowledge both personally and professionally.”

Dr. Wilkins and her students have truly enjoyed the Honors version of Marriage and Family Relations so far this semester. Wilkins stated “I hope to offer the Honors version of this course again in the near future and look forward to seeing you all there!”

Dr. Jacqueline Wilkins
Javanese Wayang Kulit

By Kyle Buxton

“It was a completely new experience,” explained freshman, Mary Moeller, when asked about one of the most recent trips offered through the Honors Program.

On Sunday, March 11, members of Dr. Fuhrmann’s Music and Drama Across Cultures Honors class, along with other members of the Honors Program, traveled to Oberlin College to witness one of only three performances in the U.S. this year from an especially unique musical genre: Javanese Wayang Kulit.

Wayang Kulit is an ancient form of Indonesian story-telling portrayed using two-dimensional puppets to cast shadows on a large white screen. The lead member of the performance is the dalang, or master puppeteer, who sits on one side of the screen using puppets to cast shadows on the other side, reenacting stories from the Hindu epic, the Ramayana. Enjoying a front row seat to this performance, students had the privilege of sitting on either side of the screen—to enjoy the battling shadows cast on one side or to observe the puppet mastery of Dalang Purbo Asmoro, who performed from the other side.

Accompanying the dalang was a 10-member performing troupe or gamelan known as Mayangkara. A gamelan is a collection gongs and other bronze percussion instruments that accompany a variety of events in Indonesia, so by hearing the gamelan’s music combined with the dalang’s dynamic theatrical display, students received a complete and phenomenal cultural experience. And by the looks of faces across the audience, it was clear that the show left its viewers both refreshed and intrigued.

Unlike any form of story-telling in the U.S. today, the puppet show was paused mid-way through so Purbo Asmoro could interact with the audience (part of the tradition of Wayang Kulit). As part of this interaction, he began comparing American culture to the vastly differing Indonesian society, joking about the differences and even using a President Obama puppet to connect with his audience. By the end of his comedic routine, needless to say, Purbo Asmoro had the audience rolling with laughter. “The puppet shows we see here *in America*” explained Mary, “are usually for little kids, but this show was more serious. It was new, interesting and exciting.”

Sharing her idea behind the trip, Dr. Fuhrmann explained that she wanted to introduce Wayang Kulit in order to show students one of the most ancient forms of drama. Also, she stated that she “wanted students to experience another culture first-hand” and this trip was the perfect occasion. Furthermore, when asked if she had the opportunity to offer the trip in the future, she responded with an “Absolutely.”

So, if the upcoming trips with the Honors Program are even half as exciting as this one, they won’t be ones to miss.
Hello, everyone!

This has certainly been quite a year! There has been so much learning, growth, and fun within the Honors Program! It’s so exciting to see the improvements that the Program has made just in the two years that I have been here.

It has been such a pleasure working alongside my fellow interns (and Lindsey) and I thank you all so very much for all of your fabulous input into this issue of the Honors Bugle. I have really enjoyed compiling your works to send out the wonderful updates and information about our Program.

Most of all, I would like to thank Nancy Andres, our Honors Program Coordinator, for all of her passion and efforts that she puts into this Program. Her guidance, support, and patience have been completely essential to the completion of this process.

I hope that everyone has a fantastic summer and comes back ready for even more excitement with the Honors Program!

Melany Bagnola
Editor