

Latin American Studies Student Spends Semester Abroad

Organized by Ashley Michini

Merissa Daugherty is a Latin American Studies, Spanish and History major who studied in Guayaquil, Ecuador at UES, la Universidad de Espiritu Santo, last semester. She told LA/W/S about her unique and memorable experience.

What was your first impression?

My first impression was that it was not as much of a 3rd world country as I had imagined. The place I was living was a really modern-looking city.

How did the classes there differ from those at our University?

They were really challenging, mostly because we didn't have the same access to resources as we do here. They were really good, though. The blending of cultures was really interesting, because I'd have classes with students from all over the world, as well as from Ecuador. It was a unique mix of ideas

and cultures.

How was the food there?

It was amazing! At first it was hard, because I'm a picky eater. When I was there I tried fish for the first time and it was so good. I had plantains and yucca. There was fresh-squeezed juice every day. Since I've been home, I've been trying to cook the food that I ate there.

What cultural sites did you visit while you were abroad?

In Ecuador, I went to the equator and stood on both sides of it. I stayed overnight at an indigenous village in the jungle. There are lots of beautiful beaches. I explored the capital city, as well. After I finished my program, I decided to hop on a bus, and see much more of Latin America. I traveled ten and a half days. I visited Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. I saw Machu Picchu, I went to Lima and La Paz, and saw



the mines in Potosí. I was in Buenos Aires and they were celebrating their bicentennial while I was there. I went to the Plaza de Mayo, but Las Madres were marching elsewhere, and I was so disappointed. To me this was so rewarding, having learned about all of these incredible places in my classes, and then finally being able to experience them first hand.

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Women's Studies Sponsors Travel Course to Rwanda Intersession 2011

Written by Dr. Sharon Meagher

This January, Drs. Linda Ledford-Miller and Sharon Meagher will take a group of students to Rwanda to examine issues of gender equality in a comparative context. The 3-credit women's studies course, WOMN 384 Gender Equity in US & Rwanda will feature a sixteen day trip to Rwanda, January 5-23, 2011.

Drs. Meagher and Ledford-Miller travelled to Rwanda this summer to develop partnerships there and plan the course.

"Rwanda presents an interesting comparison to the situation for women in

the US. On formal measures of gender equity such as formal political representation, Rwanda far outranks the US. Yet on informal measures of women's empowerment, most women in the US fare better in everyday life," noted Dr. Sharon Meagher, Director of Women's Studies and one of the course instructors.

"This course presents a fantastic opportunity for University of Scranton students to engage in dialogue with students in Rwanda," Meagher continued. We will work closely with master's degree students at the Kigali

Institute's Centre for Gender, Culture, and Development. Students will have the opportunity to work closely with the Rwandan professionals who are enrolled in the master's degree program, including having the opportunity to shadow them in their day jobs and/or visiting their homes.

In addition, the course trip will feature visits to high schools in Rwanda, as well as to women's economic cooperatives. At least one day will be dedicated to volunteer work at an orphanage and/or a related project to provide homes for orphans and widows who adopt them.



Ecuadoran flag in the shape of the country

Merissa's Study Abroad Story, cont'd

What was the most challenging part of your experience?

I volunteered at a clinic and it was in a really poor area with no sewers or anything. It was just really hard to see that every day. Also, the people who lived there spoke a mixture of Spanish and

an indigenous language, so it was hard to communicate with them. Then, by the end, we learned a lot of their sayings.

If you could a piece of advice to people who are interested in studying abroad, what would it be?

Just do it. I had lots of

apprehensions about what I would miss here before going, but what you gain from studying abroad is not just learning a new language, it encompasses learning about a new culture and meeting the people, and that is worth so much more!

LA/W/S Welcomes Classical Guitarist

On Friday, September 24, the University community had the pleasure of welcoming Francesc de paula Soler. He showcased his talent in Collegiate Hall. Maestro Soler studied at "Conservatorio Superior de Música" of Barcelona, Spain. Currently, he performs and also teaches guitar. Known as the "poet of the guitar," he performed Spanish and Latin American pieces from the 19th century to the present.



Maestro Soler pictured with his guitar



Portrayal of the Mexican Revolution by Diego

Pancho Villa and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution

Written by Colby Haggerty

On September 14, Dr. Alejandro Quintana gave a talk about the Mexican Revolution which took place from 1910 until 1929. He first explained how intricate the Revolution was. He furthered that the Revolution, which sought to empower the lower class, resulted with casualties of impoverished Mexicans numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Dr. Quintana also expressed that there was some ambiguity as to the success of the Revolution, and if its goals have yet been seen. It did not have a clear resolution, merely

forming the PRI party who took control of the country for many years thereafter. The middle and lower class citizens, who were fighting for liberties and calling for reforms, did not obtain them. Dr. Quintana elaborated on the folklore of the Mexican Revolution. He discussed how, though Emilio Zapata and Pancho Villa are known as important grassroots heroes in Mexican Revolution, they are often today misrepresented as muddled symbols of Mexican culture, as it remains that few fully understand the involvement of the Mexican Revolu-

tion.

The talk was very interesting and informative. The Mexican Revolution is a topic that I have had no exposure to prior. The speaker, Dr. Quintana, gave a brief, well-organized and entertaining overview of the historical occurrence. The Revolution contained much more complexity than I had anticipated. This is the 3rd LAWS event I have attended, and each has been more interesting and engaging than the last. The talk was excellent, and I am looking forward to attend more events in the future.

New Class— Environmental Issues and Women's Rights

Written by Ashley Michini

Professor Megan Borsuk will offer a new Women's Studies course this spring. She has traveled down an interesting path that led her to the University of Scranton. Originally from Kingston, PA, she obtained an undergraduate degree in Sociology/Anthropology from St. Michael's College in Vermont. Afterward, she joined the Peace Corps. She served in Uzbekistan, where she worked as a health educator. "We worked with schools and clinics to promote preventative health, women's health, HIV/aids awareness and prenatal care," she elaborated. In 2006, she moved to San Francisco and obtained a Master's Degree from the California Institute of Integral Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology with a con-

centration in Gender and Environmental Studies. Her thesis focused nation-building in Sudan, specifically how education, particularly that of women, was involved in that process.

After studying Sudan, Ms. Borsuk moved there. She explained, "I worked for an organization called The New Sudan Education Initiative, I was working with them as a volunteer for four years on and off. After my Master's, I went to Sudan for about a year." While in Sudan, she studied social and environmental factors, and how they affected girls' access to school. The girls in Sudan who fought for an education remain her motivation to continue pursuing Women's Studies issues. "They have more struggles", she said, "The

work is never done." Since she left Sudan, her area of study has been analyzing the social and environmental issues which disrupt women's access to health and education.

Borsuk noted that she first became interested in Women's Studies through her own experience. As she told,

"Throughout my own study, I started to question power and authority and its structure, and how it affects people in their complex identities based on race, class and gender. I come from a school where Women's Studies is for social justice...It's about learning about



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New Class— Women and Work in Africa

Q and A with Professor Rosette Adera

What is your background?

Academic: MA in Globalization Studies (McMaster University).

Courses include but limited to: Writing Diaspora (emphasis: women, African/Afro-Caribbean, Canadian), Gender & Globalization (my research focused on indigenous women and indigenous global networks), Political Anthropology (emphasis on women, nation, violence); Sociology of race & ethnicity and Global Political Economy. All these

courses added theory and content to my understanding of myriad issues that impact women globally. My thesis focused on role of women in the Rwandan (1994) genocide.

Lived Experience: I am aware of my particular take on the intersection between work and gender. It is hope that my students and I will try on many lenses as we explore many other perspectives.

When did you first become interested in Women's Studies?



It must have crept up on me slowly. I do not recall it being a sudden occurrence.

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Speaker from Rwanda Visits University

Written by Steph Pisko

This September, the University welcomed Justine Mbabazi, who spoke at the lunchtime series about "Transitional Justice in Rwanda." Mbabazi is an international lawyer and gender expert whose accomplishments include drafting Rwanda's first legislation against Gender-Based Violence, directing the American Bar Association in Rwanda, and working as a senior legal advisor in Afghanistan. At the lecture, Mbabazi explained the historical background of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and discussed the atrocities that took place.

Her message turned hopeful when she

explained how Rwanda was able to recover from the devastating effects of genocide and create a new government. Women were responsible for reconstructing the country and the government after the mass killings of over 1 million people in 100 days and they did it successfully. Immediately following the genocide, women began to repair the damage by taking in orphans, cleaning up wreckage, and bringing together their villages. They also participated in convicting the perpetrators of the genocide by testifying against them.

Ms. Mbabazi proudly noted that

Rwanda has made incredible progress and currently leads the world in gender equality in politics. The constitution sets a quota of 30% women in the parliament but Rwanda has exceeded that and currently has over 50% women, the highest percentage in the world. Women gained credibility in the aftermath of the genocide and proved they were effective leaders.

Rwanda's success is remarkable and Mbabazi argued that women are largely responsible for it. It was a privilege to hear from a distinguished world leader, Justine Mbabazi, and her story was inspirational.



Environmental Issues and Women's Rights, cont'd

how our identities that are multiple and fractured.”

Now, she brings all of her wonderful life experience and thoughtful insight here to teach. Ms. Borsuk provided an excellent description of her new course, “In the course we are going to look at how the environment is controlled, used and exploited, through a feminist lens. The new course is entitled WOMN 384, sec. 2 “Environmental Justice and Women's Rights”. The main themes include shifts in the global economy and its impact on the environment, and how both issues affect women. Specifically, how does the control of the environment and the access of resources affect women and their livelihoods? We will be looking at what's happening and exploring differ-

ent ways to change it.”

Moreover, she elaborated about her hopes and goals of the class, “. I want the class to be a jumping point for the students to become inspired to take action” As a final note, she concluded, “I want the class to be a class that challenges assumptions and gets people to reflect on their own situations and apply these questions of identity to themselves” Ms. Borsuk is an incredible woman who brings her worldly expertise to the classroom. She will be a great asset to our University community. Environmental Issues and Women's Rights will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 6-7:15 p.m. during this spring semester!

Women and Work in Africa, cont'd

What inspires you to continue working on Women's Studies issues?

I have an AAUW sticker on my door that says: “... because equity is still an issue”. I suppose that is in part what drives me.

So, tell us about your new course...

What will it be like? My course is *Women and Work in Africa*. It will focus on the changing nature as well as the patterns of ‘women’ work in Africa. We will explore differently ordered societies ranging from hunter gatherer, through rural/farmer to urban societies. The students will be asked to use a feminist framework to examine the themes that emerge.

What are you most excited about in teaching the new course?

I taught for 22 years before coming to the University. I have missed interacting with students and watching them grow. Another reason is that this is a course I have never taught and I am sucker for new challenges.

What do you hope students will learn from taking your course?

An appreciation of the shared experiences of women globally. These particular experiences will be related to work, of course!

Women and Work in Africa will be held Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 2:30-3:45 p.m. during this spring semester!