Teaching English Abroad

This March, the global and international studies program offered a panel session on “Teaching English Abroad”. Alice Molvern, Western’s International Partnerships Specialist and Sarah Divine Reid, from the Study Abroad office, spoke about their experiences teaching English in South Korea and Japan and answered student questions.

Many of our recent graduates who take language classes in Japanese or French apply for competitive government programs that send them abroad to teach English in the classroom. The Fulbright scholarship is also available for any person who has graduated college. Hundreds of countries from Brazil to Turkey to Indonesia welcome successful applicants. These are great opportunities.

However, there are many other ways to get yourself to these distant destinations. Students at the panel were given a handout listing a number of organizations that help to facilitate student teaching opportunities. They include Dave’s ESL Café and GoAbroad.com.

Molvern and Reid pointed out that proficiency in the host country language is not a requirement, but some foreign language knowledge is useful. They emphasized that previous experience living, traveling or studying abroad is important, as well as teaching experience, such as work in summer camps, swimming pools, or tutoring.

While teaching certifications are not a necessity, your application will be more attractive if you have a TESOL, TEFL or other teaching related certificate. If you have a passion for helping others, or if you are hankering to live in another country, teaching English abroad can be a good fit for your professional and personal goals! Check out our website at https://wmich.edu/globalstudies/careers for a list of websites and programs.
Human Trafficking in our backyard!

By Bonny Sucherman and Sabrina Merz

This semester, the Global and International Studies program hosted a panel presentation on human trafficking. We were pleased that over 40 students, faculty and community members joined. Our ongoing series, “Human Trafficking: When Global Meets Local,” focuses on raising awareness of human trafficking as a crime that occurs here in Michigan. Panelists included Sara Lacroix, founder of the Kalamazoo Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition; Rebecca Zarras, Human Trafficking Case Manager at the YWCA Kalamazoo; and Sam Abdo, President/CEO of Total Security USA. The panelists had different experiences with combating human trafficking. Lacroix’s organization educates and advocates for those who are being trafficked here in Michigan, seeking to ensure that there are local services offered to support survivors. Hands-on assistance is the main focus of Zarras’ work at the Kalamazoo YWCA, where she works one-on-one with survivors of human trafficking. Abdo offers training sessions for the nearby Firekeepers Casino security officers to recognize warning signs of human trafficking and ensure that they are responding appropriately in reporting any suspicions to law enforcement. Attendees asked questions about data and about the number of cases in Michigan, and the panelists explained that many instances of human trafficking go unrecognized and unreported, making hard data difficult to collect.

If you see something that leads you to suspect human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-3737-888 or text to: 233733.

Alumni Spotlight: Foreign Service

In February, recent alumnus Matt Pruitt spoke at our “Better Get to Know an Alum” Series. Our staff writer got the opportunity to talk with him about working with AmeriCorps and then the Peace Corps in Kyrgyzstan after graduation.

OKOLI: What is the difference between Peace Corps and AmeriCorps?

PRUITT: The Peace Corps sends participants to developing countries, and the work is on international development. The AmeriCorps program is based in the US. I was involved in Volunteers In Service To America, or VISTA. With that branch of AmeriCorps, the focus is typically working with civil service organizations and nonprofit organizations. I taught English in Kyrgyzstan with the Peace Corps.

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An experience of a lifetime by Caleb Fox

Through the Global and International Studies program and Samaritas, I began tutoring some of the Syrian refugee families who are resettling in the Kalamazoo area. The tutoring sessions have become an opportunity for me to learn about Syrian culture, and to see on a personal level how the civil war has affected some of the Syrian people. The stories and meals we shared together are memories that I will never forget.
OKOLI: How do you join these two organizations?

PRUITT: To apply to AmeriCorps, you make a profile, outline your work experience, [and] write a motivation letter. There are different assignments by state and county, and you can have an application active to six different submissions. For the Peace Corps, the process is similar. You send your [online] application, interview with a recruiter, and, if successful, you get a placement which gives a region and then an assignment. You can apply to up to six different programs in six different countries at once, and the organization tries to place you based on the countries you selected.

OKOLI: Do you have any tips for how applicants should prepare themselves?

PRUITT: When you are a student, get involved, get active. Join student organizations, or start your own student organization, if there is a need for something on campus that you don’t feel is being addressed. Volunteer experience, no matter how big or small, translates to work experience. Utilize your professors, and take advantage of internships. You want to build up as much experience as possible, using every opportunity you have as an undergrad to set yourself up to move to the next step when you graduate.

OKOLI: Some might have concerns about the cultural norms and security issues they might face. Do you have any advice on how to handle such things?

PRUITT: When I got to the country, my first three months were composed of pre-service training, and during that time you learn the local language, and take part in safety and security sessions. For every Peace Corps [affiliated] country there is a group of volunteers called the “diversity panel” that address-es what you can expect and offers useful coping mechanisms. So, Peace Corps does a really good job of preparing you for that during training.

A Poem: By Anya Tarasyeva, GIST major

Stepping onto a busy street
Voices filling my ears, saying words I have never heard
My tongue feels thick as I try to mimic the sounds
And my sister grabs my hand to keep me from getting separated.
Years later, the sounds come easier but communication is still hard
As the kids at school make fun of me and my sibling’s home-cooked lunches
Of borscht, crepes filled with spiced meat, cabbage and potatoes with beef
My face burning as I correct yet another teacher on my last name
Even though my parents simplified it to try to ease our paths
And my brother comes home crying because he got teased for his accent yet again
And we are the lucky ones
By the time we are adults,
We have lost our accents and are indistinguishable from our friends born here
We have learned to take pride in our history
And realize the usefulness of our multilingual upbringing
We are lucky to have the internet,
Where we can connect with people from back home
or find new friends who can relate to our experiences
We are the lucky ones.
We do not have hijabs for men to set on fire as we pass by
We do not have dark skin and accents identifying us as outsiders
and we are able to return to our home country
without wondering if we will be allowed back into this one.
We are the lucky ones
able to blend in and try to help from the inside
we know the culture, the people, the language.
we know the struggle and even still have to correct people on our names
but know the frustration of repeating yourself over and over again
and still have somebody not understand you
We have seen so many attitudes
From being welcomed with open arms
to open disdain
Even to being told that we are “different” than those other immigrants
from “less desirable” areas
Or even people we thought were friends saying terrible things about immigrants
forgetting who they are talking to
Or maybe not
We are the lucky ones
and I will take advantage of that
In the hopes of allowing more people to have the chances we did
and one day feel as safe as we do
On these streets that were once terrifying
and now feel like home.
Activities of our Model UN Club

Early in the spring, eight members of the WMU Model UN club competed at the North American Model United Nations (NAMUN) in Toronto, Canada. They participated in various committees and worked to pass resolutions in the General Assembly. Here at Western, Model UN club members worked closely with high school students in the ASCEND Program, a service supported by the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. This youth enrichment program focuses on international projects, and WMU Model UN students helped them understand the workings of the United Nations and prepared them for the spring gathering. Throughout the semester club officers conducted simulation practices to train new members in MUN rules and processes. These sessions were open to high school participants, and members of Model UN from Kalamazoo College and the Kalamazoo Valley Community College were invited. In the late spring, the club also sponsored the Second Annual Western Michigan University High School Model UN Conference. Twenty students from five high schools registered and they wrestled with the Spratly Islands controversy.

President Scholar Spotlight

In March, Caitlin Wiley and Jesse Klaus were recognized as two of WMU’s top seniors for 2017 during the 37th annual presidential scholar’s convocation. Caitlin, a double major in Global and International Studies and Spanish, will graduate from WMU in summer 2018. Jesse, a double major in GIST and World Languages and Literature (WLL) was the recipient of the WLL presidential scholarship. While at Western, Caitlin has enjoyed her semester-long study abroad experience in Buenos Aires, Argentina and her work as an Orientation Student Leader and Bronco Bash and Homecoming Coordinator. Caitlin hopes to attend graduate school and aspires to serve the interests of the United States as a Foreign Service Officer.

Student Reflections

Douglas Davidson
I like that this program can translate into any career field, whether it's directly linked to what you specialized in. After graduation I will be in Fort Sill, Oklahoma to complete my Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC). I will then be stationed in South Korea for two years.

Mike Edwards
I really liked the flexibility offered and the language options provided by the program. I feel that learning language gives you more career choices. After graduation I will be going to Milwaukee to work for City Year, an education-focused organization affiliated with AmeriCorps.

Leila Al-Ousi
My best experience in the program was the study abroad option. I went to the United Arab Emirates and Dominican Republic. I think studying abroad is really important for GIST majors. After graduation I am looking for a career in the government sector.
Allied Faculty Research: Susan Pozo

Allied faculty member and Professor of Economics Susan Pozo has been exploring the question of whether refugees should be a safety concern for Americans. Together with colleagues Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes (a 1998 WMU alumna) and Cynthia Bansak, Pozo finds no evidence that refugees contribute to crime in the United States.

In “Refugee Admissions and Public Safety: Are Refugee Settlement Areas More Prone to Crime?”, Pozo et al. use data on the location of refugees from 2006 to the present, along with the FBI’s tally of crime at the county level (the Uniform Crime Reports). The conclusion holds whether they examine the overall crime rate, the violent crime rate, or the property crime rate. Indeed their estimates detect a small but statistically significant decrease in violent crime in refugee settlement areas. They correct and account for common statistical pitfalls in assessing causal relationships, providing the strongest evidence to date that refugees are not contributing to crime.

Interest in the United States refugee program has been stimulated by charges that refugees are not sufficiently “vetted” before being admitted into the United States and may therefore compromise United States security. In concert with this belief, President Trump has halved the annual cap on refugee admissions to this country, while also attempting to prevent individuals from certain countries access to the program. Pozo’s study will be presented at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. on June 2, 2017 at the conference “Impacts of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons on Host Countries and Host Communities.”

Sigma Iota Rho Inducts Second Class at WMU

This semester, the Zeta Phi Chapter of Sigma Iota Rho inducted five new members: Deirdre Courtney, Sarah Noah, Joseph R. Schuetz, Mckenzie Sietsema, Annalisa M. Wilder. Current members and inductees went to an international restaurant in Kalamazoo and hosted an international film night featuring The Band, a comedy about an Egyptian police band that gets lost in Israel while attempting to perform at the opening of a new Arab cultural center. Dr. Gregory Veeck served as the keynote speaker and received an honorary membership in the organization.

Focus on our Instructors: Thomas Kostrzewa

Dr. Kostrzewa’s longstanding interest in ethno-nationalism remains the focus of his research on China’s western minorities. With regular trips to Tibet and Xinjiang as part of nearly 40 years of travel to China, Kostrzewa’s research examines the responses of fractured and dispersed Tibetan and Uyghur Turkic communities to the challenges of integration in a Chinese state and Han national identity. Kostrzewa continues to be an active traveler, and a recent trip to Iceland focused on interviews about the benefits of “arms length” relationships with EU powerful actors in the wake of a devastating 2008 collapse of the Icelandic economy. Locally, Kostrzewa is a member of the Kalamazoo Refugee Council (KRC), which is a sponsor and supporter of resettled refugees in the Kalamazoo area. He serves on the board of Colleagues International, which hosts professionals from around the world as part of State Department-sponsored exchanges.
Congratulations to Our Recent Graduates!

**Spring 2017 Graduates**

- **Jesse Marriott**  
  Language: French
- **Jesse Klaus**  
  Language: French
- **Sierra Mcnee**  
  Language: Spanish
- **Haley Phelan**  
  Language: Spanish
- **Heather Smith**  
  Language: French
- **Lella Alousi**  
  Language: Arabic
- **Douglas Davidson**  
  Language: Spanish
- **Ahmaad Williams**  
  Language: Arabic
- **Michael Edwards**  
  Language: Spanish
- **Meghan Pitsch**  
  Language: French

**Summer 2017 Graduates**

- **Caleb Fox**  
  Language: Spanish
- **Joseph Foley**  
  Language: Spanish
- **Darrin Cameron**  
  Language: Spanish

**Minors:** Sean Mattics, Nicholas Howland, Benjamin Vilar, Rylie Miller, Nicole Wilson, Katelyn Williams, Lydia Parenteau, Michele Ary, Alex Gibson, Sarah Noah, Haley Wright, Josaih Fillar, Boris Eyang-Obame, Zachary Reimnuller, Kathryn Hoard, Talmat Davis, Chloe Childs

Alumni Needed: We are looking for Global and International studies alumni to speak to current students about how to transition from student to professional. If you are interested in sharing your journey, please contact us at coas-global-intl-info@wmich.edu

Edited by Chikezie Kenneth Okoli

Earlier issues of the Western Worldwide Newsletter are available on our website at wmich.edu/globalstudies/about/newsletter.