DIRECTOR’S CORNER: A note from INS Director Gabriele Wickert

“State of the Major”

I am happy to report that the International Studies major is attracting more and more students. Currently 15 juniors are declared INS majors, an increase that will probably necessitate creating two sections of the INS Senior Seminar next year. (Luckily, Prof. Swedberg has agreed to take over one section.) I believe that our growth will soon require the hiring of a full-time faculty member assigned to International Studies. The increase in numbers was certainly part of the rationale for hiring our new adjunct, Ellen Houston, who is teaching a second section of Intro to Global Studies this semester and who will teach Global Economy next semester. It also was the impetus for encouraging Professor Bell to offer his new Spring course INS 3057 Culture and Development in Southeast Asia (a natural for him, given his special expertise in this area). Recent conversations with the Provost have made me optimistic that the increase in student interest will be matched by an increase in INS courses and faculty. As we move forward along this path of growth, I think it is important to get students involved, so that they can help shape the program of the future. On Wednesday, November 9, at 7:15 in the French Parlor, we will have a special get-together of INS majors, where INS reps Kendra White and Megan Angley will lead a discussion on the future of the major. (Mark your calendars!) As we grow, I also believe it is important to track things, in order to have a clear sense of who we are attracting and what our students need. With the help of INS student assistant Megan Angley, we have gathered data on various aspects of our majors. Here are some facts about the 32 students (sophomores, juniors and seniors) who have declared their intention to major in International Studies:

- **Breakdown in classes**: We currently have 6 seniors, 14 juniors and 12 sophomores (I expect this last number to grow significantly by the Spring, when all sophomores are required to declare their majors)
- **Elective concentrations**: Global Justice—14; Latin American Studies—6; African Studies—3; Global Cultural Studies—3; Asian Studies—3; European Studies—1; Poli-Econ Relations—1
- **Foreign Languages**: Spanish—9; French—9; German—2; Italian—1; Chinese/Japanese—2; Exemptions—9.
- **Number studying abroad** (excludes sophomores): 10
- **Gender**: 29 females, 3 males

Some things are harder to measure and track statistically—e.g., the number of students who get involved in INS-related activities outside of class. My sense is that INS students have become a real force on campus and are unusually active in campus clubs and activities. Their keen sense of social justice has even led them to form new clubs: it is INS majors who head the Student Activist Coalition (senior Christa Calbos is co-chair) and the Committee on Violence against Women (senior Megan Angley is chair), and who are founders and editors of the new alternative newspaper “M” (senior Kendra White is editor in chief). They are also the ones who have been going into the City week after week to observe and support the TOW movement and to arrange “teach-ins” to help us better understand what is going on. Last year senior Rachel Townsend helped run the weekly trips to the UN and this semester she is the TA in Prof. Bell’s Intro to Global Studies class. Two seniors (Christa Calbos and Megan Angley) are doing an independent study on “Women and the Correctional System”, which involves doing research as well as tutoring inmates in connection with Prof. Bell’s Bedford Prison course on “Women and Development”, a role for which they prepared in the previous semester by doing an independent study on Global Women’s Issues. Since Global Justice is currently the most popular concentration within International Studies, it shouldn’t surprise us that so many of our students are activists and passionate about social justice issues. I know many of the students with this concentration would like to dedicate themselves to these goals even after graduation (hopefully through paid work!), which is why we have worked with Career Development to put together the upcoming panel on “Careers for Causes”. (Again, mark your calendars—Nov. 14, 7pm!) Given the Global Justice concentration’s requirement for an internship, we are also working with Career Development on providing more satisfying internship opportunities in the non-profit, ngo and human rights sectors. I expect that the student discussion on November 9 will address these and other issues aimed at improving what we are and what we offer our students. I certainly feel the INS Program is on the cusp of something quite wonderful!
WHO ARE WE?

The INS Faculty Committee is comprised of:

- Gabriele Wickert (Director, German/INS)
- George Castellanos (Spanish/ Latin American Studies)
- Irene Whelan (History/Irish Studies)
- Greg Swedberg (History/Latin American Studies)
- Robert Derrell, Jim Bryan, David Borker (Econ/Fin/Mgt)
- Theresa Kelleher (Asian Studies)
- Mohamed Mbodj (History/African Studies)
- Binita Mehta (French)
- Wil Tyrell (World Religions)
- Peter Bell (INS )
- Kendra White/ Megan Angley (Student Reps)

[The INS Faculty Committee usually meets once a semester to review the program and to address specific concerns. If you have concerns that you would like to bring to the attention of the Committee, Please be in contact with one of the student reps listed above or the director. If you wish to remain anonymous, you can also slip a note under Prof. Wickert’s office door (Lib.210)]

Remember: All majors must have an advisor from the International Studies Committee

WHAT HAVE OUR FACULTY BEEN UP TO LATELY?

**Professor Binita Mehta**, chair of the French department and very active member of the College community, is the author of “Bhaji, Curry, and Masala: Food and/as Identity in Four Films of the Indian Diaspora,”, a book chapter in the volume *India and the Diasporic Imagination / L’Inde et l’imagination diasporique*, published this past summer by the Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée

As usual, **Professor Swedberg**, Latin American specialist in the History department, has been busy! In addition to his considerable College-related duties, he has presented papers and had articles accepted for publication. His most recent article, “Adjudicating Morality: Estupro in Veracruz, Mexico 1925-1950”, appeared in the *Latin Americanist* in June 2011. He has also recently had two papers accepted for conferences. One is “ ‘Meat of the Factory to Meat of Pleasure’: Gendering Labor in Post-revolutionary Orizaba Mexico, 1915-1940”, to be presented at the North American Labor History Conference in October at Wayne State University. The other is a co-authored paper with Mexican church historian Kristina Boylan, titled “When the Sex of the Martyr Matters: Leonor Sanchez, Worker Culture, Catholic Activism, and State Responses in Orizaba, Veracruz, Mexico, 1937”, which will be presented at the International Congress of Americanists in July, 2012, in Vienna, Austria. We are grateful for Professor Swedberg’s continued involvement with the INS Program and are happy to announce that he will be teaching a section of the INS Senior Seminar next Fall.

This past summer Adjunct Professor **Peter F. Bell** continued his research in Thailand and Cambodia, work that will feed into the new INS course he will teach in the Spring: “Culture and Development of Southeast Asia”. He gave invited lectures on patriarchy and violence against women at two Thai universities, as well as at the 11th International Conference on Thai Studies, where he spoke on the (radical) populist Red Shirt movement, which had just been elected into power. He is working on a larger study of women in Cambodia, tentatively titled from “Goddess to Garment Worker”.

**Professor Theresa Kelleher**, Associate Professor of Asian Studies and World Religions, organized a panel on *Confucian Sagehood and Self-Cultivation: Diverse Approaches in Late Imperial China*. It was for a special joint meeting of the Association of Asian Studies (AAS) and the International Convention of Asian Scholars (ICAS) in celebration of 70 years of Asian Studies and was held in Honolulu, HI, from March 31-April 3, 2011. As one of the panelists, Prof. Kelleher presented a paper on 'It’s a Rocky Road to Sagehood but Confucius and Zhu Xi are there to Guide Me: Wu Yubi’s Use of a Diary to Navigate the Way.'
This semester we are shining the spotlight on two faculty members: Ellen Houston and Theresa Kelleher.

Ellen Houston, who is currently teaching a section of Introduction to Global Studies here at Manhattanville. Professor Houston is working on a Ph.D degree from the New School University and has been teaching in the field of economics for nearly 15 years. In addition to her work in economics, Professor Houston specializes in gender and development and has been employed in various sectors of the United Nations such as UNIFEM and UNICEF for the past decade. She has published a number of journal articles, books, policy papers and reports, all relating to her specialized fields. Although this is only her first semester at Manhattanville, Professor Houston has already been very involved in various campus activities, such as offering support and resources for the student clubs Coalition on Violence against Women and The Student Activist Coalition. In Spring 2012, Professor Houston will be teaching the required Global Economy course. We are so happy to have such a wonderful addition to the International Studies Program!

[written by Megan Angley]

Theresa Kelleher, who graduated from Manhattanville with a BA in Asian Studies, has a Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Cultures from Columbia University. She has been teaching at Manhattanville since 1992. As a member of both the World Religions and the Asian Studies departments, she has offered a wide range of courses on the history and religions of Asia. She has also been an active scholar in her field, with a large number of journal articles, book chapters, book reviews and conference paper presentations. Her research has often focused on women, both in traditional China and in China of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as on the Catholic missionary experience in China, resulting in presentations such as “How to be the Perfect Woman: Chinese Instructional Texts for Women”, and more recently, “Are you a Man or a Woman?: Maryknoll Sisters Explore New Paths for Chinese Women and Themselves”. Professor Kelleher recently joined the International Studies Committee and is now available as an INS advisor, especially for INS students with a concentration in Asian Studies. INS students should also note that Professor Kelleher is teaching a Spring ’12 course that can count as an INS elective: ASN 1045 Asian Religions. (INS students are allowed to take one 1000 level elective course.)
Study Abroad continues to be one of the most appealing ways for Mville INS majors to combine their global learning with real world experiences.

Ismarie Fernández—Senior Ismarie completed a Spring 2011 semester in South Africa. [See her article about this on page 10-11.]

Ana Carla Costa—Junior Ana is spending the Fall 2011 semester in Barcelona, Spain.

Julia Casazza—Junior Julia is also spending the Fall 2011 semester in Barcelona, Spain. [See an excerpt of Julia’s excellent writing — about films dealing with the struggle of immigrants to Europe — on page 9]

Alina Fisher—Junior Alina is spending the Fall 2011 semester in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Crystal Espejo—Junior Crystal is spending the Fall 2011 semester in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

We also want to wish the best of luck to the following INS students who will be studying abroad in Spring 2012:

Nicole Mele—Montpellier, France
Fatoumata Bah—Cape Town, South Africa
Maggie Mai—Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Our students are also engaged in Other Activities that reflect their independent thinking and their willingness to go above and beyond the normal requirements for the major. Here are some examples:

Rachel Townsend has been TAing in Prof. Bell’s Intro to Global Studies class.’

Fatoumata Bah and Agbogo Kalu continue their pivotal involvements with UJAMMA, Manhattanville’s African club.

Megan Angley and Christina Calbos have been doing an independent study with Prof. Bell on “Women in the Correctional System”. Their independent study requires them to volunteer on a weekly basis tutoring inmates enrolled in the Bedford Hills college program. [See their article about it on the next page.]

Kendra White, Christina Calbos and Megan Angley have been writing for the new and improved campus newspaper called “M” (formerly known as “Right World View”).

Kendra White recently applied for a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Mexico. This grant would place her in a Mexican high school for a year, where she would assist in the teaching of English and American studies. We are crossing our fingers for Kendra! [Kendra spent 4 weeks last summer on an intensive language program in Cuernavaca, Mexico. See her article about it on page 7!]
Internships

A number of Mville INS majors are involved in internships this semester. We urge all students to do at least one internship as part of their studies. The INS concentration in Global Justice and International Management actually require such an internship, but internships benefit students of all concentrations, helping them to see the applica-

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Internship (Summer 2011)

By Mina Popovic - Summer 2011

This summer I had the amazing opportunity to intern in the Protection Section of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Belgrade, Serbia. While participating in this organization I was able to expand my ethical and creative outlets. I had the opportunity to be involved in various activities of the protection section related to the local integration of refugees and those internally displaced as a result of the Balkan Wars of the mid 90’s. I also participated in field visits and external meetings. In addition I had the chance to assist the office in designing and producing a high quality draft of an information brochure about UNHCR’s activities in Serbia. I met many great and different people and was able to put all my languages to use (Serbian, English and French.) This experience is one that will stay with me forever and I encourage anyone who has the opportunity to do an internship to do so. It was very helpful to me in the long-run, and I learned many new things.

Women in the Correctional System/Bedford Women’s Prison

By Megan Angley and Christina Calbos

This semester Christa Calbos and I are participating in an independent study class with Professor Bell. Our independent study is on Women in the Correctional System. In addition to doing research and readings on our topic, our independent study also requires us to visit Bedford Women’s Prison once a week to tutor inmates enrolled in the prison college program where Professor Bell is currently teaching a course on “Women and development”. As tutors, Christa and I have been helping inmates on their research papers. Since the inmates have limited access to research databases and the internet, Christa and I have been doing research outside of the prison on each research topic put forward by the inmates. We then have to print the journal articles we find and bring them to the prison for the inmates to use towards their research.

This independent study has truly been an eye-opening experience because it has allowed us to realize exactly how important these college programs are to inmates. We have learned that college programs not only improve the standard of living for these women, they also help them adjust to the real-world once they are released from incarceration. It is interesting that in states such as New York, where different educational programs are implemented in prisons, inmates have lower rates of re-incarceration and the inmate populations have actually decreased in these states. This independent study has also taught me to appreciate the resources and freedom I have as a free, college student. In the prison, the women work all morning and afternoon for a wage between $0.25-$0.70/hour and then immediately after work, they begin night classes. Since they cannot access the internet and do not have a diverse library, they rely so much on us to bring them necessary research material.
Our current Seniors have been working very hard all semester to put together their senior theses. Below are the topics each senior is working on and some advice they have for INS Juniors. [They will all be presenting their theses on Wed., Dec. 7 at 7pm in the West Room, so save the date!]

**Mina Popovic** “Integration of the Somali Bantu refugees into Tanzania”

“As a senior the best advice I could give is to start early! For my senior thesis I chose a topic I love, and I made sure to find many different sources (videos, movies, books, articles, papers etc). I also made sure to write about a topic that I was able to observe personally, which helped a lot. The best thing for you upcoming seniors is to pick a topic that you are very passionate about and to make a detailed outline which will help you very much. I also suggest that you get as many drafts corrected as possible. Good luck, guys, don’t stress too much! It’s basically like putting together 3 or 4 essays.”

**Ismarie Fernandez** "Rural-Urban Migration in South Africa".

“Think about an issue that has really caught your attention in past classes or that has been your interest outside of the classroom. After you’ve picked a topic, start doing some background research to identify aspects that you might want to include in your thesis. The next step is to do formal scholarly research in order to find sources that you can use as references. Then outline how are you going to incorporate the information that you found into different chapters and work on writing these thoughtfully and consistently throughout the semester. Maintain good communication with your Senior Seminar professor on your progress and if you are unclear on how to organize a particular argument, go to the ARC for help. Do not stress out too much about the whole process; your Senior thesis is essentially about a topic that you are passionate about, and therefore it should be a positive, enjoyable and enriching experience to write it.”

**Kendra White** “The Effects of Globalization on Indigenous Women in Mexico.”

**Christa Calbos** “Masculinities in South Africa”

**Megan Angley** “Gender Bias in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Global Diseases”

“My advice to all Juniors is to make sure you do not leave for summer break without having an outline for your paper and a bibliography. Also, you should know exactly what is due for the first day of Senior Seminar and if you do not understand what is due, meet with Prof. Bell with any questions BEFORE you leave for summer break. Also, do not procrastinate!!”

**Rachel Townsend** "Ecological feminism as a critique of 'development'"

Heartfelt thanks to INS student assistant Megan Angley, who was invaluable in putting this Newsletter together.

Gabriele Wickert
My Summer in Mexico  by Kendra White

Sitting alone on the plane, I couldn’t help but wonder if I had made the right decision choosing to sign up for a four week intense Spanish language program in Cuernavaca, Mexico. After all, I barely knew any Spanish, had never been to the country, was staying with a women I had never met and almost everyone I had talked to prior to my trip had told me I was insane for choosing Mexico, a country at war with its drug cartels, as the place to learn Spanish. Even my family was reluctant to let me go. Although I had stood my ground, after landing in Mexico City and taking an hour and a half bus ride to Cuernavaca, I still doubted my decision. It wasn’t until I walked into my host-mom’s house and was warmly greeted by a room full of friendly people and a delicious home cooked Mexican meal that I started to relax. I soon found out that the kind faces that welcomed me were my host-mom’s entire family and that this type of gathering was rather typical for a Sunday lunch. Although it wasn’t easy sitting through a three-hour long meal during which not a single word of English was spoken, everyone was patient and understanding.

The rest of my trip was full of remarkable encounters and experiences. During the week, I had five hours of Spanish classes a day. My classmate, Patrick, was a sixty-five year old American reporter who had come to learn Spanish, inspired by his son who worked defending the rights of illegal immigrants in Minnesota. In addition to my classes, I also had the opportunity to explore a little bit of Mexico. On weekends, there were trips around the State of Morelos. I visited the ruins and pyramids of Xochicalco, the route of the convents and the beautiful colonial town of Taxco. One of my favorite trips was my visit to Chiapas with two friends I made during my stay in Cuernavaca. Chiapas is a state in the Southern part of Mexico and has a large indigenous population. My stay there was an eye-opening experience. While driving up the mountainous roads from the airport to San Cristobal de Las Casas I saw with my own eyes the beauty of the Chiapas landscape. Driving along the winding roads, big white clouds stretched across the valleys. We also drove by forests, rivers and numerous corn and cabbage fields. Although I saw that Chiapas was rich in natural beauty and resources, I also witnessed the extreme poverty many of the indigenous people are living in. The contrast was striking. Seeing and talking to some of the people in Chiapas allowed me to understand better some of the issues faced by the indigenous population.

In addition to my weekend trips, I had the opportunity to meet some amazing people. Interacting with the local population helped me both gain a better understanding of Mexican culture as well as improve my Spanish dramatically. Although my trip was short, I believe that I had a well-rounded experience in Mexico. It also gave me the desire to return and learn more. I encourage anyone who has the chance, to go abroad and experience different languages and cultures.
AFS 2021: Intro to African Studies II [African Studies/ Cultural Studies]
AFS 3030: Modern South Africa [African Studies]
ARH 3077: Mexican Muralists [Global Culture/ LA Studies]
ASN/WREL 1045: Asian Religions [Global Culture/ Asian Studies]
ASN/HIS 2022: History of Modern China [Asian Studies/ Global Culture]
ASN/WREL 2050: Religions of Japan [Asian Studies/ Global Culture]
ASN 3025/INS 3057: Culture and Change in SE Asia [Global Culture/ Asian Studies]
ECO 3016: Int’l Trade and Develop [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations/ Int’l Mgt]
ECO 3017: Int’l Finance and Global Economy [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations/ Int’l Mgt]
ENC 2072: Int’l Literature II [Global Culture]
** DTH 3313: Africana Performance [Global Culture]

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ASN/WREL 2050: Religions of Japan [Asian Studies/ Global Culture]
ASN 3025/INS 3057: Culture and Change in SE Asia [Global Culture/ Asian Studies]
ECO 3016: Int’l Trade and Develop [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations/ Int’l Mgt]
ECO 3017: Int’l Finance and Global Economy [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations/ Int’l Mgt]
ENC 2072: Int’l Literature II [Global Culture]
** DTH 3313: Africana Performance [Global Culture]

ECO 3035: Int’l Business [Int’l Mgt]
HIS 2053: Modern Russia [European Studies]
HIS 2076: Spies and Secret Agents [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations]
HIS 2085: History of Contemporary Africa [African Studies]
HIS 2090: Modern Ireland: 1600-present [European Studies]
HIS 3009: Senegal and Gambia [African Studies]
HIS 3035: The Third Reich [European Studies]
HIS 3094: Int’l Relations since 1945 [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations]
** HIS 3138: Atlantic Revolutions [European Studies/ LA Studies]
HOLC 3042: Literature of the Holocaust [Global Justice/ Global Culture]
MGT 2007: Int’l Management [Int’l Mgt]
POS 2015: Comparative Politics: Non-western [Int’l Poli-Econ Relations]

Information in brackets indicates the elective concentration to which the course applies.

A single asterisk (*) indicates a 1000 level course. Remember, only one elective can be 1000 level!

A double asterisk (**) indicates a new course that might not yet be available on Webadvisor, but that will be offered.

Looking for an INS elective for Spring ‘12? Give one of these a try!
Showcasing our Students’ Excellent Work

Manhattanville strives to create responsible leaders for a global community. In International Studies classes, our students work to decipher the world around us. The following excerpt is an exemplary instance of the wonderful work of our INS students.

JULIA CASAZZA (*13)

This is an excerpt from an essay Julia wrote for her Spring ‘11 class on World Cultures through Literature and Film. Julia is currently studying in Barcelona.

The films “Inch’Allah Dimanche” and “The Secret of the Grain”, along with Mehdi Charef’s novel also turned into film, Tea in the Harem, depict a myriad of dilemmas associated with the immigrant experience in Europe. Algerians and Tunisians relocated to France look at their new country as both mother and enemy, as protector and persecutor. By examining these three works of art we can see stories that reflect the immigrant experience from the point of view of male and female and mother and father. Explored are the issues facing the immigrants, the cultural implications, the role of history, the costs of assimilation and the potential for hope or optimism.

In the second half of the 20th century, there was a huge migration of people from less developed countries who resettled in central Europe in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Because so much of the male population had died in World War II, new immigrants were needed for labor. The influx of non-Europeans changed the population of these countries, making them much more diverse. There are three distinct stages of migration. The first stage was in the 1960s. People were recruited from northern Africa and from less developed European countries. The workers tended to be traditional with their cultural values and religion, isolating themselves from the populations of their new countries. The second stage of migration came in the 1980s, with the children of the first generation who were raised into the culture to which their parents migrated. Finally, the third stage of immigrants refers to the children of these children, occurring from the 1990s through to the present. Being the farthest removed, these citizens never experienced their home country like their parents or grandparents had and are the most assimilated into their new culture.

Immigrants from Tunisia and Algeria living in France face struggles of poverty and unemployment, which stem from prejudice and discrimination. In the 2007 film “The Secret of the Grain”, Mr. Slimani eked out a living for thirty-five years in a shipyard, working as second class cheap labor in Porte of Sete, all the while dreaming of opening a couscous restaurant. He keeps close ties to all of his wives and children and showers them all with mullet and rice, perhaps symbols of his Tunisian culture. He maintains hope in his future, but his present is like that of the caged bird with whom he shares his low-income apartment. Mr. Slimani supplies women with food, the force needed to sustain life, and in doing so he makes sense out of his daily drudgery. Though divorced, he continues to care for all the women in his life and these women in turn give him a reason to live. Even though he dies senselessly after finally opening his dream restaurant on the boat, he has still had a dream to fulfill. I find it interesting that this restaurant was on a boat, not on land, and perhaps symbolic of Mr. Slimani’s dilemma as an immigrant. Caught between two worlds, he never finds home in either world. Though France has been willing to use him as a cheap labor commodity, this same country has marginalized his identity. Mr. Slimani’s salvation can be found in the fact that he had a dream and that he lived to carry it out, despite thirty-five years of hardship and sacrifice.
My Semester Abroad in South Africa

By Ismarie Fernández

During the spring of 2011 I had the immense and wonderful privilege of studying abroad in South Africa. The four months I spent in this beautiful and diverse country studying its history, people and culture turned out to be a very moving, inspirational and enriching time for me. While I was there I took courses focused on the theme “Multiculturalism and Human Rights” at the School for International Training (SIT) in Cape Town. The classes were a lecture-seminar focused on the theme of the program, an anthropology research seminar, and a beginners course in Xhosa, one of the eleven official languages of South Africa and the native ethnic tongue of the great Nelson Mandela.

I also had the opportunity of staying in four host homes with families from distinct racial and cultural backgrounds. In my home stays I discovered that the South Africans I lived with, as well as their visitors, friends and neighbors, were all very welcoming, warm and hospitable. My first home stay was in Langa, a township or ghettoized community in the outskirts of Cape Town that is predominantly inhabited by Xhosa speaking black South Africans. In the street where I stayed there were lots of toddlers who came to play with my host brother, and since most of them did not speak English yet, I was able to practice the Xhosa I was learning with them. The youngsters nicknamed me “lungu”, and I did not know what its meaning was, but I got used to responding to it since they were constantly and excitedly trying to get my attention using this word. Some days had passed before my host sister heard them and asked me incredulously: “Do you really let them call you ‘whitie’? ”. Upon hearing what the term meant I was taken aback because, although I have fair skin, I do not consider myself to be Caucasian, since I was born and raised in Puerto Rico and I come from a mixed race family.

After the township home stay, I stayed in a Xhosa speaking rural village called Tshabo, where people lived in very small concrete and brick houses with no toilets. Despite these limitations I adjusted to circumstances different from the ones I was brought up in.
This village environment was in stark contrast to the privileged setting of my next homestay, which was in Stellebosch, a vineyard and winery town that is mainly populated by Afrikaaners -- Dutch descent Whites.

My last homestay was in Bo Kaap, an area in downtown Cape Town, where mostly Muslim people of Malaysian, Indian and Middle Eastern extraction reside.

Finally, during the last month of the program, I did fieldwork and academic research in order to write a forty page paper. I chose to go back to Tshabo to investigate and explore more in detail their sources of income and migration patterns, since I had noticed the first time I stayed there that the village was impoverished because of low income and unemployment, and that most of its inhabitants went to work in urban areas.

Throughout my entire stay in the country, South Africans, especially black and mixed ones, thought I was not only “white”, but also affluent, just because of the color my skin. I understood through this experience of being automatically placed in a racial category that apartheid— the segregationist regime that existed in South Africa from 1948 to 1994 and that separated races by place of residence and in public spaces— is still psychologically prevalent in the mindsets of many South Africans today.

All in all, my time in South Africa enabled me to learn about the country’s society, history, politics and mainly about the culture of several of its ethnic and racial groups, which helped me to reaffirm my own ethnic and cultural identity as a Latina, a Puerto Rican and a person of color. Also, this experience allowed me to shatter some common prejudices or misconceptions about Africa being a vastly black, and rampantly poor continent with little or no ethnic diversity or economic prosperity. For these reasons I am deeply grateful for the time that I spent in South Africa, a multicultural country that has been transformed politically and has been slowly but progressively striving to promote equality among its hospitable, kind-hearted and extraordinary people.
It would not be fair to write about my first impressions of SAIS Bologna without first talking about our host city. It did not take me a long time to realize that Bologna is magical. After a 24-hour flight from Santo Domingo to Milan, I ended up taking the slow train to Bologna just to talk to the Italian friends I had made on my way. In Italy you don’t need to go out of your way to meet people and have a good laugh, even if the most you can do is communicate in broken Italian.

There are some cities that just “have something” -- and Bologna is one of them. Writing this would be much easier if I could articulate what makes Bologna special. But you see, this is the thing with great cities: you can’t simply explain why everyone falls in love with them. Maybe it is the great food, the friendly people, the beautiful scenery or the wine that is present at every gathering. Whatever it is, I could not be happier being here.

Now let me turn to what has impressed me the most: my peers. I feel very lucky being part of such a brilliant class. On my first night, I shared dinner with a restaurant entrepreneur, a former aide on Capitol Hill, an expert on the Balkans, a hedge fund analyst and a former social civilian consultant for Afghanistan. After listening to what my classmates have done, I feel confident saying that we have it all.

Our class is made up of people from a wide variety of backgrounds, who will use their SAIS education to become leaders in their fields. Since I arrived here, stimulating conversation has invariably accompanied the evening wine. There are so many perspectives to learn from. As one of my roommates would say, “It’s a case of mutual admiration.” You cannot help being in awe of my peers’ thrilling experiences.

Diversity is the key. Having a cappuccino can turn into a political economy class just by listening to what people from so many places have to say. This, coupled with their array of interests, enriches the experience. But as diverse as our backgrounds are, there are three common interests: passion for learning, traveling and food. The latter is one good reason to end up in Bologna.

Last year, when I was applying to SAIS, Bologna alumni would spend hours talking to me about how fascinating their experiences had been. I could not quite understand. Two weeks after arriving in this magical city, I’m finally starting to understand why this was the best year of their lives.
Anna Nadal ('10) is spending 2011-12 in Bologna with Johns Hopkins SAIS. See her article about her experiences there on the preceding-page.

November 9, 7:15 PM: “Future of the Major” — A get-together of all majors and others interested in the INS Program, to discuss the major — what it is and how it might be strengthened (new courses? new concentrations? new extra-curricular opportunities?) All INS majors are strongly encouraged to attend. Discussion led by INS student reps Megan Angley and Kendra White — French Parlor

November 14, 7:00PM: “Careers for Causes” Panel—Wondering what kind of careers you can go into with an INS degree? Come to this event and listen to a panel of professionals working for various NGOs.—West Room

November 18, 6:00PM: Film Showing of “Think Global Act Rural (Solutions locales pour un désordre global)”- This film invites audiences to discover new farming systems, successful production techniques which not only produce better yield, but also repair environmental damages and offer better life and health to the communities, while ensuring perennial food security.—Brownson 109 (Sponsored by the French Department, the Castle Scholars Program, the Global Citizenship Program, and the Duchesne Center).

December 7, 7:00PM: Senior Theses Presentations (Required for all International Studies majors)—East Library