As the academic year 2012-2013 comes to an end, 13 students from the International Studies Program (INS) will graduate in May. These seniors presented their theses over two days in December in Reid Castle (see pages 6-7). They did a superb job articulating their ideas and answering questions from the audience that included family, friends, fellow students, and faculty on various subjects with which they had become expert over the course of the semester. They were guided in that endeavor by their senior seminar professors Greg Swedberg and Ellen Houston.

This graduating class of INS seniors is composed of enterprising self-starters. At the INS Forum on March 27, 2013 they shared their internship, study abroad, service learning, and conference attendance experiences with INS Juniors, Sophomores, and members of the INS Faculty Committee. It was an impressive list of accomplishments.

The INS program has sponsored and co-sponsored several events this semester. From February 25th through March 7th we collaborated with other departments to organize an International Film Festival (see article on page 15). The INS Program is one of the co-sponsors of a “Non-Profit Career Networking Night” organized by the Center for Career Development on April 18th from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the West Room of the Reid Castle. INS majors will get a chance to meet and network with professionals from the non-profit world.

Other important activities include the UN DPI/NGO Thursday-morning briefings organized by the Duchesne Center. Several INS majors - Alexis Moore ’14, Cristal Espejo ’13, Agbogo Kalu ’13, and Karina Edouard ’15 - have participated in these briefings (see article on page 16). I attended two briefings. The first on March 14, 2013, “Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: The Role of Civil Society and Member States,” discussed the need for civil society to intervene in a timely manner to prevent future genocides. The second briefing, held on March 18, 2013, was entitled, “Forever Free: Celebrating Emancipations.” Panelists commemorated the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We hope that next year more students will take advantage of our proximity to NYC to attend these highly educational briefings.

In the realm of the curricular, the INS Program is in the process of reexamining and reassessing some of the Core courses for the INS major. It will be the subject of discussion at the next INS Faculty Committee Meeting on April 24, 2013. In addition, several professors – Jimmy Jones of World Religions and African Studies, Mohamed Mbodj of History and African Studies, Nada Halloway of English, David Gutman of History, and Deborah Saleeby-Mulligan of Art History – met this semester to brainstorm the creation of a possible minor (and INS concentration) in Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENA).

Finally, the INS Program would to thank Professors Nimish Adhia of Economics, Finance & Management, Ellen Houston of International Studies, Larry Krute of the School of Education, Sarah Murray of Political Science, David Gutman, Greg Swedberg, and Irene Whelan of History, and Gabriele Wickert of German and International Studies for teaching INS core courses this year.

—Binita Mehta, INS Director
International Studies Newsletter

Our INS Faculty

WHO WE ARE

The INS Faculty Committee is comprised of:

Lawson Bowling (History)
James Bryan (Economics/Finance/Management)
John Carney (Political Science)
George Castellanos (Spanish/Latin American Studies)
Nada Halloway (English)
Jimmy Jones (World Religions/African Studies)
Theresa Kelleher (Asian Studies)
Laurence Krute (Education)
Mohamed Mbojdj (History/African Studies)
Binita Mehta (Director, INS/French)
Eric Slater (Sociology & Anthropology)
Greg Swedberg (History/Latin American Studies)
Rev. Wil Tyrrell (World Religions/Duchesne Center)
Irene Whelan (History/Irish Studies)
Gabriele Wickert (INS/German)

Marina Adese/ Meryl Roux/ Karina Edouard (Student Representatives)

[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 the Director, or with one of the student representatives listed above]

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

For more information on the INS Program, please contact INS Director Binita Mehta at binita.mehta@mville.edu

The INS Program would like to thank Program Assistant and graduating senior Marina Adese for her creativity and hard work in the writing, editing, design, and layout of this Newsletter!
Faculty Spotlight:
Honoring Professor Mohamed Mbodj
By: Marina Adese

Professor Mohamed Mbodj was always attracted to stories. Ever since he can remember, the women around him told and retold accounts of their family history, from tales of past familial princesses, to stories of battles, marriages and their rural roots. But more than that, they always told him stories of powerful women, just like them. In the Senegalese culture in which Professor Mbodj was brought up, not only is memory a matrilineal responsibility, but one inherits power from the mother. As he explained, “you belong to your mother’s family.” Thus, listening to these stories of his strong female ancestors paved the way for his desire to study History. Looking back, Mbodj considers himself both lucky to have met his great-grandmother and to have inherited some aspects of his mother’s “capacity to remember everything” and to tell stories so precisely.

Mbodj’s career in history began at the University of Dakar, his hometown and the capital of Senegal, where he majored in Medieval Studies with an emphasis on Middle Eastern Studies. When he had completed his undergraduate studies, Professor Mbodj received a generous offer from the University of Paris, a university associated with the University of Dakar, to begin his Masters. All expenses would be paid, on one condition: he was to study and consequently write his dissertation on Africa’s Economic and Social History. The University of Paris VII (Jussieu campus) was in the process of helping build a larger faculty in Dakar, to begin his Masters. All expenses would be paid, on one condition: he was to study and consequently write his dissertation on Africa’s Economic and Social History. The University of Paris VII (Jussieu campus) was in the process of helping build a larger faculty in Dakar, and needed someone to fill that position in the future, and Professor Mbodj accepted. On July 1, 1978—the very last possible day of the academic calendar—he defended his thesis and in October of the same year began his professional career as an Assistant Professor of Economic and Social History and of Contemporary Africa at the University of Dakar.

By 1981, Professor Mbodj was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor at the University. Yet, his work in Senegal went beyond his role as a professor. Dakar was, and still is, a hub of intellectual life. During the 1980s, he ran a monthly TV program that was combined with a weekly radio show with the purpose of, as he put it, “making history public.” From the mid 1980s to 1992, as the EO of a cooperative, he supervised the building of private housing for professors and their families of the University of Dakar because he wanted to “create a place where families would grow together.” Mbodj also spent the 1988-89 academic year at Michigan State University as Senior Fulbright Scholar, the first time he ever taught in the US.
Early in 1992, Mbodj received an offer from Columbia University to become a visiting Associate Professor of History there, something that would change his life forever. The offer came at a challenging time for Mbodj. He was Chair of the History Department, but, due to circumstances beyond his control, funding for the Department had been cut by 40%. At the same time, enrollments had increased and, almost overnight, he went from having roughly 180 history majors to about 400. At the same time, he was deputy editor of a history journal (Revue Sénégalaise d'Histoire) while leading the establishment of a Laboratory for Historical Demography. Physically and mentally stressed, Mbodj accepted the offer to work at Columbia University in New York City, but thought he would only stay for two to three years. His wife and three children stayed behind in Dakar as he was still the Chair of the History Department there and maintained his role as advisor to many of his students: “I thought I would rest, and then go back,” Mbodj added.

But Professor Mbodj was mistaken. Columbia offered him another three-year extension in 1996, and this time he accepted and also brought his family along. Their oldest daughter was starting high school and he and his wife were already thinking of college opportunities. “Instead of getting better, the educational system [in Senegal] was getting worse due to repeated strikes following the IMF dictated budget cuts,” Mbodj reminisced. Although he was offered three more years to continue teaching at Columbia, by 1999 Professor Mbodj became “tired of extensions.” Simultaneously, he discovered through a former adjunct at Manhattanville College, who was finishing his dissertation at Columbia, that the college was looking for an African Studies historian. This was the beginning of his journey at Manhattanville College.

Working in a small college environment was initially an adjustment for Professor Mbodj, whose experience had been in large, research universities. Mbodj explains that these adjustments were mostly positive as Manhattanville, a four-year liberal arts college, has a “different mentality among colleagues and a different variety of students.” Even the campus is different: “It’s cozy, you can walk into any office, including the President’s office if you need to, which of course is very different from where I came from.” He felt comfortable enough to decline an offer to consider joining Ohio State University in 2007. He started as an Associate Professor in 1999, he was tenured in 2001, and soon became full professor—stabilizing professional life in about six years.

At Manhattanville, Professor Mbodj considers the face-to-face interaction with students incredibly rewarding because he “likes feeling [his] impact on students” at an individual level. Here, Mbodj knows he is making a difference through a more hands-on approach. He enjoys the freedom to teach in his areas of interest, to create new courses, and even to teach medieval history, which he rarely had the opportunity to do. He has also led study tours in Senegal, Italy and Brazil for Manhattanville students. He did the same for the University of Louisville, where he led study trips to Paris, London, Morocco, and Senegal. He is hoping to conduct another trip to Brazil (Spring Break 2014) and to Senegal (Summer 2014), if enough students express interest.

As for the International Studies Program, his own personal life experience makes his classes appropriate for the Program precisely because of their international perspective. In the French educational system, students are trained with a broader, international outlook on history and he tries to bring this into every class he designs. In his view, the INS Program creates a sense of empathy among its students and helps them understand the challenges that lie ahead of them as they go out into the world. Mbodj sees that this international perspective is exactly what “the College was set out to be by the people who started it… [it is] part of our heritage and what we need to do.”
My experience at my internship with the Westchester County Human Rights Commission (WCHRC) has been life changing. My education and all the classes that I took in College came together for me at the WCHRC. By this I mean that, for the first time, I was on the front lines able to help real human beings resolve real-life problems. I consider this to be a great responsibility and have learned a great deal about myself, my future, and the world around me working at the WCHRC. Since my internship was a 4th credit option, awarded by the Duchesne Center, connected to my Spanish course on Latino Communities in New York State, I worked mainly with the Latino population of White Plains.

I have always held family in high regard. My experience working with Latino families at the Human Rights Commission only reinforced that feeling. In Latin American cultures it is common to see the extended family come together for many activities. Grandparents and grandchildren and everyone in between do things together. Teenagers of Latin American descent do not seem embarrassed to be seen with their families. In my own experience, I have at times favored independence over being with family. As I have grown older, I can see how the family can be the glue that holds people together, that gives them direction, that grounds them. I have learned to appreciate the value of family from my work at the WCHRC.

What have I learned about myself? The answers are many. First of all, I learned that to work in an office involves multi-tasking. At the internship, I had to answer phones, conduct on-the-spot translations from Spanish into English, and communicate with compassion with those who came to the Commission for help. I have learned that I care much more than I had imagined about the problems of discrimination that people brought to our office. I learned that I needed to bring to bear all of my educational and emotional sensitivity to handle the challenges of each new day. I also learned that I had to think with all parts of my brain in order to be effective. As I graduate and move onto the next phase in my life, I will always carry with me the lessons I learned during my internship at the WCHRC.
This past fall semester thirteen International Studies seniors presented their theses to fellow students, INS majors, and faculty on December 5 & 8, 2012 respectively. Presentations were divided over two days, and there was never a dull moment on both evenings. The soon-to-be-graduating seniors enticed audience members with a plethora of ideas, controversial topics, and witty, yet practical, approaches to solving many of today’s—and tomorrow’s—international political, social, and economic quandaries.

The presenters’ theses covered issues and events spanning every continent. From the rich coasts of Africa, presenters enlightened audience members on the practice of female genital mutilation in Western Africa to the power of forgiveness in post-genocide Rwanda. In Asia, gender roles in 1970s Japanese comic books gave social relevance and meaning to modern-day gender relations. Hip hop was shown to be a useful tool in the social transformation of Brazil’s urban cities, while another thesis sought to highlight the country’s simultaneous economic growth and regional inequalities.
In Europe, Sweden’s cyclical rise as a financial and economic vanguard was juxtaposed with Kosovo’s perpetuation of male social dominance. It is clear that a lot of time, effort, and preparation went into developing all of the topics, but much credit goes to senior thesis advisors Professors Gregory Swedberg and Ellen Houston.

As I sat in the audience while some of the final presentations were underway, I watched how the professors looked on with joy and pride as the students’ hard work shone through. The students themselves felt a sense of accomplishment mingled with relief that it was finally over. Though graduation was only a few short months away, it was a bittersweet moment.

Their last four years at Manhattanville College all seemed to be relived in those short twenty minutes; it was a mutual feeling shared by every graduating senior present. The journey, however, does not end for any of the INS seniors. It is only just beginning.

Warm and sincere congratulations to graduating seniors Marina Adese, Andreas Argeros, Fatoumata Bah, Julia Casazza, Daniella Chinchilla Valdes, Ana Carla Costa, Cristal Espejo, Alina Fisher, Adelina Hasanaj, Agbogo Kalu, Maggie Mai, Nicole Mele, and Nicolle Ocasio on a job well done!
During the spring semester of 2012, I had the immense and wonderful privilege of studying abroad in Montpellier, France. The five months that I spent in this beautiful and culturally diverse city in the south of France ended up being a very moving, inspirational, and enriching experience for me.

While I was there I took courses that focused on all facets of the French language, including grammar and phonetics. I also had the opportunity to take university courses in Art History and European Economics. These classes not only greatly improved my comprehension and speaking abilities in French, but enabled me to meet many wonderful students from different cultural backgrounds from around the world.

Studying and living in France gave me a glimpse of how the world is globally connected and interrelated. I also had the opportunity to travel throughout southern France, Spain, and Italy. Something about exploring the unknown has always appealed to me, and my strong desire to explore the world around me and to learn and experience a foreign people and culture remained with me during my semester abroad. My travels took me to places that I had only dreamed of visiting, such as the Vatican in Rome and the Eiffel Tower in Paris. These experiences will surely stay with me for the rest of my life, making my study abroad experience unforgettable and one that I will greatly cherish.
Alumni Update

Francis Magnotta (‘09) After graduating from Manhattanville College Francis went to work for the state government of New York for several years in the capital district in a few departments, including the New York State Assembly, Department of Taxation & Finance, and the Bureau of Maternal & Child Health. Soon after, he moved to NYC to work at the United Nations as a political advisor. It was during this time that he became involved mostly with legislation regarding the Euro crisis. After a year at the UN, this fall Francis will be going to work for the European Union (EU) in Brussels, Belgium as an administrator for one of the offices that handles legislation at the EU. His work requires a lot of interaction with native German speakers, so this summer, he will be returning to the Goethe Institute in Berlin, Germany to perfect his German. However, since most EU employees speak French, he will also start French classes at the Alliance Française in Brussels, Belgium this fall.

Megan Angley (‘12) is currently at New York University studying for her Masters degree in Public Health, with a concentration in Community and International Health. This past January Megan took a study abroad course in London on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition to going to school full time, she is also working full time for a neurologist who is affiliated with NYU Medical Center.

Andrea Thomen (‘10) is currently pursuing an Masters of Science in Conservation Biology at SUNY-ESF (College of Environmental Science and Forestry). Andrea is conducting research on birds in organic cacao farms in the Dominican Republic, identifying challenges for research, management and conservation. She is also working in collaboration with a local NGO called Grupo Accion Ecologica, the National Aviary, and the Ryan Lab for this project. Last but not least, Andrea has a Teaching Assistant position and leads workshops for undergraduate students.
Mina Popovic ('12) is currently a teacher at the International Nursery School in her hometown of Belgrade, Serbia. While this is not something she planned on doing as a career, Mina thought that this would be a perfect transitional job that combined her English-speaking skills with her love for children. In the near future, she plans to do volunteer work for NGO’s in Belgrade. She is also planning on attending graduate school in September 2013 and has applied to a Masters program at the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences (FMG) at the University of Amsterdam.
FALL ‘13 INS COURSES

**INS 1008:** Introduction to Global Studies (2 sections) — Core requirement

**INS 2001:** World Cultures Through Literature and Film — Core Requirement

**INS 2050:** Environmental Geography — Elective [Global Culture/Global Justice]

**INS 3056:** Politics/Art of German Cinema — Elective [European Studies/Global Culture]

**INS 3003:** INS Senior Seminar — Core Requirement

Electives from Other Departments

- AFS 2019: Intro to African Studies I [African Studies]
- AFS 2082: Ancient African History [African Studies] (Cross-listed with HIS 2082)
- AFS 3098: African in World Politics [African Studies/Poli-Eco Rel.]
- *ANTH 1050: Cultural Anthropology [Global Culture]
- ANTH 3025: Global Health [Global Culture/Global Justice]
- ARH 2020: Northern Renaissance Art [European Studies]
- ARH 2025: Survey of African Art [African Studies]
- ARH 2042: Art of Civilization’s Cradle [Global Culture]
- ARH 3077: Mexican Murals [Latin American Studies]
- ASN 2033: History of Traditional China [Asian Studies]
- ASN 2034: Religions of India [Asian Studies] (Cross-listed with WREL 2034)
- ASN 3011: Seminar on Buddhism [Asian Studies]
- *BIO 1016: Endangered Earth [Global Culture/Global Justice]
- BIO 2007: Current Environmental Problems [Global Cult/Global Jus.]
- COMM 3046: Convergent Media / Divergent Voices [Global Culture]
- COMM 3070: Media Ethics [Global Justice]
- *CSCH 1050: International Museums/Gallery Studies [Global Culture]
- *CSCH 1060: Music and Politics [Global Culture]
- CSCH 3211: Genocide II: Gendercide [Global Culture/Global Justice]
- DTH: 3202: Survey of Dramatic Literature I [European Studies/Global Culture]
- ECO 3017: Global Finance [Poli-Eco Rel]
- ECO 3018: Economics of Developing Countries [Poli-Eco Rel]
- *ENG 1017: Intro to Postcolonial Literature [Global Culture]
- ENG 2077: Caribbean Literature [Global Culture / LA Studies]
- ENG 3107: Writing Africa: Col/Post Col [African Studies/Global Cult]
- FRN 3003: Advanced French Language and Culture [European Studies] (Taught in French)
- FRN 3005: French Cinema: From the nouvelle vague to the cinéma de banlieue [European Studies] (Taught in English)
- GER 3009: Politics/Art of German Cinema [European Studies/Global Culture] (Taught in English)
- *HIS 1018: History Modern Middle East/N Africa [African Studies /Poli-Eco Rel]
- *HIS 1025: Indigenous and Colonial Latin America [LA Studies]
- *HIS 1034: World History I: Before 1500 [Global Culture]
- HIS 1036: World History II: After 1500 [INS Core Requirement]
- *HIS 1050: Traditional Europe [European Studies]
- HIS 2033: Twentieth-Century Europe [European Studies]
- HIS 2030: Italy since 1800 [European Studies]
- HIS 2067: History of Traditional China [Asian Studies] (Cross-listed with ASN 2033)
- HIS 2082: Ancient African History [African Studies] (Cross-listed with AFS 2082)
- HIS 3071: World War II Revisited [European History]
- HIS 3094: International Relations since 1945 [Poli-Eco Rel]
- HIS 3103: Topics Modern Irish History [European History]
- HIS 3106: Violence/Resistance in Latin America [LA Studies]
- HOLC 3036: The Holocaust in Film [Global Culture/Global Justice]
- HOLC 3037: The Holocaust and Culture [Global Cult/Global Justice]
- ITL 3009: Fascism in Literature and Film [European Studies/Global Culture] (Taught in Italian)
- MGT 2006: International Marketing [International Management]
- MUH 2011: Survey of Western Music I [European Studies]
- MUH 3011: Music of the 20th Century [European Studies]
- PHL 2067: 20th Century Philosophy [European Studies]
- PHL 3042: Ethics and Social Responsibility [Global Justice]
- *POS 1037: International Politics I [Poli-Eco Rel] (INS Core Requirement)
- POS 2011: Comparative Politics [Poli-Eco Relations]
- POS 2042: Model UN [Poli-Eco Rel]
- POS 3007: Religion and Politics [Global Culture/Poli-Eco Rel]
- POS 3012: Environmental Politics [Poli-Eco Rel/Global Culture/Global Justice]
- POS 3104: Radical Politics [Poli-Eco Rel]
- SOC 2000: Environmental Sociology [Global Culture]
- SOC 2050: Mass Media and Society [Global Culture]
- SOC 3000: Latin American Social Movements [LA Studies/Global Justice]
- SOC 3007: Globalization and Social Change [Global Culture/Global Justice]
- SPN 3010: Latin American Novel and Film [LA Studies] (Taught in Spanish)
- SPN 3016: Latin American Culture and Arts [LA Studies] (Taught in Spanish)
- SPN 3027: Spanish Women Writers [European Studies] (Taught in Spanish)
- SPN 3029: Latino Communities in the US [LA Studies] (Taught in Spanish)
- SPN 3041: 20th Century Spanish Poetry [LA Studies] (Taught in Spanish)
- WREL 2034: Religions of India [Global Culture] (cross-listed with ASN2034)
- *WREL 1014: Intro to World Religions [Global Culture]
- WREL 2039: Religion, Reason, and Ethics [Global Justice]
- WREL 3008: Christianity [Global Culture]
- WREL 3013: Seminar on Buddhism [Global Culture] (cross-listed with ASN 3011)
- WREL 3054: Rel Advocacy Peace: Mid East [Global Culture/ Global Justice]
- WREL 3095: Race, Religion and Culture [Global Culture]

An asterisk (*) indicates a 100 level course. Remember, only one elective can be at the 1000 level!
On the 28th of November 2012, Manhattanville alumna Kitty Pilgrim (‘76) gave a brief lecture in the Ophir Room in Reid Castle about her journey from renowned CNN anchor to novelist. Pilgrim stressed the importance of the crossover between journalism and fiction, insisting they were not too far apart; she illustrated this by asserting that “journalists write the first draft of history.”

Pilgrim's lecture had the audience transfixed as she told of the many places she had visited all over the world and important events she had covered, including the 9/11 attacks.

Ms. Pilgrim went on to say that the move from news to fiction was almost seamless for her. She was offered a book contract while working for CNN and was confused about what to write. After a 13-hour day at work, she turned on the television and a famous crime author explained that she would write her books “picture by picture by picture.” Immediately, it hit Pilgrim that for 25 years that was what she had done at CNN. Her next major decision was to decide between writing crime or thrillers, and she chose the thriller thinking that it was bigger thus better!

To give her book an edge, Pilgrim added a strong element of romance, as she believes in “writing what you want to read.” Her heroine is a strong, smart woman much like Pilgrim herself. During the lecture, through various clips Pilgrim captured how much research went into these novels. From visiting the Arctic in the “frozen north” to Egypt, Pilgrim treated this novel like she would a CNN report, making sure all the facts were right.

Pilgrim’s lecture was incredibly enlightening, and she graciously and with good humor met with students and professors who were eager to ask her questions at the reception that followed. Pilgrim closed with a saying that draws from her novel: “Whatever you end up doing, always hope for the unexpected, which will lead you to explore new worlds.”
On November 17, 2012, the Berman Student Center was the center of activity on campus. Students and faculty alike congregated for a breathtaking eight hours to engage, debate, and listen to student presentations and guest speakers.

Everyone who participated in the Sixth Annual Human Rights Awareness Day (HRAD), could attest to its success. What makes this annual event so special is that students and faculty come together and teach one another about human rights issues of our day. On this particular day, professors gazed on with amazement and interest as classes such as Environmental Sociology, taught by faculty and HRAD Committee member Professor Elizabeth Cherry of the Sociology & Anthropology Department, held poster presentations.

Topics for the poster sessions included: Homeless in the United States by Angela Gigliotti, Stella Schwuchow and Shahrazan Isa; Acid Attacks on Women by Alexis Moore; and Community Garden Project at Manhattanville College by Alexandra Paulino and Jeanine Strother. It is worth noting that both Ms. Alexis Moore and Ms. Shahrazan Isa are International Studies Majors.

Also on the schedule were several guest speakers who were invited to the event to share their stories and human rights violation experiences. This list included the following Jeffrey Bortz, author of Revolution within the Revolution, Cotton Textile Workers and the Mexican Labor Regime, and Aarushi Bhandari, a senior at Manhattanville who participated in a panel discussion on Food and Human Rights along with Visiting Professor Christopher Pappas of the Biology Department.

However, there was one speaker in particular who caught many people’s attention. Audience members listened attentively as Jay Sommer, a Holocaust survivor, spoke movingly about the trials and tribulations he faced in a Nazi concentration camp. He touched the audience with his optimism, compassion, and willingness to forgive.

After a short intermission for refreshments and poetry, HRAD attendees concluded their evening with the eye-opening, yet heart-wrenching, film, “It’s a Girl.” In short, the film engaged viewers about the perils that female unborn and infant children face in India and China as a result of their gender. Female babies are subject to abortion, murder, and abandonment more frequently than their male counterparts.

Human Rights Awareness Day has come and gone. The information shared on November 17, 2012 should not be just stories or mere statistics that fade away only to resurface again next fall semester. These stories and statistics should shock and fuel greater awareness and push for change. The International Studies major is designed to prepare students with the knowledge and tools necessary to tackle many of today and tomorrow’s challenges including attacks on human rights all over the world.

The INS Program is rife with progressive students and faculty who, among other things, have made it their goal to examining these perplexing questions and to finding solutions to them. It would be a fun twist to the annual event should International Studies majors play a more active role. Majors could organize panel discussions, or present ideas during poster sessions. It would also be a great opportunity to showcase the INS program to undeclared Freshmen and Sophomores. Those that have a true passion for studying today’s human rights violations would get a firsthand experience by witnessing INS majors in action.

Nevertheless, HRAD has quickly become one of Manhattanville College’s most exciting annual events. It is a time when students and faculty from every major department unite with a common interest—broadening one’s knowledge about global and domestic human rights issues. HRAD truly encompasses Manhattanville College’s spirit and mission.

By: Karina Edouard (‘15)
ICD, or the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, hosts conferences and seminars around the world to educate people about the importance of intercultural dialogue and the use of “soft power” to achieve global peace. The ICD Annual Conference on Cultural Diplomacy was held in Washington, D.C. from January 9-13, 2013. The theme of the conference was “Options on the Table: Soft Power, Intercultural Dialogue & the Future of US Foreign Policy.” I was selected by the International Studies Program as a student participant to the conference. I had never been to Washington D.C., so my adventure began before I arrived at the conference. My immersion was underway even before I attended the first session. My hotel roommates were not from America, nor were they students. One was from Singapore, spoke basic French and English and worked as a textbook reviewer. The other was a journalist from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and spoke only French.

The conference was packed with sessions and question and answer segments. Starting at 9 or 10 a.m. every morning students, professors, diplomats, journalists, and professionals came to participate in the conference. The sessions ranged from presentations by Ambassadors on their respective country’s use of cultural diplomacy, to paper and research presentations by students. There were also plenty of opportunities to socialize and network with others at the conference. I met with many attendees and was able to obtain business cards from many people who worked in non-profit world and in governmental and non-governmental agencies in the Washington D.C. area.

One interesting speaker was Undersecretary Tara D. Sonenshine. She works for the US State Department in area of Public Diplomacy. Her lecture was entitled, “Leveraging Culture and Diplomacy in the Age of Information.” She made a powerful comment stating that United States represent the ultimate cultural experiment because of the incredible diversity of its population. She also explained the reason why so many people from all over the world focus on the US, because for them it continues to represent freedom and opportunity for which they hunger.

Ambassadors from various countries spoke at the conference. In some of the sessions they focused on their own countries while in others directed their remarks to more general global issues. For example, the Ambassador of Estonia to Washington D.C., Marina Kaljurand, discussed specifics about how Estonia conducts cultural diplomacy. She even showed a YouTube video made by a Canadian couple who had hosted an Estonian girl at their home in Canada. After hearing stories about the country they decided to visit Estonia and eventually turned their entire experience into a short video. It was a concrete example of the power of cultural diplomacy.

Several presentations discussed the Middle East and its relationship with the US. There were several sessions that examined other topics as well such as, “Diplobamacy,” “Cultural Exchange and the Visual Arts,” or “Reclaiming Soft Power’s Good Name.” The conference organizers hosted dinners during the first two nights so participants and presenters could get to know each other better. During one of those dinners, I was able to talk to Mark Donfried who founded ICD and on another occasion, I was able to introduce myself to Undersecretary Sonenshine. The conference provided me with a wonderful opportunity to learn and to network in an international atmosphere.
Confronting the Past: An International Film Festival co-sponsored by the INS Program

By: Marina Adese (‘13)

For eight days in February and March 2013, the International Studies Department co-sponsored an International Film Festival, “Confronting the Past.” The films selected from all over the world dealt with how people confront their historical and cultural pasts. The film festival was funded by a generous donation from Manhattanville alum Sue Weil (‘10).

Manhattanville College faculty, students, and alumni led post-screening discussions, as the Berman Center Theater filled up each night at 7 p.m. with students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Culinary specialties from the different regions portrayed in the films were served before and after the screenings.

The films dealt with many topics including the Armenian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, post-Communist Germany, and the Israel-Palestinian issue. On three evenings, short films were screened before the main feature. The first was the première of a documentary made by Professor Alkananda Mukerji of the Manhattanville College Studio Art Department. Others were made by Manhattanville College film students and students from the Ciné Institute in Jacmel, Haiti.

On a personal level, I was not only pleased with the number of people who attended the screenings, but will never forget some of the films and conversations we had, especially a talk given by a Manhattanville alum and survivor of the Rwandan genocide, Yvette Rugasaguhunga (‘07). Her words on the family members she lost, the pain that she and all survivors feel, the pain they still feel, lingering health issues, the historical background that led to the genocide, and her fortunate journey to the United States were simultaneously incredibly sad, heartfelt, inspiring, and humbling. The audience listened to her explain how she copes on a daily basis with her memories and how she believes there is no such thing as “moving on,” but only finding a way to learn to live with such sadness and memories. While what happened to her remains unimaginable for the majority of us, her insight into her own grief was unforgettable.
UN DPI/NGO Briefings

By: Alexis Moore (‘14)

The United Nations is the most representative inter-governmental organization in the world today and relies on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to act out many of the details of its plans and goals. Manhattanville College has NGO status with the United Nations and is invited to attend weekly briefings on global issues organized for NGOs by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI). These briefings help NGOs understand where their assistance is most needed and to witness the effectiveness of other NGOs. I have attended these weekly briefings, organized by the Duchesne Center, since my freshman year at Manhattanville College and they have educated me on a wide range of global issues.

Each week the DPI chooses to address a different topic. They usually invite four or five speakers for each session. After the panelists give their statements, attendees participate in a question and answer period. The speakers range from ambassadors to journalists, academics, and, in one instance, an eleven year-old girl. Often the panelists are members of NGOs, and these sessions give them an opportunity to inform the UN and the other NGOs about their ongoing work. On some occasions, NGO members point out deficiencies in the UN’s handling of the issue being discussed. The UN moderator of the briefings then responds by informing the NGOs about the latest UN efforts to resolve the issue.

One powerful session I attended was entitled “The Impact of Climate Change on People Living in Poverty.” The panelists discussed how global warming has caused many changes worldwide such as flooding, rising temperatures, and deforestation. These rising temperatures have caused food shortages around the world. A representative from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), who was one of the speakers, stated that there was nothing the UN could do to save some of the low-level islands throughout the world, and explained a number of vital ways NGOs can help focus the world spotlight on the impact of climate change. It was a powerful briefing. It showed that the UN cannot solve some issues on their own and needs the help and cooperation of NGOs.

This year I have continued to attend the UN DPI/NGO briefings. Last semester, I included my trips to these briefings as a 4th credit option to one of my courses. This year, I am one of Manhattanville’s two youth representatives. In an initiative to include the voices of youth, the UN has begun requiring NGOs to appoint Youth Representatives. This semester, I have been able to meet other students who are representing their NGOs and learn more about their experience with the UN and the briefings. A few weeks ago, last year’s Youth Representatives were able to coordinate their own youth-led DPI briefing. It was the first such DPI/NGO briefing and was entitled “Raising and Empowering Youth to Break the Cycle of Violence Against Women and Children.”

I want to encourage International Studies majors, and others, to attend these briefings. They are usually held on Thursdays from 10:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Attendees take a Manhattanville College van, or public transportation to New York City. The briefings are a great learning experience for anyone interested in Global Affairs at Manhattanville College. Students should take advantage of our proximity to the UN headquarters in Manhattan to truly live Manhattanville College’s mission.