A visit from the Association of Interdisciplinary Studies

This past October MSU and the Social Science, RCAH, Lyman Briggs and James Madison Colleges had the privilege of hosting the 36th Annual AIS Conference, INTERDISCIPLINARY PUBLIC PROBLEMS, THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY AND DIVERSITY. Scholars, students and other professionals had the opportunity to present and learn about the field of interdisciplinary studies in many different contexts. Topics and discussions ranged from global warming to same-sex marriage to interdisciplinary teaching and learning, an interdisciplinary view at comics.

Next conference will be hosted at Merrimack College in Andover, Massachusetts: “Impact for the Common Good?” from October 22-25, 2015. If you want more information about AIS, the conference and our National Honors Society—Alpha Iota Sigma—http://www.merrimack.edu/academics/education/2015-ais-conference/index.php. More information will be available during the semester about the events of AIS and the Honors Society. Stay tuned...

So, where to next? Study Abroad plans anyone?

Young Brahman boys reciting Sanskrit in ancient Temple in Chidabaram, South India. Melodi Litkouhi—GLAS Alum

“Mixed School” – Uganda
Kendsie Hunter—GLAS Alum
BOOK REVIEW

DEAD AID: WHY AID IS NOT WORKING AND HOW THERE IS ANOTHER WAY FOR AFRICA
By: Dambisa Moyo Review by: Nura Firdawsi

In *Dead Aid*, Moyo joins the side of the critics of aid and provides her own ideas on how poverty should be addressed. She repeatedly argues that aid, instead of helping to solve the problem of poverty, has actually become the root cause of the continuing cycle of poverty and aid-dependency. The first half of the book focuses on her analysis and critique of the past fifty years of aid, after which she transitions to discussing her ideas for a possible solution. While her ideas are ambitious and somewhat unique, they are sometimes difficult to believe possible. Cutting off all foreign aid in five years could potentially have disastrous effects, and her prescriptions depend too much entirely on economic solutions. One thing she makes clear, however, is that without a change in the attitudes and ideas towards development, little will ever be accomplished and poverty will continue to thrive unchecked.

NOV. 2ND - DAY TO CELEBRATE LIFE... AND DEATH
By: Nicolas Gisholt

Every year on Nov. 2nd, Mexico celebrates Dia de Muertos (Day of the Dead). The tradition is the combination of All Saints Day in the Christian tradition and indigenous traditions since the 1300s. In many cultures Death is something to be feared or a somber topic; not so in Mexico. We all die, that we know; but it is how the person is remembered which makes this day a reason for celebration. To honor Death is to praise life. With that spirit in mind, people create altars adorned by pictures of all those departed whom the family wants to honor. In these altars, prized possessions or mementos are included (favorite coffee mug; reading glasses; books he/she liked), as well as the foods most enjoyed to be later shared with all those present. The streets in the city are full of color and references to Death permeate the city and every person’s daily experience—putting an altar in one’s home; preparing traditional foods; going to the cemetery; dressing up in colorful costumes. It is a time to celebrate our loved ones’ lives; to remember all the good times together; a time to dance and sing; a time to make sure that our beloved are remembered fondly and in case they are watching the celebration, they might want to join.

An important part of Mexican culture is the use of humor in our everyday lives. A great example are the “Calaveras” where Death is personified as something tangible, a friend or enemy with whom we can have a conversation, dedicate songs and poems in a humorous way so we can laugh in good company. Here are some examples:

**AT THE TABLE**

Death has called to ask from us
If a visit she can make
Set the table and prepare
To be eaten as dessert

**DEATH VISITS MSU**

Our friend Death dropped by to say
That to campus she will come,
And before she starts to work
She would like to have some fun

She’ll be roaming by the halls
Interviewing all the pros
Asking if in their research
They have found a cure for death

She will find a great surprise
Waiting at the Dairy Store
Where to show her their respect
They made “Death by Chocolate”

She will cheer for White and Green
And at Izzone she will be,
Sing the song for MSU
While she scares the Maize and Blue

And delighted we will be,
If you appear again by here
call or text me when you’ll come
So that day I call in sick

**WHAT… ME WORRY?**

I am sure that we all know
Death will take us to our grave
With mariachis, dance and rum
Might as well accept our fate.
Traveling abroad is, in and of itself, a life-changing experience that has exposed me to adventurous people, breathtaking landscapes, and new perspectives. Wherever you go, you will come back with stories to be eagerly told to family, friends, and the occasional stranger. Studying abroad in a non-traditional location, however, adds a particularly fun twist to the post-trip game commonly referred to as let’s-see-how-many-times-can-I-insert-a-reference-to-my-study-abroad-trip-into-random-conversations.

Flying kites? This one time in Antarctica, on Christmas Day, we flew kites off of the top deck of our ship. Someone complaining about the water being cold? This one time in Antarctica, I took a quick dip in a freezing (literally) volcanic caldera and then rode the Zodiac back to our ship wearing shorts and T-shirt, and it was cold.

Did someone mention a penguin? I love penguins! I highly recommend seeing them in the wild; here, let me recommend to you the ship that I took to Antarctica.

You have to play it right, of course, to come off as impressive rather than pretentious, but the effect is a beautiful one. Some people gloss over the reference entirely. Some people continue the conversation for a few seconds before performing a verbal double take: “Where did you say you had been, again?” And some people are caught totally off-guard: “Are you serious? That’s the South Pole, right?”

This is not to say that more conventional study abroad programs are less worthwhile, or any less fun to talk about after the fact. But for these four years at Michigan State University, you have easy access to more corners of the world than you will ever have again. Go someplace crazy, and I promise you won’t regret it.

Adele penguin colony at Brown Bluff, Antarctic Peninsula. Photo by Rachel Osborn.

Want to write for
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