Winter 2011 Newsletter

Note from the Asst. Director

Time and time again whenever I meet with IS alumni they let me know that doing an independent research project was one of the most rewarding experiences they had as undergrads. An independent research project gives students the opportunity to really delve into a subject that they really enjoy and focus on a research question that they are truly passionate about as you’ll read in Alexis Tubb’s Lee F. Anderson report (pages 6-7). Alexis was our grant winner last year and traveled to Peru this past summer to carry out her global engagement project.

Many times an independent research project will influence your decisions after you graduate from Northwestern as Shalyn, Mike, and Rajni explain on pages 2-4. Although one of the most common questions I receive in the office from students is “What types of jobs can IS majors get?” our alumni demonstrate that there is not just one specific path for our students. In fact, the IS program prepares you to be an interdisciplinary scholar which opens the door to a wide and diverse set of opportunities.

But, “how can I get started?” you ask? Although there are a number of different resources available at Northwestern to help create and develop these kinds of projects many students don’t know how to find them or where to get started. Fear not, the International Studies Program is here to the rescue! We have developed an exciting new initiative called the Global Café (page 7) that begins winter quarter. We have incorporated all of the elements that students need when they begin to think about creating their own projects, including graduate and faculty mentors to help you get started, printable resources to keep as handbooks and guides, and of course, fuel (snacks and refreshments) to keep you going. You can read all about our newest addition in the IS office, Professor Liuba Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan below. I hope that you can all join us Mondays through Thursdays from 12pm-2pm for our open Global Café.

~Bianca Ramirez

A New Face in the International Studies Office

Liuba Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan is a new faculty member at the International Studies Program this year. She is currently teaching part one of the two-part Global History core course in IS. During spring quarter she will be teaching Global History II as well as a seminar on systems of slavery in the Old and New World. In addition to her teaching duties, she is available for student advising.

Professor Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan’s academic background is rich in diverse experiences. She initially specialized in Middle Eastern history with a special emphasis on Turkey and its socio-political history, culture and language. The study of the Ottoman Empire and its international impact brought her to the controversial issue of the Caucasus as a contested sphere of influence between two major empires: the Ottomans and the Russian Empire, which was expanding in an eastern direction in the nineteenth century. Further study of the Russian empire followed, as a result she found the topic which would become the focus of her research for a few years: Ottoman slave trade off the Caucasian shores and its suppression by the Russian authorities. This topic became the subject of her book, The Tsar’s Abolitionists, which came out last year at Brill Publishers and is available at the Northwestern library. Professor Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan’s other academic interests include the process of empire-building, frontier situations, interactions between state and non-state populations, women’s issues in history, Islamic and Middle Eastern culture and history. She has successfully taught courses on Islam and Politics in the Middle East, History of Imperial Russia, seminars on comparative Ottoman and Russian Empires, on slavery and slave trade in the Old and New Worlds as well as Global History.

Professor Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan is passionate about teaching and interacting with students. She believes in interactive teaching, involving students in the thinking process, in structured dialog and discussion in the classroom. She finds teaching the most rewarding of all academic pursuits because she is, essentially, a “people” person. She enjoys advising undergraduate students in their academic decisions, in the opportunities of research and in all other opportunities the IS program can offer them. She is excited to be part of the IS Program because she finds it to be unique in that it offers students a truly interdisciplinary, global outlook on the world around them and encourages them to make the most of their time at Northwestern.

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Shalyn Hockey: A Winding Road

When I reflect on the time since I graduated college, I am struck but what a journey it has already been. I have found a job (actually several), applied to law school, and my perspective on the world has changed greatly. But I have been surprised at how beneficial my IS degree has been throughout.

I originally chose IS because I was fascinated by the content, not because I felt it would lead me to a career. And as many Northwestern students do, I figured sometime during my junior year that I should “do business,” and I landed a consulting internship. But after a short stint, I was struck by my lack of enthusiasm for the content of this type of business compared to my still fervent enthusiasm for the topics I studied in IS and the work I was doing with both the Northwestern University Conference for Human Rights (NUCHR) and the Global Engagement Summit (GES). And so I decided to pursue “alternative” avenues during my senior-year job search.

I assumed that my IS degree had prepared me for work in foreign policy, academia, or internationally focused non-profits. As such, I applied to be a Foreign Service Officer at the State Department. I passed the exam, but quickly realized I hadn’t exactly landed a job. Instead, I simply earned a place on a short list to potentially get a job. And as I considered more carefully what that job would entail, I lost enthusiasm for the prospect of moving every two years and not having the chance to engage sustainably in the countries I would live in.

Still thinking I had to find a job within my “predefined fields,” I turned to my contacts within NUCHR and GES (I had directed NUCHR my junior and senior year, and had been on the Exec Board of GES for three years). The suggestions I received ranged from being a bush pilot in Africa to running after-school programs in Chicago—and although I was open to all suggestions and possibilities, none of those quite suited me, and I became quite frustrated.

But then I took a step back and realized that more than anything my IS degree had taught me to think broadly and critically. And though I was committed and deeply passionate about international issues, there were many ways to serve these passions. My crucial take-away from IS was the recognition that there is an infinite number of complex questions facing our world, and the key to a “better” world is engagement by people committed to creatively and actively solving these questions. The types of questions they chose to solve mattered less than the process they used to solve them. I realized that the jobs I was less interested in did not answer the questions or the process that I was drawn towards, but what jobs were not limited to certain industries.

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Mike Schoengold: Working in International Development

Billions to rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan; to fight AIDS in Africa; reform broken court systems in Eastern Europe; institute modern hiring practices in a Middle Eastern Ministry of Finances; fund civil society groups or help draft new laws and regulations. The United States government spends billions of dollars every year on a variety of technical assistance development programs that aim to improve the lives of others in isolated banana republics and far flung geo strategic locations alike. Development, now more than ever, plays a central role in the formation of US foreign and national security policy. Early in her stint as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said the Obama administration intends to put development and foreign aid on the same level as diplomacy and military power in U.S. foreign policy. International development assistance is no longer merely one of many tools in the foreign policy toolbox; now, our nation’s international agenda is implemented through these very programs, and our allies and enemies alike are shaped by them. Foreign development goes well beyond providing grain for the starving, building schools in south Asia or providing support grants for civil society—it is how America expresses itself abroad, exerts power, and tries to shape the world.

Unbeknownst to me when I graduated from Northwestern with a major in international studies and political science, the burgeoning international development industry provides plenty of ways for young people to get an exciting start in the field. Since graduation, I’ve been lucky enough to travel to Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan and Yemen for work and have had the chance to see how development assistance is provided all the way from the donor, to a development implementer down to the eventual benefactors abroad. I currently work at Chemonics International, an international development firm. I am based in Washington DC and am continually amazed that I wasn’t aware of the development field when I was in Evanston.

USAID does not always directly implement the projects that the US government prioritizes. Rather, the agency releases requests for proposal to development implementers like Chemonics. Once the donor, in this case USAID, releases the sketch of the development program it hopes to execute, implementers compete to develop proposals that meet the expectations of the donor and demonstrate their own plan for the envisioned program. USAID then reviews these bids and awards a contract to one of the organizations that is then responsible for implementing the contract in close consultation with USAID. By ‘bidding out’ its projects, USAID ensures it gets the most for its money and provides it with a menu of different approaches to each of its projects.

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Rajni Chandrasekhar: Grad School and Beyond

When I first came to Northwestern as a freshman, I thought I’d be preparing for a path to law school (I watched way too much Ally McBeal in high school). I always had a passion for international issues and social justice, but I never knew there was a way to translate that passion into a career path. During my first and second years of college, I stumbled upon volunteer opportunities in Chicago—working with an after-school program run by the Rogers Park Community Council—and a (then) fledgling student organization called the Global Engagement Summit (GES), a capacity-building conference for young people with projects in international development and community building. At the time, there were few institutionalized channels for upperclassmen or professors to mentor or support students with a passion for international issues or social justice. However, the student community was increasingly vibrant and active at the time, so I decided to join. Eventually, by my senior year, I was working as the co-Director of GES, leading a team of over 100 students to engage with over 35 global non-profits, building partnerships and opportunities for investment in student work. Other opportunities and projects at Northwestern (or funded by the university) cemented my future working in international development. For lack of courses focusing on issues of international development at Northwestern, I spent a year studying abroad at the London School of Economics (LSE), investigating issues of developed and developing world poverty and social exclusion, the major topics of international development, and the global political economy of developing countries. I also had the privilege of working in primary education reform in southern India after my freshman and sophomore years, where I worked with and analyzed the efforts of Asha for Education, a grass roots education reform NGO working in government primary schools in Bangalore—a subject that became the focus of my thesis in International Studies.

Despite having so many important experiences that shaped my commitment to this sector during college, upon graduating, I still felt that I had a lot to learn. I felt a strong disconnect between being passionate about global development or issues of education reform, and really understanding the causes and the forces that shape economic growth and poverty reduction in the developing world. Though many of my peers spent time volunteering or working directly after college (and I’d recommend that, too!), I decided to go to graduate school at the LSE to study for an MSc in Development Management. While in London, I consulted for the Global Development Special Initiatives team at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, investigating issues of urban poverty and youth unemployment in Africa. I analyzed unmet needs of the young unemployed in urban areas, and provided recommendations for future opportunities and entry points for grant making. I also got a part-time job at the Learning Launchpad fund at the Young Foundation, supporting the development of business and financial strategy for social enterprises working in education in the UK. Working and studying in London in one of the capitols of the international development and social enterprise sectors was an incredible experience, and I also had the opportunity of studying with an amazing, international group of people that both interesting and exciting stories to tell about their work to improve the human condition around the globe. Since graduating LSE, I moved to Boston to join FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm dedicated to finding better ways to solving social problems.

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Catching up with our Alumni

Professor Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan believes that undergraduate research is one of the most important and rewarding activities both for the students engaged in it and for the faculty, who guide students in this process as they make their first steps in this field.

No matter what career may be chosen by students, undergraduate research teaches them the precious skills of structuring their mind, writing well, and putting together successful grant applications. The most important (and the most exciting) opportunities for students’ academic involvement lie in the interdisciplinary sphere.

More “holistic” approach to social sciences is long overdue, and it can yield amazing results, which can be an eye-opening experience to a lot of people. In Professor Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan’s own words, “One of the goals I have in my teaching is to break the traditional way in which students see the world around them. My courses are not about ‘right or wrong’ answers, they are about connections between different branches of social sciences, they are about paradigms of development, structures and patterns in which mankind has developed so far. If students come out of my classroom with more questions than answers I consider my job well done. It may be an uncomfortable experience for some, but it gives students tools to deal with the unexpected in their own lives and to see their lives as parts of a much larger, global pattern of human experience.” We wish Professor Kurtyn-d’Herlugnan good luck in all her plans this year.
Mike Schoengold, continued from page 2

These contracts require large staffs of qualified technical experts in the field and a larger staff of young aspiring professionals to provide contractual, financial, and administrative backstopping for the project office and work on future project proposals. Currently, I work on a $150 million municipal governance project in southern Afghanistan as a project associate. This project’s goal is to create effective, responsive, democratic, transparent and accountable municipal governance in Kandahar City through improving service delivery and building the capacity of municipal officials. As an associate, I’ve been able to travel to our projects and help start up program activities.

When President Obama discusses America’s efforts to develop a Palestinian state, eradicate malaria in Malawi or promote liberalization in Egypt, he is talking specifically about USAID funded projects that my company is implementing. Before graduation I was aware of the role USAID played in foreign policy but didn’t understand how to get involved or the full scope of opportunities available for young people. Any policy or international studies major who wants to someday work on foreign policy, would benefit greatly from working for a development implementer, by learning how international development really works and through the ultimate experience gained by traveling the world.

To pursue a career in international development, I’d encourage undergrads to look for research opportunities, fellowships, internships or even temporary jobs abroad even after your first year on campus. International experience, whether it’s a week conference or a year living and working abroad, proves your interest, comfort and commitment to exposing yourself to the developing world or just a different culture. Many of the development organizations and non profits offer paid and unpaid internships in Washington DC during the summer. It’s a great way to begin to understand the complex bureaucracy of the foreign assistance world and to get a birdseye view of the field. Finally, exhaust your existing networks in pursuit of these sorts of positions. Sit down for coffee with professors, alumni (including me!), family friends, parents of friends anyone who is somewhat involved in the field. Build a social and professional relationship with them not based on pushing your CV in front of their face, but by listening to their story and asking questions about what you could do to get to where they are. A dash of international experience, a pinch specialized regional knowledge, a broad base of class work in international studies at NU and you’re well on your way to a career in international development. Be patient, passionate and persistent and you’ll have no trouble.

Michael Schoengold graduated in June 2008 with a double major in Political Science and International Studies. His senior honors thesis in International Studies was entitled, “Forgetting Civil Society’s Charisma in Egypt: Examining Civil Society and Remembering Political Parties” won the 2008 Frank Safford Award for Best Senior Thesis.

The Newsletter of the International Studies Program

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We Need Your Help!

The International Studies staff welcomes you to become a supporting member of our program by donating to our gift funds.

Every year International Studies alumni make donations to support IS students pursuing international endeavors.

If you would like to support the Anderson Global Education & Engagement Fund, the Guetzkow Prize or other student initiatives please contact us at:
international-studies@northwestern.edu

You can also mail checks made out to Northwestern University and include “International Studies Program” in the memo line to: Office of Alumni Relations and Development 2020 Ridge Avenue Evanston, IL 60208

Additionally gifts can be made online at:
http://development.northwestern.edu
Shalyn Hockey graduated in June 2009 with a double major in Political Science and International Studies. Her senior honors thesis in International Studies was entitled, “Drivers of Humanitarian Intervention: Exploring the United State’s Policy Towards Sierra Leone.”


Shalyn Hockey, continued from page 2

So I took a job at a social entrepreneurship startup company based in San Francisco and run by Nathaniel Whittemore, the founder of GES. But after a year of falling in love with the creativity, innovation, and fast pace of startups and the tech world, I realized I did in fact miss working more directly with the causes I cared deeply about. I also realized that even though I was young and faced many choices and unknowns, I still needed to start thinking critically about the career I wanted to pursue and the type of work that motivated me. I also realized the path I chose needed to tell a coherent story and that each step needed to equip me with useful skills and perspectives.

After a trip to India and much deliberation, I decided I wanted to stay plugged into the entrepreneurship world but also wanted to pursue a career in human rights law. So I took a part time job at another technology startup in Chicago called Two Bright Lights and began the law school application process. I then contacted Professor Galya Ruffer to ask if she had any suggestions for where to look for human rights research positions. Fortunately, she said she was looking for someone to help her start the Center for Forced Migration—I felt extremely lucky when she offered me the position, and was excited to combine both my interest in entrepreneurship and human rights.

My current jobs could not be more different. As the marketing manager for Two Bright Lights I spend my day focused on weddings, customer service, and software design. At Northwestern I am focused on researching theories of displacement, human rights abuses, and asylum law. But this juxtaposition has given me new insight into the usefulness of my IS degree. The knowledge I learned in IS has been equally helpful in the startup world as it has at Northwestern doing research—while the content of my IS degree correlates closely with my research work, it is the IS lessons of how to critically analyze questions and assumed frameworks, combine world views, and foster a flexible mind that has been most useful.

International Studies is about exposing the theoretical frameworks and paradigms that structure our world view. It is about understanding which facts are important and which are not when answering complex questions. It is about turning a critical and open mind to questions of interaction, behavior, and history. And these processes have been instrumental in my success both in my jobs and in finding a job. Overall, IS has been infinitely valuable to me so far, and I am sure as I move forward in law school, it will be crucial.

Rajni Chandrasekhar, continued from page 3

Many of the mentors and friends that I developed through those experiences helped guide me to my current work in the social sector—I’d encourage students now to develop those connections to peers, professors, and organizations in the social sector to develop a sense of the different paths you can take in international development. Now, my friends from the LSE and Northwestern, all driven by similar goals, are scattered around the world doing incredibly different things—sitting in London or Boston, consulting for foundations and global non profits, setting up independent businesses in rural Ethiopia, working with refugees in northern Uganda, or teaching in charter schools in New Orleans. I’d encourage you to do the same.

Background
Project Sunampe is a Peruvian high school-led project that has been working with the Sunampe region of Peru by building community centers, schools, and homes ever since the Sunampe Earthquake of 2007 (magnitude of 8.0). The partnership between Markham College (a private high school in Lima, Peru) and Mayor & Senora Grimaldi has created a very successful effort that caters towards the needs of the Sunampe community. In the last three years, over 30 community centers have been built, numerous schools have been repaired, and several basic homes have been built. During Spring Break 2010, eight Northwestern students traveled to Chincha and successfully constructed a community center that consists of a multi-use central room, a kitchen, a bathroom, a playroom for children, and a covered patio made from sturdy, but also local materials. The community decided to use the center as a nursery school for children of ages 2-4 by day and at night to run workshops in household trades, such as jewelry making, to enable local women to earn their own income and become more financially self-sufficient.

Project’s Objectives
There were three separate components to my project: My first intention was to research what makes a community center successful, which was done by studying the previously built community centers in the Chinchan community. My second goal was to look into the mode of energy that powers the lighting, kitchens, and bathrooms of these community centers. And, to see if these community centers could be more energy self-sustainable through methods such as the simple installation of solar panels. My third objective was to assess in the ways Northwestern would be most useful to the Chacarita Community Center in the future. I would like to establish a firm relationship between Northwestern, the Chinchan community, and Markham College to ensure that this community center continues to operate at its maximum potential while simultaneously encouraging intimate international relations between citizens of Perú and Northwestern University students.

Observations
What defines a successful community center?
The success of a community center can be divided into three consecutive parts: the physical accumulation of useful commodities, the opportunities that the center provides for the individuals of the community, and the spiritual ties and obligations that bind the individuals of the community together.

Why is solar energy not a viable option?
Firstly, the community centers use very little artificial light. Most activities that are hosted in the community centers are hosted during the day. Since there are transparent roof panels that act as skylights, typically making up approximately one-fifth of the roof panels, most community centers don’t need artificial light during the day. Secondly, after interviewing Sra. Grimaldi and Mr. Harry Hildebrand and inquiring further into the subject, it was concluded there are no known solar panel projects in the region of Sunampe, meaning that there are no solar panel specialists or electricians. While it is possible to train a solar panel specialist to maintain the solar panels, it proposes another challenge. Thirdly, the reason why there might not be any solar panel projects in the region of Sunampe might be because of the apparent need for more basic aid. A vast portion of Sunampe lacks a waste management system, running water, drainage, or even proper housing; it is clear that tackling issues of poverty, daily health care, and infrastructure reconstruction should be higher priorities.

In May of 2010 sophomore Alexis Tubb was awarded the Lee F. Anderson Memorial Global Education and Engagement Grant. Alexis spent the summer of 2010 in the Sunampe district of Peru conducting observations at ten different community sites: Chacartia, Dios Es Amor, Virgen del Carmen Sucre, Jazmin, Madres Unidas al Progreso, Maria Mercedes, S.E.T. Sala de Estimulacion Temprana (“Manchitas”), Virgen de Pilar, Club de Madres Santa Maria, and Medical Center.

Alexis Tubb, 2010 recipient of the Lee F. Anderson Memorial Global Education and Engagement Grant

The Municipalidad of Sunampe. This building serves as the center for government and town meetings, library, a safe center for kids to read and play.

Alexis Tubb in the region of Sunampe, Peru.
Female empowerment: an unanticipated strength.
While visiting community centers, a third theme presented itself to me that I had not mentioned in my Project Proposal: female empowerment. Project Sunampe is essentially a matriarchal sub-society that seeks to empower women. Sra. Grimaldi, the mayor’s wife, is the leader of the presidents of the community centers – all of which are female. Together, these women meet in Sra. Grimaldi’s house and discuss how they can improve the community centers and continue to give back to the community in new ways. One of the responsibilities of these women is to organize workshops in their respective community centers. With the exception of the community center of Jazmin which also offers unisex workshops, these workshops are geared towards teaching women household crafts to enable them to earn their own income and become more financially self-sufficient. These household crafts or services include jewelry-making, purse-making, knitting garments, sewing clothes, haircutting, cake and pastry-making, and other crafts that are not only typically done by women but are also sold to women.

Conclusions
During my research in the Sunampe region of Chincha, Peru this summer I intended to answer several conceptual questions regarding community centers and energy self-sufficiency. Although I was able to acquire more than sufficient information regarding community centers, it became obvious that introducing energy self-sufficiency in Sunampe was a more complicated subject. However, along the way, I discovered the inspiring topic of female empowerment that was prevalent in Project Sunampe.

I consider my summer research successful; however, my project has not been completed. I have achieved my first two objectives, studying what defines a successful community center and looking into the viability of introducing solar panels to the community centers of Sunampe. I plan to achieve my third objective, establishing a firm relationship between Northwestern University and Project Sunampe, during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Join us for Global Cafe Winter and Spring Quarter

Ever thought about conducting a research project of your own? Don’t know where to get started? Stop by the International Studies Program office this winter quarter and get the resources you need to shed some light on this mysterious process.

Come find out about:
• Institutional Review Board (IRB): What is it? How does it apply to undergraduates?
• Faculty resources on campus: How to approach faculty about your research
• Applying for grants: Resources available on campus for short-term and long-term projects
• Writing for grants: Not your typical term paper
• How to focus on a topic and formulate your research question
• Developing your senior honors thesis and proposal
  and much more!

Ideal for:
• Students who have come back from abroad and want to start their own projects
• Students who are planning on studying abroad and are interested in carrying out international projects
• Students interested in conducting an Honors thesis
• Students interested in applying for graduate school

Students of every level are welcome. Light refreshments and snacks always provided.
Global Cafe will be held on
Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays
from 12pm-2pm
at the International Studies Program Office located at 2010 Sheridan Road
In December the IS program welcomed back three of our alumni, Mike Schoengold, Rajni Chandrasekhar, and Shalyn Hockey and hosted an alumni dinner with 25 current IS majors at the Norris Student Center. Students got a chance to hear about their experiences after Northwestern, talk about career opportunities, and get advice from recent grads.