From the director’s desk:

“Thank you,” writes an LAH senior to Linda Mayhew, “for always being such a guiding and reassuring force in my life. I would not be the student I am today without you helping me along the way.” Another, an LAH freshman, lets me know that Stacey Amorous is “knowledgeable...kind, helpful, thoughtful, respectful, and courteous. There are not enough words to say how grateful I am for the LAH program or our counselors.” A senior concludes: “I truly believe LAH and Humanities are as excellent as they are because of the top-notch advising they offer.” He is right. One of the keys to the success of LAH is excellent academic advising. In Stacey and Linda, LAH has the best. Both have a commanding knowledge of degree requirements and university rules; both have a network of connections built up over many years and upon which they can draw to help students negotiate nimbly the bureaucracy that is U.T. Austin. They also keep up with the latest developments in web-based resources for students, keep a sharp eye out for scholarship, internship, and job opportunities, while keeping students abreast in a weekly blog about events in LAH and on campus. Of greatest importance they bring to the office each and every day joy, energy, and no little wisdom. For them academic advising begins in freshman summer orientation, as the students fashion that first semester of classes, begin to explore their majors, and talk about, many for the first time, their lifetime goals. That dialogue continues on, 24/7, for the next four years, and often continues after graduation. Academic advising at its best is a form of teaching. As Andrew Delbanco writes, “the fact that students can be touched and inspired as well as trained and informed has always been the true teacher’s aim and joy.” He goes on to quote Emerson: “the whole secret of the teacher’s force lies in the conviction that men are convertible. And they are. They want awakening” (College: What It Was, Is, And Should Be, 45). Stacey and Linda help to awaken our students to the vast opportunities afforded by a liberal education, and in this newsletter you may read about some of their successes. I welcome your comments, suggestions, and questions (carver@austin.utexas.edu).

Best wishes,

Larry Carver
When I learn something new, I want to shout it from the rooftops.
“Mom. I just finished reading this amazing book. Can I read you my favorite parts?”
“I just memorized the Gettysburg Address. Anyone want to hear?”
“Okay, can I just explain to you the religious and political situation in Central Asia? It is fascinating."

It never matters that someone else may know more than I do. It never matters that someone may understand more deeply. It never matters that I do not know everything. As Vladimir Nabokov once said, “I am sufficiently proud of my knowing something to be modest about my not knowing all.” What does it matter if I do not know everything? At least I know something.

If both a professor and a freshman know that they live in the state of Texas or that two and two make four, who knows it better? Anyone can teach you something, so why not listen to everyone? And, afterwards, why not shout it from the rooftops?

After I read the book Lolita, no one would talk to me for a week. It was all I wanted to talk about. I wanted to read them my favorite parts, I wanted to talk to them about the premise, all I wanted to do was talk and talk about my new favorite book. But most people did not want to listen. The only chance I got to recite the Gettysburg Address was in my AP US History class for extra credit. No one else ever wanted to hear it. Whenever I brought up Central Asia, my friends rolled their eyes and told me to stop talking about it.

Professors should listen to students because they know things too. What they know may not be backed with fancy degrees (yet) and they may be from behind the lens of eighteen year-old eyes, but that does not make what they know any less true or any less powerful. Professors, listen to students because they do not yet have fancy degrees and because their brains are eighteen years young. Listen to students because they like to shout their knowledge from the rooftops with unparalleled enthusiasm. They are just looking for people to listen.

Jordan Pahl, Middle Eastern Studies/Liberal Arts Honors

Above: Student campsite in Tajikistan at Iskander Kul, translated as Lake of Alexander the Great. They spent one night at this location, about a four hour drive from Dushanbe.
Right: Caroline Suh modeling her handmade corta, traditional Tajik dress.
The Little Things

When I left in June to study abroad in Tajikistan, I was fully aware that I was going to be immersed in a different culture, and that everything would be different. In fact, I expected it. After flying for more than 20 hours across the globe into Central Asia, I expected things to be different. However, no one ever said that the little differences between cultures could be as surprising as the big ones.

The first and most apparent aspect of Tajik culture that was unfamiliar was the food. Despite reading the introduction packet that covered everything from food to traveling, I imagined exotic dishes involving different tubers and spices. My first meal with my host family was fried potatoes, fried cauliflower, and a tomato and onion salad that tasted surprisingly similar to pico de gallo. Food in Tajikistan primarily consists of carbohydrates (potatoes, rice, bread, and different pastas) and does not have many spices. Herbs like basil and chives are used, but everything tends to stay pretty mild. However, the abundance of oil (not even olive oil, but unfamiliar oils like cotton or other flax based oils) in Tajik food was unexpected. No matter what kind of food was made, after we finished the main course there was always a layer of oil at the bottom of the serving plate. Even more surprising was how quickly all the students became accustomed to the amount of oil. At the beginning of the program I would eat my share of oily rice and wish never to eat another plate for a year. But by the end, that same type of oily rice would be quickly finished with relish.

Another food norm that I quickly assimilated to was the lack of cold drinks. It is widely accepted throughout Tajikistan that drinking cold drinks will make a person sick. The origin of this superstition is probably from people falling ill after drinking unboiled water when water sanitation was not fully developed. Some families also believe that drinking cold liquids shock the body’s system. However the extent of this belief is slightly ridiculous. If any drinks are kept in a refrigerator, families will leave it out until it reaches room temperature before drinking it. Convenience store refrigerators that contain drinks are kept barely under room temperature. Ice is rarely found in local restaurants, and only small amounts are given if given at all. One day, my host brother came in from playing and started complaining because his tooth was aching. While people from the US would blame sugar and candy, my host family immediately asked if he drank anything cold. He admitted to drinking a cup of cold water because he was too impatient to wait for a cup of tea to cool which led to his grand-mother giving him a stern talk.

While on superstitions, about halfway through the summer I was in a small grocery store browsing and whistling when a boy told me to stop. After a few exchanges I learned that whistling inside a building is considered unlucky in Tajikistan. Later that day I asked a few other people to investigate further. One of the office workers explained to me that whistling inside a building causes money loss and whistling outside causes hair loss as well as other head-related ailments. My host mother told me that only bad children whistled and it was simply bad luck to whistle when it got dark. Although varied, I got the general impression that whistling in Tajikistan was bad and should be avoided at all costs.

Before this summer, I had the choice to improve my Persian skills by attending the Persian Summer Language Institute at UT or by studying abroad in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Although I might have learned more by staying in UT, I chose to study abroad because learning a language is not restricted to learning grammar structures and memorizing vocabulary. Studying abroad would provide the opportunity to immerse myself, which would make me more confident in my skills. Also the opportunity to experience Tajik culture has broadened my sense of the world and helped me remember that there are so many perspectives throughout the world on everything from whistling to cold drinks, and it is the little differences that make each culture special.

Caroline Suh, Philosophy/Liberal Arts Honors
“Better is bread with a happy heart than wealth with vexation.” The ancient pharaoh Amenemope succinctly communicates the personal sentiments of my own first year in college, and pronounces the key point of a philosophy most freshman coming into the LAH program do not believe. Saddled with parent expectations, surrounded by a cutthroat academic culture, and swamped with work, these newcomers discredit the school of thought that does not always focus thought upon school.

The importance of schoolwork is indisputable, and I mean no censure of it despite our society demanding these standardized representation of our combined talent and studied skills. Upon entering university, students immediately understand the things required of them: build your resume, join organizations, and get the highest GPA possible. Most weight is given to that last stipulation, as one can not find a good job without good grades, and not live a good life as a result. That seems to be the educational monolith created by society, where the measures of success are not in personal satisfaction but in reaching social goals. Academic pursuits assist in reaching a goal, but what of their individual reward? The coveted “A” creates a good image but the happiness of it rings hollow, the value of your grade derived from its effect on your course grade and how it will affect your overall GPA in a positive way. Withholding those subjects a student genuinely cares about, minimal personal satisfaction at the completion of an assignment is found. The student continues a cycle of grinding through a series of satisfactory accomplishments with minimal concern or care. Academic excellence turns into an unfilling game of most reward for least work. An entire aspect of college is lost, as the institution becomes a means to an end rather than a journey, new experiences and friends lost to tomes of study.

When a student enters college, the single focus mindset closes vital doors to experience. A part of what makes a college education so vital is not the complete recall of ancient Grecian philosophers but the connections fostered and friendships cultured that hand you an entirely different set of tools for the post-college world. Social situations dependent upon the savvy of an individual will arise. Floundering in these cases can be solecistic, and for every bit of knowledge you hold, you will be none the better in the eyes of those who surround you. The hardest workers could also be the most lonely, and for every innovation of theirs, each great piece of work...The Nikola Teslas and Edgar Allen Poes of the world still died without anyone at their sides. A book, a paper, or an essay will not teach you how to become you. You will be a mirror of the past, reflecting your studies. Step back from the books, and breathe. You can not learn life, you live it.

Corbin Brooke, History/Liberal Arts Honors

LAH Music Ensemble: The Amorous Paulharmonic

The LAH music ensemble offers a chance for LAH students to showcase their musical talents. We rehearse once a week and perform at various university functions like Honors Day and Explore UT. We also put together our own shows, which usually include music from a wide range of musical genres (classical, pop, rock, Broadway, and more) to accommodate the diverse tastes of our musicians. We are always open to new members, no matter what kind of vocals or instruments you bring to the group! There is no need to audition, so if you are interested please contact heathernwong@gmail.com to join our mailing list.

Left: LAHers Jack Mifts, Charley Binkow, Caleb Parker, and Samantha Tedford on a bike ride to Barton Springs and Zilker Park.
Students Act:
LAH Student Organizations

Rapoport-King Thesis Scholarships

- Alana Harrison, Psychology
  “Fostering and Suppressing Creativity: An Environmental Comparison”
  Faculty Adviser: Professor David Gilden
- Saff Kazim, Sociology
  “The Bhopal Disaster and The Legalization of Human Rights”
  Faculty Adviser: Michael Young
- Cody Lee, English
  “Blood Order: The Struggle Between Man and Wolf in Cormac McCarthy’s The Crossing”
  Faculty Adviser: Don Graham
- Armanda Martin, American Studies
  “Impossible Forms and the Pursuit of Perfection: Understanding the American Female Body Through Photography”
  Faculty Adviser: Steve Hoelscher
- Ivy Mestrovic, Anthropology
  “The Cultural Dimensions Surrounding Private Chen’s Suicide and Subsequent Court-Martial of Sergeant Holcomb”
  Faculty Adviser: Brian Stross
- Taylor Morrison, Anthropology
  “Against the Walls: Ethnography of Segregated Space in Prison City”
  Faculty Adviser: Heather Hindman
- Katherine Noble, English
  “Mythology, Morality, and Mortality in the Poetry of Frank Stanford”
  Faculty Adviser: Coleman Hutchison
- Lidia Plaza, History
  Faculty Adviser: Neil Kamil
- Nicholas Sanford, Asian Studies
  “Wang Xiaobo’s The Golden Age Trilogy and Its Influence on Liberal Chinese Youth”
  Faculty Adviser: Yvonne Chang
- Margaret Sayre, Anthropology
  “The Effect of Forelimb Mass Distribution on the Function of Arm Swinging During Human Bipedalism”
  Faculty Adviser: Liza Shapiro
- Joseph Sorenson, Government
  “Looking for Locke in All the Wrong Places: The Case for a Liberal Continuity from John Locke to Barack Obama”
  Faculty Adviser: Devin Stauffer
- Tammy (Thanh) Tran, Psychology
  “The Effect of Prior Knowledge on Memory Encoding: Memory Strength as the Moderating Factor”
  Faculty Adviser: Alison Preston
- Ady Wetegrove, History
  “Behind the Curtain: The Artist as Collector in Peale’s Museum”
  Faculty Adviser: Neil Kamil
- Katryna Watkins, Anthropology
  “Violence Against Black Women With Mental Illness(es)”
  Faculty Adviser: Joao Vargas
- Ben Weiss, Government
  “Foreign Influence on HIV/AIDS Relief in Africa: A Comparative Case Analysis”
  Faculty Adviser: Catherine Boone

Pre-Med Society

Liberal Arts Pre-Med Society is an organization whose main goal is to foster a pre-med atmosphere within the College of Liberal Arts. Our main objective is to help Liberal Arts Pre-Med students gain experience in the medical field through volunteering, and shadowing at various hospitals and clinics throughout the Austin area. Not only that, but we feel our members need to be well-rounded, so not only will we volunteer at hospitals and clinics, but we will also spend time helping the less fortunate, such as those in food shelters and retirement homes.

LAH Student Council

The Liberal Arts Honors Student Council is a great way to get involved in the LAH community through service, social, and academic events. Students of all ages and interests make LAHSC an ideal avenue to strengthen friendships with classmates and to meet new people with similar interests. The LAH family is tight knit - and LAHSC is knitted tight even tighter. Our mission to make the college experience more fulfilling, diverse, and fun, while offering leadership positions to our bright and motivated peers.

LAH Yearly Scholarship Winners

First Year
- Meagan Abel
- Joshua Briggs
- Katelyn Burran
- Maureen Clark
- Thomas Galbraith
- Elizabeth Gerberich
- Kassandra Gonzalez
- Samantha Meyer
- Jackson Miller
- Matthew Milliron
- Anisa Nabily
- Jordan Pahl
- Imogen Sealy
- Haley Williams
- Michelle Willoughby

Second Year
- Elissa Allen
- Corbin Brooke
- Ariana Brown
- Jillian Fisher
- Teddie Owen
- Tara Timinsky
- Katie North
- Kylee Yeatman

Third Year
- Michael Arrington
- Patrick Crowley
- Sarabeth Flowers
- Catherine Moreno
- Caroline Suh

Fourth Year
- Armen Hazarian
- David Oh
- Dietrich Riepen
- McLean Rabb
- Kelsi Tyler

Echo

Echo is the annual Liberal Arts Honors literary journal. The journal contains various student submissions of prose, poetry, and photography. A new edition comes out each Spring semester, and we begin accepting submissions at the start of the Fall semester. Feel free to submit any number of pieces in any or all of the categories. To have your work considered for publication email echo-ltmag@gmail.com.

To join the Echo editorial staff, please email the same address or contact co-editors Andy Bowman or Cindy Brzostowski to be put on the mailing list. We will begin sending out information regarding reading sessions in the Spring semester. This year we will be looking for dedicated and hardworking individuals to train to take over the literary magazine next year as the co-editors will graduate this Spring.
Student Stories:
Summer Internship with ALARM

I walked down a little path through some plants towards a table and some chairs under a straw-hut gazebo. This was in Burundi. I sat with three Africans who worked for African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM). They asked me how I was doing, and I thought they meant how the project was going.

My project was to interview (with a translator) kids that ALARM had identified as needing aid, to document some basic information about them such as their names and birthdates. Most of them do not know their birthdates. I also asked them about more personal information, such as their favorite activities and their family situation.

I wrote all this down while speaking with them and later transferred it into a digital database. The goal of my project was to allow ALARM to create profiles of these children, which they could then upload to a website they are launching. The website aims to give someone with money the opportunity to help the children.

I told the three ALARM staff that the project was going well. I had spoken to around 250 children in Uganda over the past three and a half weeks. I had spoken with all the children that had shown up to be interviewed. I had spoken with some in the capital city of Kampala, and then we had driven north to four smaller towns: Lira, Pader, Kitgum, Gulu. In my few remaining days, I was eager to speak with about 40 kids in Burundi.

But they were not asking how the project was going. They were asking how I was doing. One of the staff, Deo, told me about something that can happen to social workers when they work with people who have been traumatized. Social workers, in their enthusiasm, can get so close to the people they are helping that they take on the trauma or pick it up almost like a disease. Then that social worker becomes overwhelmed with emotional stress and cannot help anymore. So, they wanted to know how I was doing.

I acknowledged that my conversations with the children weighed on me. The stories of children separated from their parents stacked upon one another in my mind. In the stack there was both sobering diversity and unnerving similarity. There were a hundred flavors of misery under one gray banner. I remember one girl in her early teens who cried throughout the interview. Her father was either dead or unable to help. Her mother was a drunkard who did not provide for her kids, so this girl would work in the fields to earn a little money. Then her mother would spend that money on alcohol.

There was another boy in his late teens. Both of his parents were dead. He was the head of his house because none of his relatives would take in him and his younger siblings. In fact, his relatives had been trying to run him off of his land ever since his parents died. Imagine that. You are behind in school because you are working in a field all day to earn your dinner for that day. You get home to your one-room mud hut and you are sitting on the floor trying to do your homework before it gets dark. And then you hear your uncles knocking on your door, telling you that your property belongs to them now.

Deo told me that if you want to help those in poverty, you must know your role. Otherwise, you will try to do too much and realize (rightly so) how all your efforts have been fruitless, how things are the same as they used to be. I wrestled with that sentiment but eventually I embraced my role as a bridge, a bridge between the children I talked with and the people who can help them. My gift to the children is an opportunity to be sponsored, and my gift to those who can help is the opportunity to sponsor one of these kids.

I thank ALARM, Liberal Arts Honors, Watermark Church, Northwest Bible Church, and many personal supporters for giving me the opportunity. I am grateful to have had a network to help me this summer as I was helping others.

Do not be discouraged by the stories of children that I mentioned, for they do not discourage me. On the contrary, the trip refreshed my spirit. There are two ways to consider these words of Jesus: “The poor you will always have with you.” One way sees a burden to help others that will never be lifted from our backs; the other way sees an opportunity to help others that will never be taken from us.

Ben Johnson, English/Liberal Arts Honors
LAH Abroad:
Cambridge, England

Thoughts from Cambridge, England

This past summer, I studied abroad at the University of Cambridge through the Pembroke-King’s Programme, which brings together talented students from around the world. My time in Cambridge, a city of great beauty and historical significance, is burned into my memory like no two-month period before or since.

No stone in Cambridge lacks a story. Some stories, preserved in old statues and grand architecture, cry out for recognition: King Henry VIII, for instance, demands your attention via emblems carved all over the magnificent King’s College Chapel. Other stories are quieter. The little side street you dismiss as inconsequential turns out to be where Charles Darwin once lived. The pub around the corner is where Watson and Crick announced their discovery of the structure of DNA.

I sought out, stumbled over, and failed to notice countless such stories. Their presence became a part of life, like the red telephone boxes, the open air market, the tea shops, and the punts moored on the banks of the River Cam. I shuffled blearily into the Pembroke dining hall each morning and ate my breakfast under the painted eyes of famous alumni. I rushed to class past the haunts of Isaac Newton, Lord Byron, and William Wordsworth. The illustrious mingled with the ordinary, and the past flowed seamlessly into the present day.

Living among the stones and the stories of Cambridge, I felt sometimes intimidated, sometimes inspired, but always connected to an endeavor with roots deeper than I had comprehended. When I read books and wrote papers and attended lectures, when I faced the triumphs and frustrations of learning, I was doing something that people had been doing in this city since the founding of the university 800 years ago. In a very brief, very small way, I was part of that story.

In America, a country so young and individualistic, it’s easy to forget this connection. Your own struggle to gain knowledge and make an impact seems independent of anything larger. But the story of humankind isn’t written in one lifetime, or by one person. The construction of the story goes on, one stone on top of another.

I gained so much from my time in Cambridge: new friends, new knowledge, a new perspective. I also gained this treasured thought: I am not the first stone, nor the last.

Katherine Thayer, Rhetoric and Writing/Liberal Arts Honors

Above: Ben Johnson in Gulu, Uganda, while interning for African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM).

Right: Katherine Thayer punting down the River Cam, a traditional activity in Cambridge. A punt is a flat-bottomed boat propelled with a pole.
LAH Abroad:
Kalahari Desert, Botswana

I’ve spent the last couple of months welcoming back the little luxuries I had once taken for granted for so long—comfy beds and soft carpets, air conditioning and electricity, computers and television, four walls and paved roads. After six weeks in the Kalahari Desert (a semi-arid savanna, actually) and the Okavango Delta, in a country roughly the size of Texas but with a population of barely 2 million, I’ve begun to really miss the rugged simplicity of a life outdoors.

I miss tumbling out of my bedroll and unzipping my tent in the early morning to hear the snorting of antelope echoing in the clear and unpolluted air. I miss traveling on dusty, bumpy roads, through whirlwinds of sand and gazing out through the meter-tall grass to see eland, wildebeest, ostrich, springbok, and kudu strolling leisurely under the fierce mid-afternoon sun. I miss the taste of game fresh and sizzling from the fire—warthog, kudu, eland, wildebeest—and of sweet, rooibos tea warming my bones on a freezing morning.

Weeks of hard but truly fulfilling fieldwork—of analyzing and plotting thorned and hooked vegetation, chopping down acacias and leadwoods (Kalahari shrubs and trees), and trekking kilometers into the Kalahari bush land to map out roads for the game ranch in which our campsite was situated—were both rewarding and challenging. I had been dreaming of visiting the continent of Africa and the country of Botswana in particular for years, and it had finally manifested itself in the flesh. I suppose I could describe a typical morning on our program in Botswana, but then our day-to-day lives there were anything but typical. Awake early in the morning to greet the rising sun—and often a small herd of four-footed ungulates—we would crowd around the dining tent for our first warm meal of the day while reviewing the instructions for fieldwork that morning. Then we would set out to work, either on foot or via four-wheel drive, to work on vegetation plots, soil sampling, and other field activities. Afternoons would be a time for leisure and then lectures, during which we learned topics from conservation practices to the impacts of human development on the region and species distribution of wildlife.

Though there were countless memorable moments during my experience studying abroad—from visiting a women’s basket-weaving co-op, to exploring the towns of Ghanzi and Maun, and taking a trip to a San (an indigenous ethnic group of southern Africa) cultural center—perhaps the most memorable were sitting around the campfire with my fellow students sharing jokes and stories, visiting a wildlife project where we got to see both lions and wild dogs, and journeying through the Central Kalahari and the Okavango region on safari.

Although I’ve traveled on a student exchange program before, and was mesmerized by all of the sights and opportunities, Botswana provided a completely different experience. I believe that the style of learning, activities, and lifestyle were unique to this program, and allowed us to experience a completely different realm of existence that we had been accustomed to. As with all study abroad programs, there were challenges we were bound to face, but I honestly feel that we all gained immeasurable strength and knowledge from our time in Botswana.

Lalini Pedris, International Relations & Global Studies/Liberal Arts Honors
What are the contemporary definitions of venery, virtue and worldly success? In the age of Jerry Sandusky (and Joe Paterno), Lady Gaga in a meat corset, and a single film that can provoke the whole Muslim world to riots, these terms lose their meaning in the greater cultural context. You can call it a result of Postmodernism and the breakdown of meaning, but objectivity has become antiquity. The idea that something like honor or courage could have a universal definition, or even be called “good” is hopelessly problematic. I know the average person on the street would say that these are “good” traits, but on the cultural level, these words are meaningless. I’m not claiming that we are constrained by this theory, but the fact remains that there is a popularity to subjectivity that abolishes much of the value in virtue.

Worldly success is also rife with definitions. In our flash-celebrity generation, this idea is perplexing yet inexplicably appealing. From my cultural observations, there is certainly no traditional virtue to modern success. We are a generation without limits, the children of the children of the 60’s, the first generation to be social-networked and consistently reminded without a hint of irony that we are stars. As a result of this, our atavistic desires have also been liberated to come to the forefront of our culture, unchecked by the cultural or religious mores that once kept them back. (I’ve read enough Homer and Shakespeare to know that they have always been present, but now they have a voice that is radiantly self-aware.) Venery, an archaic term I had to look up on my iPhone, effectively functions as a virtue today (e.g. a certain meat corset on a woman who has enjoyed more worldly success than virtually anyone else). So we see that virtue and venery and worldly success are all a pastiche of the same thing. We turn the channel, we click the link, we move on to the next Biggest Thing.

Personally, I believe that human beings crave a connection beyond themselves. There has to be meaning. Things like love and joy and peace and courage and truth must have value. I think that these are the anchors in the depths of human existence. And philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has a great point in saying that we should practice these things irrespective of who’s watching or what’s buzzing in the background. These ideals will always be beneficial, and when we lose the meaning of them we lose ourselves, the beauty of an inward life of virtue. Without them, worldly success ultimately crumbles because it can’t be maintained. Through a greater desire for the long-term benefits of virtue, our basic urges, sex and violence, can have an ordered and defined place in our lives. Our generation, brimming with endless possibility without constraint, must choose virtue in order to survive. I’m not saying it’s easy, and I’m not fool enough to think we can do it on our own, but I think it is the best path for genuine success in this world.

Sarabeth Flowers, English/Liberal Arts Honors

**Giving to Liberal Arts Honors**

Help Liberal Arts Honors Students pursue academic research, study abroad opportunities, and unpaid internships. You may give to Liberal Arts Honors online: http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/lahonors/giving.php

Of course, we welcome the opportunity to meet with you and seek your guidance in assisting the College. If you would like to make a donation, please mail your pledge for Liberal Arts Honors to:

Kathleen Aronson,
Director of Development and Alumni Relations
College of Liberal Arts
The University of Texas
1 University Station, G-6300
Austin, Texas 78712
“This will change your life.” “No, it really will.” I think these are two of the most cliché phrases college students hear and ones that after a while, you stop believing. However, there are some opportunities at University, which really can change your life – one of them being studying abroad.

I remember hearing upper classmen rave about how “awesome” and “cool” studying abroad is, even that it could be “life changing.” Of course I wanted to go but that is because I have a natural tendency to enjoy traveling (maybe a slight case of wanderlust) but ultimately I figured that it couldn’t be much different than all of the other times I had travelled. I believe that this is a common assumption made by a lot of pre-study abroad students and I cannot begin to emphasize how far from the truth that actually is.

My journey first began without me even leaving the university. Someone, one day, came into my Italian class and started, again, attesting to how their study abroad experience had been “life changing.” Those words again. Despite my initial skepticism, I went to the meeting to check things out. More people were present talking again about how great the program was and ultimately I decided that the best way to fully absorb a language was to be immersed in it. That afternoon I made one of the best decisions of my life and applied for the Rome Study Program.

Now I’ll fast forward to the actual life changing aspect of this whole experience – not only being, but living in a foreign country. Upon arriving at the Roman International Airport I found the group and we were quickly ushered into a Pullman that would drive us to one of the two main bus stations in Rome where my host mother was waiting for me. Getting nervous is not a feeling I usually deal with but the prospect of having to not only meet this woman but also speak Italian to her was almost enough to make me run in the other direction. However, I was already on the bus and running would get me nowhere so I met this wonderful woman and settled in.

There is truly a difference between visiting a city and then actually becoming apart of it. You establish a routine. Monday through Thursday I would get up and have the breakfast (some biscotti, aka chocolate biscuits) my host mother would have left out for me. Then I would get ready, hop on the tram that drives into the center of Rome and go to class. After class, depending on my homework, I would meet up with Italian friends who would show me around the city or sit at a café, do homework and drink a cappuccino. I’d then go home and fit in a quick run at the local park before dinner. Dinner was always the best part of my day. My host mom always had a delicious, and I mean delicious, home cooked meal ready for me knowing exactly how I liked things. Then we’d watch the eight o’clock news together, discussing issues and just chatting – all in Italian of course.

The weekends are something else. We had the freedom to do just about whatever we wanted as long as we left our information with the supervisors. One weekend in particular stands out – Nettuno, Italy. A few friends and I decided on Thursday afternoon after class that we wanted a relaxing weekend and hopped on a train to a little beach town an hour south of Rome. We spent the weekend on the beach, made quite a few Italian friends (with whom we still keep in touch) and discovered a less explored part of Italy. In my opinion, that’s what studying abroad should always be like: where you are free to be spontaneous.

That’s another invaluable aspect of this whole experience – you make connections. The friends I made in Italy are people with whom I plan on keeping in touch with and who I know will always make me feel welcome whenever I return to visit.

Now that I have finished rambling on and on, I really only have two things to say about studying abroad – This will change your life; it really will.

Juliette Seive, Government/Liberal Arts Honors
Blind Commitment

For simplicity and because Socrates referred to men in his argument, I will use masculine pronouns.

Sometimes, in the face of adversity, one must put collective ideology before individual life, and grow accustomed to the idea that perhaps he will perish in defense of the particular cause. But, according to Socrates, a “good” man will have no regard for his own life, only for maintaining honor and avoiding disgrace. With that, my opinion diverges. I believe that a good man can show concern for his life and those around him.

To support his argument, Socrates praises Achilles for demonstrating focus on honor, grace, following orders in danger, and not fretting about death. The language Socrates uses, however, is too strong for me. To die in an attempt to save lives and fight for a cause is one thing. But to die out of blind dedication to orders that put oneself in danger is another. A commander might not be able to manage his forces perfectly or properly adjust strategy as the battle unfolds. Given that the death of an individual is the ultimate loss in a war, I would hope that a foot soldier would not blindly or unnecessarily put himself in danger out of hubris or respect for orders. To me, such mindless and unwavering commitment to avoiding disgrace is primitive. I deem that an individual can rationally have enough devotion to die for a cause, but to only consider disgrace when in battle seems far too narrow.

To perish in battle because one is too hard-headed to face potential disgrace by altering strategy would indeed cause much unneeded pain to family and friends of the soldier. For instance, Japanese soldiers in WWII committed suicide before surrendering. While this act may have inspired other soldiers to fight harder, I imagine that the pain and suffering thrust upon the soldiers’ loved ones would outweigh the benefit. Additionally, once that soldier commits suicide, he can no longer do good in the world – only his memory. Thus, dying for a cause is only worth the resultant loss and suffering when that exit is visible enough to inspire the masses to fight for the cause.

But I should note that this dedication to honor and grace would be more praiseworthy in the heavily patriarchal, warring, and conservative atmosphere in which Socrates lived. In today’s relatively liberal world, there is much less need for a man to prove and assert his masculinity by heroic acts in dangerous situations. And in this way, the stance Socrates presents is somewhat anachronistic. Naturally, ideologies and definitions of good and bad evolve constantly, and I contend that honor and glory in battle are less important today than in 5th century BCE, a century of multiple wars in Greece.

As a final note, I would give my life if it were necessary for my family or others I consider family. My dad always told me he would give his right arm, or even his life, for his family, and I cherish that unconditional loyalty and love.

Dietrich Riepen, Economics/Liberal Arts Honors

Left: Juliette Seive with her Italian host mother. Right: Venice, Italy.
Alumni in Action:
Andy Uhler

I graduated with a degree in Humanities and English Honors in January of 2005. While I was enrolled at UT, I interned for two years at KUT Radio, Austin’s NPR affiliate. After graduating, I spent the better part of 2005 and the beginning of 2006 working in Germany and then in Spain. It was while I was in the latter country that I received a serendipitous e-mail from a friend I used to work with at KUT. She told me that David Brown, the former host of the nationally syndicated radio show, Marketplace, had recently moved to Austin and was starting up a music journalism program that they were calling Texas Music Matters. If I was interested, she said, they were looking for interns. I replied that, unfortunately (truth be told, it was not that unfortunate), I was working in Spain and wouldn’t be back in the states for a number of months.

When I got back stateside, I contacted my friend and asked if they were still looking for help.

She said they were and we set up an interview. Five years later, I was the Senior Producer for our broadcast and had the opportunity to host live events at SXSW and Bonnaroo for NPR Music. I recently had the opportunity to move to the News department and report every day on issues important to Central Texans. People always ask if I got a Radio/Television/Film degree. I tell them that everything I learned about radio I learned by doing radio. But the lessons and skills learned from my Humanities and LAH degrees have been far more valuable.

The thing is, anybody can develop the technical skills necessary to put together a good radio piece. But the ability to distill a ton of information into a digestible story takes the skills that are refined through a Humanities education. Some of more successful journalists I’ve worked with didn’t do any undergraduate work in journalism. My mentor got his masters in “great books” from St. Johns College. In the world of news reporting, I often tell people that you’re expected to become an expert on the issue you’re reporting on over the course of a few hours. You’ve got to be able to think critically and quickly assemble your thoughts for a general audience. And the Humanities degree gave me the tools to do just that.

Though I loved the work I was doing at KUT and the knowledge I was gaining through my reporting, I couldn’t get rid of the itch to go back to school. But I didn’t want to leave Austin. So, this September, I enrolled as a candidate for a Masters in Global Policy Studies at the LBJ School of Public Affairs here at UT. Over the past year, I did some reporting on Texas drought and became interested in the allocation of natural resources in our state and throughout the world. And over the next couple of years, I hope to learn about some policy changes we can make to help alleviate the stress of dealing with limited resources.

KUT was my first, and only, professional job out of college. I got my foot in the door as a work-study intern and never really left. If there’s anything I’ve learned, it’s that if you’re willing to work for free, businesses are not going to turn you down. You just have to be prepared to convince them to pay you at some point!

Andy Uhler, Humanities and English/Liberal Arts Honors, 2005

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