Study Abroad Opportunities

Living and studying abroad can enhance your education and help you stand out in the increasingly global job market. IU South Bend offers study abroad programs in Mexico, Europe, Belize, Costa Rica and South Africa. The school also has direct exchange relationships with international universities in Germany, Mexico, and Ireland. Additionally, students can take advantage of the more than 70 programs administered by IU's Office of Overseas Study. The shortest study program is 10 days; some programs are 3 weeks, some 4 weeks, all the way up to a full year abroad. Some programs have language requirements, but many do not. All the programs require a minimum GPA of 2.75 or special permission.

According to Scott Sernau, International Programs Director, most students return saying it was one of the most life changing experiences of their life. Students learn more in that time abroad than they do in a classroom setting in an equal amount of time. For some it is opening up a whole new world and broadening horizons. Taking advantage of these programs can satisfy requirements of a degree or certificate program. It also speaks well of a student's experience, helps their resumes stand out and adds an international dimension to their college career.

It can be expensive to study abroad. However, most forms of financial aid can be applied to study abroad programs and several scholarship programs are available to help offset the expense.

Sernau says, “Study abroad is an option for anyone; in particular our programs at this location are very flexible. They are targeted toward IU South Bend students. We have a lot of shorter term programs, we have a lot of low cost programs, and we have a flexibility that makes it possible for just about anyone. It takes some planning. For many it means planning a year ahead.”

For more information students can contact Professor Scott Sernau (s kernau@iusb.edu), the office of International Programs, or on the web at http://www.iusb.edu/~sbintl/study.shtml
Faculty Highlight

Assistant Professor of Anthropology—Theo Randall

Dr. Theo Randall is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology. He completed an undergraduate degree in sociology and holds a Master’s degree in Public Health. “My love for Anthropology comes from the situations or issues that people face being socially constructed and I think that Anthropology answers and explains the issues,” said Randall.

He is a passionate educator, “I like when I can convey the information to the students and they appear to understand it,” said Randall. He feels it is encouraging when he teaches lesson on topics that come so naturally to him. Randall states that he loves to teach for many reasons, but most of all because in the field of academia he is able to also be a role model to first generation students—and that is something he embraces.

Randall’s Advice for Undergraduate students:

- Find a major that you love and go for it, because the passion will encourage you to get through.
- Do not worry about getting a job, worry about that after college.
- Borrow as much as you need to help you get through to your goals.
- Associate yourself with like minded students and people, because if you are not around people that understand your goals they will discourage you.
A Fond Farewell to Dr. Bryce Merrill

Dear Dr. Merrill,

Two years ago I registered for an intro to sociology course with the intention of it being just one of the many requirements to get into the Nursing program. On the first day of class I walked into one of the larger rooms in Wiekamp and took a seat in the back of the room, expecting to receive a class that I “needed”. In walked the professor. At first glance I thought this would be a very interesting class—he was young and funny so he had my attention. I soon discovered that this was the beginning of something that I would value for the rest of my life.

I intended to come to IUSB and receive a degree that could and would send me into the workforce able to provide for my children. What I developed in the fall of 2009 was my ability to dream about the possibilities for me. You may be asking yourself, “How did you get that in a simple Intro to Soc class?” It is because of Dr. Bryce Merrill that I could see that not only was I smart enough to be a Nurse; I had the intelligence to be a doctor. It is because of Dr. Merrill that I begin to take layers of societal requirements off of myself, and begin to imagine myself outside of what I had previously known to be “real”. This professor taught me things outside of the classroom and my life will never be the same.

So I have been given the honor of saluting him and giving him the farewell that he deserves. Here it goes; Dr. Merrill your impact on your students at IUSB cannot go unnoticed. From the simple “hey how’s it going”, to the “let’s talk about Grad school”, we will not forget the impact you have had on us during our undergraduate lives. You came to IUSB with a purpose and goals. You leave with an extended family, a lot of well-wishers, and you should leave IU South Bend knowing that your legacy here will live on through many student and faculty accomplishments. You leave behind the Social Science lab, your vision for IUSB’s students. IUSB this is a place that needs to grow and it is with your dream that it began. You also leave behind all those that you have mentored and developed. We are all better because of your involvement in our lives.

Dr. Merrill, you mentored me so that I may now mentor someone else. You helped me find myself and understand the complexity of me, and also encouraged me to embrace all of myself. You leave IUSB and the one thing I want you to remember most about us, your students, is that you share in our degrees, our success, our shining moments, our careers, and our entire lives. You leave with the sense of accomplishment and a job well done. I believe that you have done more than you were hired to do and for that this is my thanks.

Best,
Niesha McGhee

Dr. Bryce Merrill photo courtesy of IUSB website
Staff Highlight

Meet our Secretary—

Kathi Piekarski

Kathi Piekarski is the administrative secretary for the Sociology and Anthropology Department, the Women’s Studies Program, Wolfson Press and the Center for a Sustainable Future. She received her B.S. in Secondary Education Degree from IU South Bend and holds a Licensed Practical Nursing Degree from Ivy Tech. Kathi has been employed at IUSB for the past 16 yrs. She loves reading, is passionate about animals, and currently volunteers in the community with her certified therapy dog, Paris, a black Standard Poodle. Some of the places she visits are Memorial Hospital, Family Children Center, Juvenile Justice Center, St Mary’s and Inwood Hills Estates. Kathi has also developed the Read to a Canine Friend Program at the St Joseph County Public Library. This is a program where children can spend time reading to Paris and other certified therapy dogs. This fall will be the first time she will be conducting the program at the Francis Branch library in addition to the main library downtown.

Kathi and Paris
Alumni Highlight — Kelly Hofferth

Kelly Hofferth graduated from IU South Bend in May 2001. She went on to obtain her Masters in education at the University of Notre Dame while participating in the A.C.E. program. For five years Hofferth also endeavored to teach math and science to students at area middle schools. She is currently working as a Client Improvement Manager at Press Ganey Associates in South Bend.

Alumni Highlight — Monica Escalante

Monica Escalante is an IU South Bend graduate in Sociology. She finished a Master’s Degree in Criminology at the University of Houston in Clear Lake, Texas. In addition, she began a PhD program in Criminal Justice Administration. Escalante worked as an adult probation officer for about three years and is currently an Academic/Transfer Counselor for San Jacinto College North and also a Criminal Justice adjunct professor at SJCN. Escalante recently got married and has a four month old son. “The best part of all this (except for my son!) was attending IUSB,” said Escalante, “That is the school that I truly consider my Alma Mater”. Escalante believes IUSB defined her as a person and who she is now because she had such a good experience while in attendance at IUSB and cherishes the memories of those she met while there. “None of the other schools (2) I attended will come close to what IUSB represents to me and for me!”
Participating in the ASA Honors Program at the 2010 ASA Conference in Atlanta was an amazing experience! The first day of the conference our program organizer told us, “you’ll take this experience with you far into the future”, and I must admit, I didn’t completely buy it. I also must admit, I was completely wrong. The people I met and the things I learned – I will absolutely take them with me for the rest of my life. I met students from across the country and around the world - from Los Angeles to Lima, Peru. We formed an amazing bond over our love for sociology and our ambition to keep pushing forward. Students were getting ready for endeavors from teaching in South America, the Peace Corps, and starting graduate school. We all learned from each other and were able to share our unique experiences.

Along with meeting fellow ASA Honors Program students, I was also able to meet and speak with many graduate students and professors who were at the conference.

I learned about how graduate school works, what to do and not to do to get into a good school, how to understand funding options, the importance of publishing and of having a supportive advisor – and so much more! Before the conference I felt a bit unsure, but now I feel ready to take those graduate applications by storm! Attending the conference and meeting with the professors and graduate directors in person gave me the confidence I needed to see myself as part of this wonderful world of sociology! It was incredible to sit in sessions and listen to presentations given by professors whose names I had only ever seen on the cover of a textbook. I felt as though I was sitting on the pulse of sociology – I had a front row seat to all of the new and cutting edge research that is flowing through the discipline. It completely reinvigorated my own research interests and I can’t wait to get started on them when I enter graduate school!

Aside from the conference itself, the Honors Program set up workshops and outings specifically for the participating students. We learned about continuing our studies, about research ethics and about ‘what can we really do with a degree in sociology?’ We were also able to present our own original research during student roundtable sessions. Additionally, program organizers also brought us out into the city. We toured the CNN Headquarters building, visited the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center and had incredible meals in local Atlanta restaurants. I cannot say it enough – this really was an experience of a lifetime. I made friends for life, learned invaluable information and just plain had a blast. I was proud to represent IUSB at the conference and in the program, and I would absolutely recommend the ASA Honors Program to any and all undergraduate students in the future.
Gail McGuire opted early in her teaching career to have students complete actual research projects in her courses in order to give them a more accurate understanding of the research process. One semester, however, is too short a time period to truly be able to work with students on all aspects of the research process. McGuire recognized that the process of writing up the research often received short shrift. This led her to develop the new course, SOC-S 457, Writing for Social Scientists. McGuire exposes the students to different forms of writing and works to build their confidence by helping them understand the connections between research and writing.

Throughout the course students produce a grant proposal, a research paper, a conference presentation, and a personal essay. In the Spring 2010, McGuire encouraged her students to submit their personal essays to WVPE, the local public radio affiliate, for broadcast on their “Commentaries” series.

Three students, Melissa Papp, Brandynne Chapla, and Jennifer Pace, took her up on the challenge. You can find the students’ commentaries in WVPE’s Archive.

Melissa Papp: “I found it to be a very rewarding experience to see my writing process evolve from an idea, to the written word, to a broadcasted commentary heard by others.”

Brandynne Chapla: “I appreciated the experience and it forced me to look at my feelings on going public with what I write. I received so much positive feedback. I encourage every student with the ability to put words into a picture to push them into the public forum because it will truly help them grow. I am very thankful that Dr. M encouraged me to share the words I wrote. It was motivating.”

Jennifer Pace: “Reading my essay on WVPE was such an amazing experience! It was an excellent opportunity for me to take my work out of the classroom. For students, being able to connect what we do in class with real world activities is a very important part of the learning process. I’m so glad that I had this opportunity available to me and I would highly recommend for other IUSB students to submit their work!”

Melissa Papp


Brandynne Chapla


Jennifer Pace

Summer Field School Opportunity

The summer of 2011 will have IUSB’s second archaeological field school in northern Indiana. The course is open to all majors. All IUSB students are invited to apply for this exciting learning experience that involves hands-on research and technical training in excavation, metric and qualitative analysis, global positioning system coordination, digital mapping, scientific writing, and database management. This year the field school will be held at the Collier Lodge site south of Valparaiso. Excavations will be held at Collier Lodge south of Valparaiso, Indiana, a site on the National Register of Historic Places. It contains important components related to Potawatomi interactions with Pioneers in the 1800s, and beyond that it has deeply stratified and well-preserved deposits related to human activities spanning the last 11,000 years. The site has been a research focus of Notre Dame and the Kankakee Valley Historical Society for several years, and we are very excited to have IUSB faculty and students join this collaborative team.

This year’s field school will have three weeks of excavation at the site (Tues-Fri, visitors welcome) followed by three weeks of artifact analysis at the IUSB Material Culture Laboratory in Wiekamp Hall.

See http://tiny.cc/vdtut for a field school flier, and watch the departmental web site for updates this summer.
If you'd like to help our students gain real world experience, click on the following link to give a donation to our department:


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