

Curriculum in International & Area Studies

Spring 2008 Newsletter



In this issue of the CIAS newsletter, we feature a story from alumna Erin Scharling '06. If you'd like to share the story of where your International Studies major has taken you, please e-mail tdhudson@email.unc.edu.



A Carolina Girl in Taliban Country: '06 Grad Provides Electoral Assistance in Pakistan and Beyond

I thought I was landing on the moon. The view from my window seat was one of rugged mountains and arid valleys as the pilot announced that, "in sha'Allah," we would soon be landing in Quetta, Pakistan, at the border to Afghanistan. Before long I was riding along a dusty road in the wild west of Pakistan, amidst covered women and armed men. I quickly understood why many observers include Quetta as part of "Taliban Country."

It was late September 2007, and I had journeyed to Pakistan on business for the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), an apolitical nonprofit in Washington that provides technical assistance for elections worldwide. Accompanied by a young female Pakistani colleague, I spent time in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore before reaching Quetta. When we weren't interviewing Pakistanis to assist on a nationwide project, my colleague provided me with invaluable insight into her culture and the

Muslim observance of Ramadan which blanketed the devoutly Islamic nation during my visit.

My work in the democracy and governance sector in Pakistan began with a simple job search from the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia, Cyprus, where I interned following graduation from Carolina in May 2006. I submitted my resume to IFES and was contacted several months later, when the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded the nonprofit an election support project currently valued at \$19 million. Within weeks, I began working at headquarters in Washington, DC, and backstopping our office in Islamabad, which serves as a base for our international and local staff to offer assistance to the Election Commission of Pakistan. Since the fall of 2006, our project team has secured the ballot boxes for use in the elections, *(continued next page)*

provided technical expertise in the development of the voter registry, educated the population about the electoral process, developed a system to manage election complaints, and conducted numerous other activities in support of free and fair elections in Pakistan.

Not surprisingly, it has been challenging to conduct such politically sensitive work in a country vulnerable to extreme internal instability and significant external pressure. Elections are so high-profile that they are guaranteed to hit the CNN news ticker, but development work in general presents many of the same professional and personal challenges faced by individuals in other occupations, such as the military or government service. The week before I departed for Pakistan, Newsweek magazine ran a cover proclaiming Pakistan as the world's "most dangerous" country, and my friends and family were horrified to learn that I would have minimal security compared to those working under the cover of the U.S. government. I shared their concerns, but I also pointed out that most NGOs operate in the

same, low-cover manner. We work at the grassroots level, with the people, in order to build their capacity in whatever sector, be it education, women's rights, or governance. It can be dangerous, but it is almost always very rewarding and productive.

My colleagues and I watched as Pakistani voters cast their ballots on February 18 in a vote which seems to indicate a continued shift of support away from President Musharraf and back toward the political parties of the previous Prime Ministers Bhutto and Sharif. We will continue to assist the Election Commission through the fall, and I will return to Islamabad for a month at the end of the summer. Hopefully by then Pakistan will have lost its crown of "most dangerous" and be on its way to a more stable and prosperous future.

— Erin Scharling was the 2006 recipient of the Douglas Eyre Award for Best Thesis in the International Studies Curriculum. She currently works in Washington, DC, as Program Coordinator for electoral assistance projects in Pakistan and the Caucasian nation of Georgia.



A Note from the CIAS Chair

As the 2008 presidential campaign continues to generate excitement, this issue of the CIAS Newsletter contains political reports by a former student and a faculty member from two locations, Pakistan and Iowa, a world apart, but intimately connected. The global power of the United States means that whoever is elected president this year will inevitably affect Pakistan, while the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan immediately became an issue on the campaign trail. Erin Scharling '06 and Jonathan Weiler (Director of Undergraduate Studies) are keeping abreast of political changes that affect us all through their work. One of the goals of a research university is to generate knowledge; one of the goals of a liberal arts education is to create the ability to think critically about complex issues. The interdisciplinary nature of the International Studies major makes CIAS uniquely suited to further both these goals. We invite you all to share with us the ways in which involvement with CIAS, whether as a student, an alumnus, or faculty member, illuminates your daily lives.

— Adam Versényi, Chair

News & Announcements

Covering the Iowa Caucuses

In January, Dr. Jonathan Weiler, CIAS Director of Undergraduate Studies, attended the Iowa caucuses with press credentials. He went to see events and hear campaign speeches by several of the major candidates, including Hilary Clinton, Barack Obama, John Edwards, Mike Huckabee, and Ron Paul, as well as a house party for Mitt Romney. He was able to speak with some of the key players in the campaigns, including Edwards' advisors Joe Trippi and David Bonior, as well as Elizabeth Edwards and Michelle Obama. He also did live-blogging from the historic Obama victory celebration party on the night of January 3rd.

Dr. Weiler says of his trip, "The highlight of my time there were the caucuses themselves. I went to two, and it was fascinating to watch the voters talk to each other about their preferences and to try to persuade one another to come over to their side. For a politics junkie, it was very exciting and felt consequential, especially given the potentially historic nature of 2008 elections, which the Iowa caucuses themselves made a real possibility."

Bringing the World to UNC

CIAS recently co-sponsored two exciting events at the FedEx Global Education Center:

- On January 24, the Carolina Women's Center, CIAS, and a number of other UNC units presented the North Carolina premiere of "Faces of Change" as part of the 27th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration. This powerful documentary features grassroots activists from different corners of the world who go behind the camera to find a voice denied to them because of their social, racial, gender, or ethnic background. Director Michele Stephenson armed five activists with cameras and sent them to explore their communities in Brazil, India, Mauritania, Bulgaria, and the United States in preparation for the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. These unique video



Support the Curriculum!

Gifts to the Curriculum in International Studies support our mission of providing Carolina students the opportunity to develop an appreciation for and fuller understanding of the global issues by giving us the resources to

- Bring speakers to campus
- Hold the annual CIAS commencement ceremony
- Recognize our honors students with the annual honors luncheon
- Fund awards
- And more!

To make a gift to the Curriculum, [click here](#) to give online (be sure to designate "Curriculum in International & Area Studies" in the department or program space) or contact The Arts and Sciences Foundation, 134 E. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, NC 27514, 919-962-0108. We truly appreciate your support!

dispatches relay the stunning commonalities of the participants' histories and experiences. The screening was followed by a discussion with the filmmaker.

- Where is "the Palestinian Gandhi?" As one Palestinian activist responded when asked the question, "We are everywhere." On February 12, Dr. Joe Groves, Co-Director of Interfaith Peace-Builders and Adjunct Professor of International Peace and Conflict Resolution at American University, gave the presentation "Nonviolence in the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict." His presentation explored the rich, varied, and largely unknown history of Palestinian nonviolent activism, much of it using Gandhian tactics, yet without "a Gandhi." The event was sponsored by Solidarity with Palestine Through Education and Action at Carolina and co-sponsored by CIAS.

For more information on events co-sponsored by CIAS, visit www.unc.edu/depts/ints/links.html#events. Additionally, the FedEx Global Education Center at UNC is hosting a wide range of cultural during the spring 2008 semester. Come to enjoy art exhibitions, music and dance, lectures, informal social events, and even coffee samplings! All events are free and open to the public. A full list of events is available at global.unc.edu.

Career Contacts

Thanks to the generosity of our alumni, CIAS has begun to establish a network of career contacts for our majors. We currently have alumni serving as contacts for six fields. If you're an INTS alumnus and are interested in serving as a career contact for your field or a student interested in speaking with one of the contacts, please e-mail tdhudson@email.unc.edu. Additional information is available on the CIAS website at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/ints/careers.html>.

Introducing the new GLOBAL.UNC.EDU

Explore this comprehensive new website, illustrating the breadth and depth of UNC's international assets and opportunities. At global.unc.edu, you will travel world regions, read news and stories about Carolina in the world, and discover 70+ UNC units engaged in global teaching, research and service.

The site illustrates how UNC, through its strategic partnerships and global presence, affects positive change in people's lives around the world. Experience UNC Global! Visit global.unc.edu.



Alumni, students, and faculty:

Do you have news to share? Know of events that may be of interest to CIAS students, graduates, and faculty? Send information to Tara Hudson, CIAS Administrative Manager, at tdhudson@email.unc.edu for inclusion in the next newsletter!

Faculty Awards & Recognition

- Assistant Professor **Banu Gökariksel** is a fellow at the Institute for the Arts and Humanities (IAH) this spring. The purpose of an IAH Fellowship is to “provide time for faculty to focus on specific research projects while exchanging their ideas with a diverse group of colleagues,” according to John McGowan, IAH director. Dr. Gökariksel’s project is entitled, “The Urban Spaces of Modern Women, Veiling as Fashion and Political Activism.”
- Assistant Professor **Christopher Nelson** is researching the history of Japanese nativist anthropology. Through archival research, Dr. Nelson is looking at the relationship between certain prewar Japanese ethnologists and their Okinawan counterparts.
- **Mark Sorensen** is currently undertaking research on health and culture change among Siberian reindeer and cattle herders. The project will attempt to explain the health consequences of rapid social and cultural changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and will increase our knowledge of the mechanisms through which social and cultural processes affect health and human biology. Dr. Sorensen is also working with colleagues at Carolina to develop a large-sample, multiyear, interdisciplinary study of the effects of market integration on health status among indigenous lowland Ecuadorian populations.
- CIAS Chair **Adam Versényi** has been appointed the Milly S. Barranger Distinguished Term Professor of Dramatic Art.

Student Updates

- **Audrey Gauss '09** and **Amanda Morgan '09** are recipients of the Michael L. and Matthew L. Boyatt Award for study abroad for spring 2008. The Boyatt Award is a merit-based scholarship to enable International Studies majors to study abroad. Audrey is studying this spring in Germany at Freie Universität Berlin and Amanda is studying at the University of Sussex (UK).
- **Alexandra Ogden '09** received the 2006-7 Laura Hudson Richards award. She is studying in Ecuador this spring as part of the SIT Culture and Development program. The Laura Hudson Richards award provides study abroad scholarships for International Studies majors demonstrating academic excellence and financial need.
- In January, **Angela Harper '08** exhibited her photo collection “The Faces of Child Trafficking” at the FedEx Global Education Center in conjunction with Free the Slaves. The exhibition shared the stories of children whose families sold them into slavery in Ghana’s Volta Region.



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