

Community-Based Learning for Notre Dame undergraduates in Europe

The Center for Social Concerns continues its initiative to promote community-based learning opportunities to Notre Dame students while they study abroad in Europe. Spring 2010 saw two courses with community-based learning components offered by ND faculty members to students.

Prof. Kevin Whelan again offered *"Introduction to Ireland"* to students studying in Dublin. Ten students in that course were placed in community agencies serving at risk youth, tutoring older students returning to university level education, animating events and visiting the elderly, and assisting in ESL courses with unaccompanied minors who are refugees to Ireland.

Teaching in London for the Spring 2010, Prof. Anton Juan offered *"Migration Issues in Contemporary British Theatre."* Besides reading, analyzing and attending theatre productions focused on the theme of migration, the students worked in a parish community organizing effort and with school children and their parents who are recent immigrants to London. This connection to Sacred Heart School in Battersea builds on a longstanding relationship between the ND London Centre and the school administrators. The end result of this community immersion was a theatre production, written and produced by the students in the class to give voice to the stories of immigration that have been shared with them over the course of the semester.

Professor Juan offered this reflection on the course: *"Indeed I have come out of this experience, as my class has, with fond memories and, even more so, a new knowledge not only to keep for ourselves but to contribute to the world. Most of all, the students have seen how theatre can indeed be the forceful tool to unite and speak out issues from diverse origins, from conceptual framework onto the space of the theatre and beyond."*

The performance, held at Sacred Heart School, played to a full auditorium on April 23rd. Peter Balestracci, a history major and Italian minor in this class, shared this reflection on his experiences: *"I learned a lot from this class. I learned migration stories, and about the people who tell them. I learned about the dynamics of the transmission of history from generation to generation, and the difference between the truth and what is often told to sugar-coat things. I learned that not everyone's stories are painful. Many people have very successful migration stories, and others aren't so fortunate. All in all, I met a wonderful group of people, heard their stories, and hopefully gave them an opportunity to express themselves and their culture."*

As greater numbers of students are studying abroad and Notre Dame moves forward with its efforts to internationalize, combining study abroad with community-based learning is one way to promote engagement and deeper learning for students in their host communities.

Rosie McDowell ('93, '07MNA) directs this initiative for the Center for Social Concerns in collaboration with on-site faculty and staff in Europe and the Office of International Studies on our home campus. Contact Rosie at McDowell.9@nd.edu to learn more or to get involved.

How Europe Alumni/ae can get involved:

- Share your contacts: If you are active as staff, a volunteer or on the board of an NGO or nonprofit that would accept students to intern, volunteer, or visit, please help us build a network of partner community organizations. Contact Rosie McDowell with your suggestions of places where Notre Dame study abroad students might have an opportunity to learn about social issues while in Europe.
- Become a 'fan' of the Center for Social Concerns on Facebook: When you do, you will keep up to date on all Center events and see photos of these and other community based-learning projects.
- Visit the Center for Social Concerns website to learn about these and other community-based learning opportunities: www.socialconcerns.nd.edu