



# UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

## B.A. IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

### NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2009  
ISSUE 5

## BAIS STUDENTS

### Immersed at Middlebury

By Jason Shah (BAIS, 2012)

As the spring semester came to an end and the mercury rose in the thermometer, all of us were excited for our own reasons. For some, it was the age-old adage “summer: sun and fun” while for some, it was the anticipation of travelling or simply enjoying long lazy days. I had both these and one more: The Spanish immersion program at Middlebury College.

Every summer since 1915, Middlebury College has been organizing Language Schools with the intent of educating motivated and interested people in different languages and cultures of the world. Renowned internationally for its accelerated language learning environment, the Language Schools offer intensive classes in ten different languages with a teaching faculty who come from all around the globe. The secret of the productivity of this program is its effective use of the Language Pledge – an honor-bound pledge taken by the students to use the language of study as their only means of communication during their stay. Sounds crazy, right? I thought the same and almost decided not to go. Little did I know that the same pledge would be the foundation of my joyful summer.

### Cultural Dialogue in Palestine

By Gioel Gioacchino (BAIS, 2010)

*Gioel spent the past summer in Nablus, Palestine working with Project Hope at a refugee camp. The following is an excerpt from her account of her stay.*

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has ramifications for politics all around the world, and understanding it, or trying to, is a must for every international relations student. However, when one tries to figure out the history and roots of the conflict, one becomes entangled in a confusing web of biased analyses of religion, culture, and politics that make it

When I reached Middlebury College, I was awed by the greenness and beauty of the terrain. It reminded me of my country, Nepal, and provided a serene backdrop for an intense summer of study and a severe test of my patience. My first day in class was catastrophic and I almost regretted being there. My professors were from Cuba and Mexico, and I didn't have the faintest idea what they were saying; it was as if they were speaking an alien language, not Spanish. I found out that all other students, placed in my academic level, had either studied more Spanish than me or had been abroad in a Spanish-speaking country for some period of time. I, however, had studied just two semesters of

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nearly impossible to obtain an accurate picture of the situation. Every article, discussion, and book on this topic left me with a sensation of looking at a half-megapixel picture of a thousand-year old tale. So, after having repeated this exercise of frustration numerous times, I decided that trying to understand people with-

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Spanish at UNO, and I had a long way to go.

As the days passed, I learned more Spanish than I could have imagined though I did not notice it immediately. I had four hours of classes each day, grammar

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**Interested in learning more about  
internship  
opportunities?**

**Go to our website and  
check it out!**

**[http://cola.uno.edu/BAIS/  
BAIS\\_internships.htm](http://cola.uno.edu/BAIS/BAIS_internships.htm)**

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR JOHN HAZLETT

This issue of the **BAIS Newsletter** benefits from the help of a guest editor—**Kaylan Geiger (BAIS, 2010)**, who comes to us with a good deal of experience as the editor of UNO's *Driftwood*. BAIS students have also authored the lead articles in this issue: **Jason Shah (BAIS, 2012)** writes about his experiences at the world-famous **Middlebury College Summer Language Schools**, and **Gioel Gioacchino (BAIS, 2010)** shares her thoughts on her work this past summer with **Project Hope** in a West Bank Palestinian refugee camp. We also have articles highlighting two new additions to UNO's international studies faculty—**Ambassador Peter Moser**, our first Diplomat in Residence, teaching in both the Political Science and History Departments; and Dr. Richard Frank, a newly hired Political Science Department faculty member with a specialization in the field of International Relations. Finally, this issue contains news of a recently established **Internship Agreement** between the World Affairs Council

of New Orleans (WACNO) and UNO that will be of particular interest to BAIS students. Three BAIS students are currently working with WACNO, and we expect that more will do so in the future.

More good news: the Program continues to grow, even during a period of budget cuts. Our enrollment is now higher than it has ever been, with almost 180 students on our office roster. Increased numbers are good, but we do not want to lose the sense of community that marked the program's first years. One of our goals this year, therefore, will be to create ways for BAIS students to interact more frequently—through a BAIS student organization (or by creating a student wing within WACNO) and through events—both social and intellectual. With that in mind, I'll be sending out notices of events organized specifically for BAIS students. In mid-September, for example, we held a panel presentation on the Crisis in Honduras, sponsored by WACNO and featur-

ing three representatives of the **Unión Cívica Democrática**, who came to the US to defend the new regime and the legitimacy of the upcoming November elections in Honduras. The day after the panel presentation, ousted President Manuel Zelaya slipped back into the country, giving those who attended the event a powerful sensation of sitting in the bleachers of an important unfolding international situation. In the coming weeks, we plan to have presentations for BAIS students on study abroad opportunities and internships. We are also working closely with other campus units—Center Austria, the International Student Exchange Programs, the Summer Study Abroad Programs, the College of Business, as well as those departments whose courses make up the curricula of the BAIS. Stay tuned. We will be bringing an event to your neighborhood soon.



## MIDDLEBURY...

homework, two quizzes and two or three essays each week with a number of presentations thrown in between. We spoke, talked, ate, and slept in Spanish. I wrote my first Spanish article in my composition class, and received a grade of C in return – the worst grade in my life. My progress was gradual, and by the second or third week, I had developed enough Spanish knowledge to share my feelings and present my opinions. I found out that the program was demanding, but not very difficult; for my last assignment, I wrote a four-page research paper – for me, the linguistic equivalent of climbing Mt. Everest.

When I recall those glorious days, the first things that come to mind are neither the classes nor the ordeals I faced in learning Spanish; I remember the awesome times I spent with some of the friendliest people I have ever met. Sharing the same dorms and same kitchen, I befriended people from all walks of life – students, college graduates, professionals and experts in Spanish language and linguistics. I had a group of friends with whom I went out to explore the town and nature, and take in the summer sun with great loads of fun. I also took salsa and tango classes, participated in the cooking club, played soccer and volleyball, and partied every weekend. As you must have noticed, the

Spanish school provides a great deal of extra-curricular activities along with intense class-work to give an enriching immersion experience. Not surprisingly, by the end of the summer, I fell in love with Spanish language and culture.

The greatest thing I learned this summer is that languages are alive. Just like a person, each language is a door to a new world full of opportunity, revelry, culture, and ideology. As much as I learned this summer in my classes, I experienced some unforgettable moments that will always remain dear to me. Every significant event produces a hundred memories. When I look at my summer experience at Middlebury, it also brings forth a hundred smiles.

## PALESTINE...

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out getting to know them is pointless.

Last summer, I was given a chance to pursue my interest in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict by drafting a proposal for a month long Cultural Dialogue workshop in Palestine. The project I prepared was accepted by a grassroots organization called Project Hope ([www.projecthope.ps](http://www.projecthope.ps)), which offers English and French lessons to the children living in Nablus, one of the largest cities on the West Bank. My personal goal for volunteering in Palestine was fairly simple: I wanted to get a 'feel' for the situation there by spending time with its residents and by listening to their stories. I do not like to build up expectations before I begin a new experience or visit a new place. In this case, I had no idea that my volunteering project would turn into such a profound learning experience. Project Hope (PH) and the city of Nablus have been an excellent platform that has allowed me to obtain an inside view of the Palestinian people and their struggle.

Nablus is a vibrant city, even though its recent history has been tough. In fact, it was the center of the Second Intifada which began in 2002 and ended only in 2006. The consequences of this long period of hostility are still very visible. Nablus has been isolated by check points for years and developed into one of the most conservative cities in Palestine. Nonetheless, Nablus is a lively city where smells and sounds are captivating and people are reacting to the deeply traumatizing experience of the Israeli occupation and the Intifada. I fell quickly in love with Nablus and its people.

Living in Nablus as a western woman is quite an experience. Virtually all the women in Nablus wear a headscarf and a black robe which

covers their arms and legs fully. As a PH volunteer, I was required to wear long sleeve shirts and long pants in the heat of Nablus. In spite of this, I was always very noticeable when I walked around the streets, and people would stop me frequently to ask in broken English where I was from and what I was doing. On my strolls, I was constantly followed by a group of at least three or four neighborhood children screaming 'What's your name?'; I must have repeated my name at least a million times to the same group of kids. Palestinian hospitality is almost overwhelming, and I received, and gladly accepted, numerous lunch invitations by locals. I was always amazed by the long-suffering patience that the Palestinians use to deal with their hardship.

In a place so different from the world I am used to, I could not feel like an insider while in Nablus; thanks to Project Hope, however, I never felt like a tourist either. In fact, PH is extremely well integrated with the local community. While the rest of the city might feel very conservative, the PH office is a sort of international melting pot where locals and international volunteers meet and exchange ideas very openly. PH utilizes its resources well by pairing a local volunteer (as a translator) with an international one (as a language teacher). In this way, volunteers can learn from each other and work sensitively with the local community.

If during the day I was constantly in contact with Palestinians, during the evening I would spend my time with the other twenty or so international volunteers, who came from all over Europe, Canada, and the US. For security reasons, we were not allowed to go out during the evening after 9:30. The curfew, however, was not very stringent as it was important for all of us to take the time to reflect upon and discuss our experiences. I lived in a humble



Gioel Gioacchino

<http://www.recrear-culturaldialogue.blogspot.com/>

apartment, which I shared with a Canadian girl studying for her masters on the Middle East and a British journalist working on economic issues. Every evening we fixed our dinner on the balcony, watched amazing sunsets over Nablus, and talked about politics and life while megaphones called the city to prayer with beautiful Arab chants. In our apartment building, we had two bathrooms to share among all twenty of us, and very little water. Yet, I rarely felt as happy as I have felt in Nablus.

My happiness in Nablus grew also out of the sense of deep fulfillment I obtained from the Cultural Dialogue workshop I invested so much energy in organizing. Project Hope assigned me to work with the summer school of the Askar Refugee Camp. The camp, only 10 minutes from Nablus, has a large population of around 15,000 people and was established in 1950. Life in the refugee camps is harder than in Nablus as so many people are crowded into a very small space with poor recreational and social structures. In addition, most of the children I worked with had seen one of their siblings, parents, or close relatives killed or arrested by the Israeli Army. As a consequence, the atmosphere in

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Askar is very tense.

I was assigned to a class of twelve energetic fifteen year olds for my project. The sessions, held three times per week, were designed to increase cultural awareness through the tool of photography. In the first phase, the students were introduced to basic photography techniques, and we took pictures around the Askar Refugee camp shooting the crucial features of the Askar culture. During the last two weeks of the month, students prepared short presentations describing the significance of the pictures they took. As a final pro-

ject, we created a poster with pictures and descriptions. In addition, throughout the month, my students engaged in various challenging discussions on topics like stereotypes and intercultural communication.

The workshops turned out to be a great opportunity for students to reflect upon the impact of culture on their way of perceiving the world. Listening to their stories and experiences was extremely powerful; I was finally able to connect real faces to the stories I have been avidly reading about for the last few years. Parallel to my project, I was teaching English to the nurses of the local hospital and Italian to a couple of university students. This extensive interaction with

Palestinians was important in helping me understand their view of the world and in showing me what they made of life in a stateless, military occupied society.

Almost two months after my return to the US, it is still difficult to distill what I have learned from my experience in Nablus. Despite countless discussions on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, I must admit I am still frustrated by its complexity. However, I have definitely learned that in a situation of conflict, politics touches all people, and very deeply; I plan to keep this lesson in mind as I pursue my career.

## Looking ahead...

- ◆ World Affairs Council of New Orleans PubNite  
Social gathering for the purpose of sharing experience with internationally-oriented professionals  
6-8 pm —Oct 1 2009 @ Westin Hotel at Canal Place, New Orleans
- ◆ New Orleans Citizens Diplomacy Council "Diplomacy Night"  
Educational event featuring presentations on 24 countries  
5-7 pm—Oct 1 2009 @ Pete's Club in the Intercontinental hotel, 444 St. Charles Avenue
- ◆ "The State of Trans-Atlantic Relations: Austria, the European Union and the United States"  
Dr. Christian Prosl, Austrian Ambassador to the United States  
10 am—11:30 am, Oct 1 2009 @ Library 407, the University of New Orleans

## ATTENTION

### Changes within the Critical Languages Program

This semester, the Critical Languages Program, formerly offered through Metro College, became part of the Department of Foreign Languages in the College of Liberal Arts. For more information on studying critical languages, such as Russian, Arabic and Vietnamese, students can call 504-280-6934.



## BAIS Welcomes New Professors to Campus

By Kaylan Geiger (BAIS, 2010)

### Former Austrian Diplomat Becomes UNO Professor

A new face can be seen in the halls of the University of New Orleans' History Department. **Dr. Peter Moser**, the tenth annual Marshall Plan Chair for the academic year 2009-2010, is the first ever Diplomat-in-residence for UNO. This semester he is teaching "The Practice of Diplomacy" and "European Diplomatic History."

Dr. Moser brings with him years of diplomatic experience. "My personal motivation has been my interest in history," said Moser, who has worked as a diplomat for Austria in every corner of the globe, from Bulgaria to India, from Japan to Washington D.C.

"I have developed something that is just the contrary of home sickness," joked Moser of his willingness to live in places far from his birthplace in Vienna.

Moser was trained at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and was admitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1967. His first assignment abroad was in New Delhi, followed by a stint in Bulgaria, which, at the time, was under communism. He then served as the Consul General in Los Angeles. Afterwards, he became the first Austrian Ambassador to South Korea, before becoming Ambassador to the US. Moser retired as a diplomat after serving as Ambassador to Japan.

"I had a key interest in East Asia, always," Moser said of his positions in Seoul and Tokyo. As the first Austrian Ambassador to Seoul, Moser said that witnessed South Korea's "transition from a police state to a democracy." The ambassadorship in Japan, he added, was "a reward." The Japanese love Austrian culture and music, "they love our culture, our cities, our society, [our] music."

Moser was Ambassador in Washington D.C. during the weeks following September 11 and later, as the U.S. deployed troops to Iraq and Af-



ghanistan.

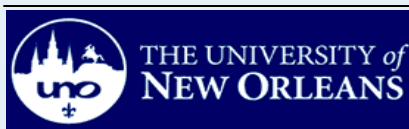
*Ambassador Moser in his office  
Photo by Malcolm Mansour*

"It is easy for the [United States] to win wars, but it is much more difficult to win at peace," analyzed Moser. "One ounce of peace has more weight than one ton of victory."

Moser recommends traveling and learning about the international system, adding that "since we are growing towards globalization, International Studies is a good tool."

He also recognized that the role of a diplomat is changing. "Before, a diplomat had more or less the task of a gate keeper," said Moser. "The role is not a gate keeper anymore; now you have to be a facilitator."

Moser also acknowledged the importance of language in the profession; he speaks German, English, Spanish, French and others. "Each language," he said, "is a new habit, a new cloth, a new window."



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### Bringing the Experience of Seven Continents with Him, Assistant Professor Richard Frank Joins the Political Science Department

Not many people can claim to have lived and traveled on all seven continents, but new International Relations Assistant Professor **Richard Frank** can.

The number seven appears to be lucky for Frank. He spent seven years traveling to over 70 countries on all seven continents, amassing a great understanding of the world along the way.

"It's definitely important to understand what's going on in the rest of the world," said Frank, who initially studied literature as an undergraduate before taking to political science.

"Travel has underscored the importance of the United States for me," said Frank, describing what it was like to see people in developing countries wear t-shirts featuring American pop artists. "It is really a bizarre effect."

Of the favorite places he has visited, Frank mentioned "New Zealand for the outdoors and Tibet for the mountains." But he added that "East Africa left the biggest impression," stating that he was studying how minorities are represented in different parts of the world.

Frank has also traveled in Pakistan, Central Asia, the Congo, and yes, he has even lived in Antarctica, allowing him to truly conquer all seven continents.

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## News Around Campus

### Amnesty International-UNO Chapter on Campus

The University New Orleans welcomed its own chapter of the human rights advocacy group, Amnesty International, onto campus last Fall. Founded by UNO student Jason Shah, the volunteer organization plans to examine hot topics, such as the death penalty, human rights, poverty, and violence against women and children.

The group has already organized events and activities on campus, such as a collaboration with The Women's Center last April for a book discussion of *Three*

*Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson.

And on September 19, Amnesty International UNO organized a 'Death Penalty Teach-In' to discuss capital punishment with a panel made up of death penalty experts and practicing attorneys.

Students can become involved in the organization by contacting Group Coordinator Jason Shah at [jshah@uno.edu](mailto:jshah@uno.edu)



### WACNO Internship Provides Opportunities for BAIS Students

The World Affairs Council of New Orleans (WACNO) is offering internships for BAIS students that will give them a chance to work directly with programs with an international perspective.

"We want to give all students the opportunity to get exposed to international affairs," said Eduardo Platon, the current Executive Director for WACNO.

WACNO currently has three BAIS students enrolled as interns, Gabriel Ruiz, Jason Shah, and Tammy Vu.

"It seems like it is going to help me in my international studies program," said Ruiz, who works directly with the programs offered by WACNO, including PubNite, which occurs the first Thursday of each month.

"PubNite is a great networking program for professionals, students, and international affairs enthusiasts," said Ruiz. The next PubNite will be hosted at The Westin Hotel at Canal Place from 6 to 8 p.m. on October 1.

The internship program was initiated only last June 20, but despite that, interns are already im-

plementing significant changes.

"The program is growing," said Platon. "We want to get students from all area universities and have a diverse group." Platon said that students wishing to apply for internships in the spring should start by mid-December and that decisions will be made in early January.

WACNO's office, housed in UNO's Research and Technology Park, provides people who live in the metropolitan area with a variety of programs and speaker events on topics related to international affairs, cultures, and global topics.

"Our mission is to educate New Orleans on international affairs," said Platon, who is originally from Salvador, Brazil and who studied at UNO as an exchange student. "We want to make international events and trends more visible here."

UNO students can become members of WACNO by paying a discounted fee of \$15. For information on enrolling as a member of WACNO visit their website at [www.renola.net](http://www.renola.net)

### Professor Richard Frank...

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"People around the world are unfailingly polite," said Frank of those he has met while traveling. "Often the friendliest of people are the ones who have the least exposure to foreigners."

Of his experience thus far in the classroom at the University of New Orleans, Frank said that when students have "international experience, it helps in the discussions." Students with a variety of perceptions from all walks of life and all corners of the globe enrich the conversation.

"The students are engaged and interested," said Frank of his two current classes, a graduate course in "International Conflict" and a 4000-level course on "Politics of Developing Areas." Frank said that his goal in the classroom is to make a "connection between political science as a research method and as a tool for affecting policy."

Having only been in the city of New Orleans for several weeks, Frank finds himself adjusting to both the heat and the culture. "Politics is almost like a sport here," said Frank of the city. "Being here, you definitely get a different perspective, seeing it up close."



*Photo by Malcolm Mansour*