Alt Spring Break: Oaxaca
By Paula Straile-Costa

Please keep your eye out for students who might be interested in our international Alternative Spring Break trip to Oaxaca, Mexico. It takes a special kind of student, willing to give up the comforts we enjoy in this country, in order to learn about the effects of globalization on local communities abroad. Last year I went with eleven students who experienced an intensive immersion in the Oaxacan culture. Here are some highlights from their trip. Working with a Mexican NGO called Enlaces Comunitarios/Community Links, we were able to live and work in San Luis Tilantongo, a rural Mixteca indigenous community, building rain water cisterns for the extremely arid region.

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The previous year’s group planted seeds for 3,000 trees and built greenhouses for the seedlings. We visited an artisan collective called Ecoalebrijes, whose name comes from their ecologically conscious production of alebrijes, the fantastic wood carvings painted in incredible detail that are traditional to Oaxaca and very sought internationally. The artists of the collective harvest the sacred copal wood needed for the alebrijes in a sustainable manner due to its depletion in the region. We visited a carpet weaver and learned about every aspect of techniques that have been in his family for over 100 years.

AIS Faculty Updates
Faculty Research and Pedagogy Events

Patricia Ard will be giving two conference presentations this fall. The first is at the International Conference on the Book, in October at Emerson College. This presentation concerns the material culture of literature and famous authors. It is titled “Literary Things: Marketing Authors in Objects.” The second presentation is in Philadelphia at the Society for the Study of American Women Writers. It is titled “Mary Peabody Mann and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento: Correspondence between the Americas.”

Walt Brown, a widely published author on John F. Kennedy, spoke to the History Club on November 2. Brown demonstrates a couple of examples of the process of investigating JFK’s murder, but is more hopeful of fielding numerous questions from the audience. Brown’s next JFK project, a CD-ROM database that will be approximately 5,000 pages in length, is scheduled to be released in January, 2008.

Lisa Cassidy has been appointed the treasurer of the eastern branch of the Society for Women in Philosophy (E-SWIP). In addition to creating their website and managing memberships, Lisa will also serve on the program committees for all organizational activities, including the committee that annually chooses the recipient of the Distinguished Woman in Philosophy award. Cassidy, with Bernard Roy, also coordinated the New Jersey Regional Philosophical Association’s fall 2006 meeting, which was held on campus on November 4.

In summer 2006, Rosetta D’Angelo conducted research (in archives in Italy and interviewd partisans), with co-author for the forthcoming book: Resisting Bodies: Italian Partisan Women during World War II. In September, she was invited to read her poetry at Hofstra University. In October, she traveled to University of Buenos Aires for the “Congreso International de literatura: Arte e Cultura en la Globalizacion” Conference; her paper was entitled “New Narrative Styles, National Identity, and Marvelous Realism in the Poetic Tales of Contemporary Haitian Women’s Writers.” She also delivered Italian Women in Trans National activism at the University of Arizona at Tucson, in addition to lecturing at the Upper Saddle River Library.
years. He uses all natural products down to the soap used to wash the raw wool made from berries and vibrantly colored dyes made of plants and even a small cactus beetle worth 100 dollars a kilo. We learned about the way many indigenous sociopolitical systems are practiced in Oaxaca, for instance, the practice of tequio or lifelong community service and guelaguetza, the practice of sharing one’s wealth, whatever that may mean. Our host shared with us many of the traditional beliefs about healing and methods practiced in the community. We witnessed the incredible efforts in reforestation of an NGO called SEDICAM that planted 17,000 trees last year and over 2 million since its initiation in the 1980s. The really impressive part of this work is that it has been done through grassroots organizing of communities that have been so depleted through migration to urban centers and abroad due to the way global economics has hindered the tenant farmers’ ability to sustain themselves. Finally, we climbed to the ancient site of Monte Alban (below).

2007 Trip to Puebla, Mexico: Oaxaca has been featured in the international news since last May when a revolution was sparked just weeks after last year’s trip. Teacher unions gathered in Oaxaca to make their yearly petitions to the state for improved working conditions and support for Mexican education. Amnesty International has visited and recorded numerous human rights violations. At least a hundred and fifty people have been detained without access to family or legal counsel and some even tortured. At least 13 people have been killed over the course of the protests. The protest has apparently ended, but the violence and repression continue. Finally, the program we worked with, Enlaces Comunitarios/Community Links, had to shut down operations. Thus, this spring, we plan to work with them in the state of Puebla. Iraida López will pilot a similar service trip to Cajolá, Guatemala this May as well.

AIS Clubs & Organizations
Students and Faculty Events

The AIS Colloquium Committee, consisting of Yvette Kisor, Lisa Cassidy, and James Hoch had two presentations this fall: The first featured talk was political science professor Jeremy M. Teigen speaking on “Swift Boats and Swing Votes: Military Service and American Electoral Politics” on October __. The Political Forum co-hosted this event. Sigma Tau Delta (literature honor society) co-hosted the second colloquium event, a lecture by literature professor Monika Giacoppe. She spoke about her recently published book, a translation of Stephanie Corinna Bille’s stories, as well as about the process of translation. This event was on December 6. The AIS Colloquium Series is partially funded by a grant from the Ramapo College Foundation.

Fall 2006 Culture Club activities:

► Multicultural Festival by the Arch, with US popular songs and Puerto Rican dance, on Sept. 25.
► Marguerite Dunne (AIS) gave a talk entitled “The Medicinal Value of Herbs” on Oct. 16.
► Regina Clark (SSHS) gave a talk entitled “Modern Segregation: Should We Overcome?” on Nov. 13.
► End of Semester Party on December 4, with a cultural exhibit from Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Cuba, China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Iraq, Italy, South Korea, Morocco, Panama, Russia, Spain, United States, and Vietnam.

The Italian Club hosted a Poetry Reading by the Italian-American Poet: Daniela Gioseffi, an American Book Award Winning author of twelve books of poetry and prose.

Political Forum held an election coverage watching party at J Lee’s on election night. Additionally, the club organized a debate between the College Democrats and College Republicans for the week after the election.

A warm welcome is extended to the new international scholars currently at Ramapo. Laura Barbin, Chafik Chakir, Verónica Muñoz, and Abel Pérez Abad, all four Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants in French, Arabic, and Spanish, come to us from France, Morocco, Argentina, and Spain respectively. We also welcome Tatiana Ivouchkina, of Volgograd State Pedagogical University, and Ning Qiao (aka James), of the Utah Institute of Science and Technology, Shanghai Normal University, who will teach Russian and Chinese language and culture. We are lucky to have them on campus. They are helping us to implement the international/intercultural mission of the College.
Marguerite Dunne just published article in Chronogram, entitled “Abraham Cherrix and the Hoxsey Formula Nonpharmaceutical Cancer Treatment in the Pharmaceutical Era.” In her other life outside of Ramapo, Dunne is a clinical herbalist and presented her work to the Culture Club on the traditional use of herbal medicine.

Chuck Carreras is on sabbatical this semester. His project is working with the Mahwah Museum. There is a very special exhibit going on until December 16 centered around George Washington’s passing through Mahwah on August 26, 1781. They have on exhibit a large part of a collection on loan, which include pewter plates given by Washington to Mahwah resident Andrew Hopper.

There are many other items of interest from this very valuable collection. The museum is open Saturdays and Sundays from 1-5 and is located on Franklin Turnpike in Mahwah. If anyone would like to arrange a special opening for a class please call Chuck at 201-825-3840 or email at ccarrera@ramapo.edu. The main focus of his work is organizing the archive. The hope is to arrange to have Ramapo students intern at the Mahwah in the future. Last Spring semester there were two Ramapo students who worked at the museum, and this semester there is one.

Dana Crum, adjunct professor at Ramapo since spring 2006, has recent publications in both creative writing and scholarship. Among the highlights are: “Nothing Can Remain Unchanged” (a novel excerpt), published in Bronx Biannual: Urbane Urban Literature (a literary journal) in July, 2006. In addition, Crum’s round-up review of nonfiction books on how American writers have portrayed African-Americans will appear in the Jan/Feb 2007 issue of Black Issues Book Review. There are many other items of interest from this very valuable collection. The museum is open Saturdays and Sundays.
Niza Fabre presented “Lo popular en la literatura: mitos y supersticiones en Huasipungo (1934) de Jorge Icaza y en Juyungo (1943) y LaEntundada (1971) de Adalberto Ortiz” at the Association of Ecuatorianists in North America in Guayaquil, Ecuador, July 18-22. The translation of the title is: “Popular Culture in Literature: Myth and Superstition in Huasipungo of Jorge Icaza and in Juyungo and The Entundada of Adalberto Ortiz.” On November 7, she also made a presentation on “Misconceptions of Voodoo,” sponsored by the Haitian Organization for Progress. Her translation from Spanish into English of the book Blacks in Central Central America, which was written in Spanish by Santiago Valencia Chala was published in July 2006 by Mellen Press. The book is dedicated to Angelo Tarallo, who assisted in reading and revising her English translation. Virginia Gonsalves-Dumond (SSHS) wrote a scholarly preface and Karl Johnson (SSHS) and Samuel Pinn (SSHS) provided support and revision of the manuscript. She also gave a talk on “Culture and its Definition” for the Culture Mix Week at Ramapo on November 20.

Monika Giacoppe’s forthcoming book, The Transparent Girl and Other Stories, co-translated and edited with Christine Makward, will be published by Lexington Books this spring.

Sharon Goldman, along with Jeremy Teigen, served as panel discussants at the Northeastern Political Science Association Conference in Boston on November 9-11.


Susan Hangel presented a conference paper on my ongoing research on the Nepali diaspora at the 35th Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison, WI, Oct. 20-22. The paper was called “Global Gurungs” DVDs, Photographs and the Production of Intimacy.” She organized the panel, called “Connecting with the Nepali Diaspora: Media, Politics, and Affect.”

James Hoch won an National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Grant in Poetry for $20,000. This year a panel of judges selected 50 recipients from a pool of 1100 qualified applicants. The grant was awarded based upon a selection of poems. Poems have been accepted in the following journals: Forklift Ohio, 32 Poems, and Poetry Northwest. His new book, Miscreants, is due out in June from WW Norton.

Robert Janusko (adjunct, English) is a discussant in the internet “Ulysses for Experts” group. Membership in the group is by invitation and is limited to 20 participants. Among others in the group are the editors of the Critical and Synoptic edition of James Joyce’s Ulysses and of the James Joyce Archive, and the directors of the Dublin, Zurich, and Antwerp Joyce centers.

Yvette Kisor’s piece on Beowulf, “Numerical Composition, Howlett, and Beowulf: A Consideration,” has been accepted for publication in the premier journal Anglo-Saxon England. In addition, her article, “‘Elves (and Hobbits) always refer to the Sun as She’: Some Notes on a Note in Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings” will appear in Tolkien Studies 4 (2007).

Iraida H. López has presented at five different venues since February, including the Latin American Studies Association Congress in San Juan, PR, and a National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar at SUNY Buffalo, where she was a participant. Her article “La elaboración del espacio en la última narrativa autobiográfica cubano-americana” was published in Temas: Cultura, ideología, sociedad 44 (Fall 2005). Her review of Among Worlds/Entre Mundos, a volume of essays on Gloria Anzaldúa, is forthcoming in MELUS, and a second one of Eliana Rivero’s Discursos desde la diáspora appeared in Letras femeninas. Her entries on Chilean folklorist Violeta Parra and Cuban novelist Ena Lucía Portela are forthcoming in the Routledge Encyclopedia of
American wood engraver and painter named Elbridge Kingsley. The grant enables Race to hire an American Studies student, Daniel London, to help with the transcription of a sample chapter of the memoir, and with researching and writing the annotations. Rice also delivered the keynote address at the “Blackstone Canal Symposium” in November at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. The symposium focused on the history of the Blackstone Canal, which was completed in 1828 and which helped turn Worcester into an important manufacturing center. His talk was entitled titled “Heads and Hands: Imagining the Industrial Order in Antebellum America.”

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**Carter Meyer** published an article, “‘The Battle between Art and Progress’: Edgar Hewett and the Politics of Region in the Early Twentieth Century Southwest,” appearing in the fall 2006 issue of *Montana: The Magazine of Western History.* She also has a published book review of Jorold S. Auerbach’s *Explorers in Eden: Pueblo Indians and the Promised Land* (University of New Mexico Press, 2006) appearing in the forthcoming issue of *Journal of American History.* Meyer was also part of a panel presentation with Judith Jeney, Jeneffer Mazza, and Tom Heed at the American Studies Association conference in Oakland, CA on October 14. The panel focused on Ramapo’s recent U.S. State Department grant to develop an American Studies Center at Volgograd State Pedagogical University in Russia. The title of her paper was “Assessing Diversity: A Transnational Exchange.” Meyer has also been invited to serve on a panel of consultants for a major new exhibit on Native Americans in American Popular Culture being organized by the Oakland Museum of California.

**Monica Pelaez**’s article on Emily Dickinson’s critical dialogue with sentimentalism entitled “Reversing the Irreversible: Dickinson and the Sentimental Culture of Death” will be included in the forthcoming volume *Essays on Culture and Irreversibility,* to be published by Cambridge Scholars Press in spring 2007. The essay considers Dickinson’s resistance to the sentimentalism that not only dominated American popular literature by the mid-nineteenth century but also contributed significantly to her development as a poet.

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ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Paul Elowitz traveled to Barcelona to give a paper this July and then spent four days in July doing historical travel and research in and around Arles in France. (Thanks to the college for the $200 it contributed to this activity, which paid most of my registration fees.) His wife Geri is recovering nicely from her serious intestinal surgery to correct her diverticulosis.

Ron Hayashida’s daughter is attending Lafayette College in Easton, PA, where she is enjoying a freshman seminar on “Death and Dying” (the crematorium was great) and where is also playing Club Soccer. She says that Ramapo’s cafeteria, especially its salad, is much superior to that of Lafayette’s. Her main complaint is that she has to do her own laundry.

This past summer Bernard Roy continued the custom of moderating philosophical discussions in a nursing home in the south of France. Bernard barters this service for the use of the nursing home library for his research. This year, there was a new resident/participant; he is a retired general from the Gendarmerie Nationale and had just celebrated his 100th birthday. The others, in their low nineties, were youngsters. The topics of discussion, proposed by the participants, were: “La Mode” (Fashion) and “Activité d’aujourd’hui--Activité d’autrefois” (Things we do today and things we did in the old days). Bernard also moderated a café philo in Ibiza, Spain. The participants were non-Spanish residents of the island; they came mostly from England. The topic they chose was: “How can the Christian West make some accommodation with Islam.” Since his return from Europe he has resumed the bi-weekly moderation of cafes philo in Manhattan. On October 26th, 2006 the Manhattan group will discuss the purpose of values. The same topic will be discussed in Atlanta, D.C., Paris, and Ibiza. The summaries of the discussions will be posted on the web.

Anyone interested in reading the results should contact broy@ramapo.edu.

In August, Lisa Cassidy married her fiancé Mark Meiler. Anthony Padovano officiated the New Canaan, Connecticut ceremony. The weather was perfect, the groom’s father was the best man, the bride’s mother was the maid of honor, and the eight of the couple’s nieces and nephews comprised the rest of the wedding party. Afterwards the couple honeymooned in Brazil. (Thanks Paula Straile-Costa for vacation advice!).

Katina Manko and Gary have welcomed Sylvia Pearl and Madelaine Juliet (pictured above) to the family. They came very suddenly at 11:27 and 11:28 on Saturday night October 28, weighing in at 2 pounds 15 ounces and 2 pounds 13 ounces. The twins are very tiny, they each gave a little wail when they delivered and are very kicky and feisty. The amazing NICU nurses at Albany Medical Center are very positive and comforting; neither baby is on oxygen and each needs just a little assistance breathing. They have a long way to go, of course, and will stay in the NICU for another 8-10 weeks (maybe a bit less). Once Tina is released from the hospital she will move over to the Ronald MacDonald House just across the street so she can stay near the babies, as she cannot drive for a few weeks. She gives her heartfelt thanks to everyone for all the support and encouragement.

During the summer Jeremy Teigen tagged along with his wife, Julie George, on her field work researching ethnofederalism in post-Soviet space, heading to various cities in the Caucuses, including Tbilisi and Batumi.