



LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY
experience the world

COMPARATIVE RELIGION AND CULTURE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2009 – 2010

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LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Global College takes as its mission the development of well-educated world citizens. Virtually all the world's inhabitants now live in a world society, but we do not always have the know-how to live with one another *well*. Learning how religions function in this society, for better and for worse, is one vital source of this much needed know-how. Thus, in line with the mission of Global College, the Comparative Religion & Culture (CRC) Program creates opportunities for you to learn from scholars and dedicated participants of many religions how they understand the world and its present challenges.

I have been working with CRC students since 2001. The impact this program has on students continues to inspire me. Let me offer just two memorable instances.

In Thailand, students were shocked by the disjunction between the image of Buddhist simplicity they brought with them from the United States and the opulent temple-headquarters of several Buddhist organizations that hosted us. Starting from this simple surprise, the students left with a far more complex understanding of Buddhism and a heightened ability to question their own presumptions.

In India, we were walking to class one bright, dusty morning, just as seemingly every Muslim man in the city was heading – in the opposite direction – to a nearby mosque to celebrate the ending of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Conspicuously not part of this surging assembly of faith, and not knowing what else to do, we began to greet them as they passed, “*salaam aleykum*” (Peace be unto you). Soon, we were greeting and being greeted enthusiastically by everyone who passed. I'll never forget it.

The semester long program begins in Turkey, where you will study a variety of Islamic practices. Then, in India, you will look at Hinduism, Buddhism, and Tibetan issues. You will continue eastward in the second half of the semester, and after a week long recess in Thailand, immerse yourself in Theravada Buddhism, and issues of social justice.

In the meantime, I invite you to read through the following pages. They will tell you more about what you can expect as a CRC student. To ensure that you receive additional information during the summer, please keep the admissions office informed of any updates to your e-mail, phone or mailing address.

Sincerely,

Robert Glass, PhD
University Dean of International Education
Dean, Global College

INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE RELIGION AND CULTURE

Global College takes as its mission the development of well-educated world citizens. Every year, the program in Comparative Religion and Culture (CRC) offers a small group of undergraduate students the chance to explore the meaning of this mission in relation to the world's religions. CRC is a one-of-a-kind experience, combining theoretical study with extensive exposure to religious practice in several different cultural contexts.

Virtually everyone on the planet now live in a globalizing society. Each of us is affected by distant others, whom we may never know. And close neighbors may go about their lives with different assumptions and expectations than do we. Life in a global society is full of such fascinating and frustrating encounters.

Why religion, though?

Religions play a variety of roles in life, for better or for worse. CRC students learn a great deal about many of these roles. But in particular, one of the primary roles religion plays is as a source of personal orientation in one's world. However well or badly, religious participants gain an orientation to their world that shapes how they understand and act in it. For this reason, religions today have a vital influence in efforts to create a livable world community.

CRC helps students learn about and wrestle with, the situation of religions today by creating opportunities to study with scholars and learn from dedicated practitioners, across several cultures.

Interestingly, and importantly, there are many different religions and many different cultures. Not only are they different, though. At times, they seem quite divergent: each of these truly different ways of understanding and acting in the world is endorsed by centuries of experience as a (if not *the*) good and true orientation to have. Thus, although there is increasing interaction, oftentimes that interaction is just confusing. (Sometimes it is damaging; sometimes it can be wonderful.)

In short, even though religions are a source of personal orientation in one's world, most religious traditions are struggling to sort out how their adherents ought to orient themselves towards others. Within traditions, then, there is a great diversity of views about the meaning of other religions. Indeed, the same tradition itself can mean different things from one culture to another.

This complex situation points to a problem for life in a global society. CRC students learn first hand about the situation, and they are also expected to address the problem explicitly. The problem can be posed the following way, borrowing language from the Global College mission statement:

What does it mean for me to act for the good of this society, to act as a "world citizen," if what I take to be good and true reflects only a particular perspective among so many?

To understand how CRC students combine learning about the situation with addressing this problem, it is helpful to think about the model of experiential learning.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND CRC

Students can study religions in many ways, and the many scholars and practitioners you will meet while on CRC engage you through a wide variety of approaches: anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, art, meditation, ritual participation, dialogue, dining and more. But the key to your work as a student on CRC, knitting things together, is the commitment to experiential education. This is a commitment that each and every CRC student must make for him- or herself.

CRC emphasizes *self-motivation* within the context of a *learning community*. Experience has its individual aspect, of course, but experience is a cooperative creation, too. To maximize the benefit of learning together, students are required to attend all classes and events. At the same time, each student's success depends on pursuing an individual cross-examination between what he or she learns in the field, in the classroom and in less formal ways.

Programming in each country is overseen by a locally based Coordinator, in consultation with the Director of CRC. The program engages local academics and other experts to introduce students to the religions and cultures around them. Not only are students learning by living in new and different cultural environments, but by attending classes and field trips where they are exposed to the perspectives of locals and experts. In addition, the traveling Faculty Advisor provides continuity and aids students in connecting their experiences, classes, and interactions with one another and with comparative theory. Advising sessions, briefings, and debriefings act as a space for tying events together, and exploring the various religions and cultures in a comparative context.

It is common to equate experiential education with *doing* things, with *taking part* in events. This is a good part of the equation, but it is not the whole. For instance, you can “take part” in a ritual without learning much of anything worthwhile. And while taking part in rituals is one way of learning that CRC makes possible, all of CRC is (or should be) experiential education – even a regular classroom seminar can become a totally engaging learning event.

The Handbook of Global College is helpfully clear about what is meant by experiential education:

It is important to stress that Global College does not equate experience with learning: students are not given academic credit merely for having experiences. Rather, credit is earned for the documented learning that occurs through the experience. Experience is an essential component of the learning process, bridging the gap between the students' own lives and the larger global reality. (*Handbook*, 2005 Edition, p. 53.)

Experiential education aims at enabling students, through documentation of their learning process, to create and explore connections between “[their] own lives and the larger global reality.” In this way, Global College fulfills one of its primary goals, enabling students to “prepare for a life of committed action in the interest of the world community.” (*Handbook*, p. 2.)

In light of this, there are three interacting levels of learning in CRC:

1. Learning about the world's religions and cultures through classroom studies;
2. Learning about the world's religions and cultures through direct experience;
3. Learning about our own ways of learning about the world's religions and cultures.

Regarding the first two levels, students on CRC learn through a combination of organized classroom and field experiences and their own, un-programmed opportunities to explore, make acquaintances, dine, and so on. The third level deals explicitly with the challenges of cross-cultural understanding. It involves recognizing that every person understands his or her world according to certain cultural and/or religious commitments which may not be shared by everyone else. Thus, the third level of learning is learning about the implicit values or biases that form how one understands the world differently from others.

Each of the three levels of learning has the potential to enrich the others. Neglecting one will diminish what can be learned from the others. Therefore, typical questions a CRC student would ask of him- or herself include: How does what I learn in the classroom help me understand what I experience directly? What questions does my direct experience raise back in the classroom? How do my commitments affect what I take to be important questions and relevant answers? How might I change? Such questions reflect the power at the heart of experiential education.

CLASSES AND CRC

CRC classes are arranged by local coordinators and fit into the course descriptions described in this guidebook. Although all classes pertain to the general theme and goals of each course, classes may each only address a particular facet of the general courses goals, or come from a particular perspective. The classes will be taught by local professors and experts in the field.

This format allows for a pluralistic, holistic, understanding of a region, religion, or culture. Given the opportunity to take instruction from many professors (as opposed to only one) for each course enhances the perspective and awareness of a student. This model is certainly beneficial to comparative study.

Furthermore, the CRC's collaboration with local instructors assists students in fully grasping local perspectives and practices. Local teachers are invaluable in that they offer students an "insider's" perspective, open the door to local contacts and resource persons, and expose students to teaching styles typical of the region. The classroom can thus be seen as a microcosm of the society students are exposed to. Navigating the dynamics of diverse classroom settings is an experiential element of discovering the culture at large.

Though individual teachers will not be responsible for student evaluations, they will sometimes review student work and share their input with the traveling faculty advisor.

DIRECTOR'S SEMINAR

The Director's two-semester Comparison Seminar works primarily at the third level of learning. To begin with, the seminar introduces students to a variety of theoretical or conceptual "tools" with which to begin learning about their own—and others'—ways of making sense of the world. For this reason, the seminar resembles, at least on one level, typical college courses on "Theory and Method in the Study of Religion."

As it is a seminar, student dialogue is an essential component of this course; the seminar can also be seen as a workshop where students must use theoretical tools to practice understanding one another's different ways of learning and comprehending. Working with these tools amongst peers in the classroom setting prepares students for working with the same tools in situations of more radical cultural and religious difference.

Students make use of the ideas introduced through the seminar to learn how events may be interpreted in new ways and woven into broader fabrics of experience. This is not simply a call to attend to *one's own* experience, but also to try to understand others' experience *as other*, and not simply as a variation (however strange) on one's own experience. In other words, students will learn to understand events in the cultural context in which they occur, rather than assessing them solely within the context that arises out of the students' conditioning.

Overcoming the tendency to judge and reduce others in terms of one's own experience is one of the most important challenges facing religious scholars today. The opportunity for comparative study reflects the contemporary reality of increasing interaction among religions and cultures, and the vital issues in

comparative study are special instances of broader life issues for us today. Admittedly, the use of any conceptual tool, and therefore any study of religion, involves some reduction of the subject being studied; however, the failure to understand the other in terms other than one's own has been a cause of much suffering and confusion. A third way of posing the problem CRC students are expected to address is: Can I appreciate and understand others outside the context of my own experience?

The American philosopher, John Dewey, uses a furniture analogy to distinguish between events and experience. When furniture is unloaded from a moving van, it is stacked in any old manner on the sidewalk. This is like a collection of unconnected events. When the furniture is carried inside though, we arrange it carefully to suit our tastes and the character of the home. Similarly, events are woven into a fabric of experience through analysis, reflection and integration according to our own values and the changing character of our environment.

Any trip around the world will give you the opportunity to select extraordinary pieces of "furniture." Without critical thought, the furniture remains in a disconnected jumble outside on the sidewalk and eventually rots. The Director's Seminar is designed to assist you to analyze your own part in events, and to consider how they might become part of your experience. Critical self-reflection is at the heart of this process. Students will look closely at the "furniture" they pick up along the way. Why they choose certain pieces and not others, and what they recognize as appropriate, beautiful, sturdy, etc. Challenging questions will be raised: Have you trained yourself to select only those pieces that complement your present arrangements? Or are you open to a radical reconsideration of what furniture is and to a complete re-orientation of your interior spaces? Considering these sorts of possibilities is a vital part of our work together.

DOCUMENTING AND EVALUATING LEARNING

CRC is a writing-intensive program. Documenting the learning process means not only stating *what* you have learned, but also recording and reflecting upon *how* you have learned it and relating it to *other dimensions* of experience and knowledge. Different kinds of writing assignments stimulate different aspects of the learning process.

It is expected that you keep a journal in which you describe events, note favorite quotations, clarify questions you have, and ponder the meaning of incidents you encounter. From time to time, portions of this journal may be turned in to your Faculty Advisor as a basis for discussion. As part of a larger assignment, you may also be required to submit field notes on occasion. Other classes require you to write short, extremely focused response papers based on a specific reading or event. You also have the opportunity to write traditional college essays, synthesizing readings and direct field experience to explore the meaning of some phenomenon, or better understand an issue. The program ends with the assignment of a major paper that asks you to distill the lessons you have learned and speculate on the future importance these lessons may have for you.

CRC combines emphases on learning from a diverse faculty and gaining continuity through the constant presence of a traveling Faculty Advisor. Several of your papers are read and discussed with you by local professors, who can share their intimate local knowledge to give you a perspective on your learning that you might not see otherwise. Most of your papers are read by your Faculty Advisor. This person travels with the group as a teacher, but also meets individually with students on a regular, at least bi-monthly basis, to help them review and refine their learning. Local faculty contribute to a narrative evaluation of each student's work, but it is the Faculty Advisor who writes the evaluation, taking into account the portfolio of learning in its final form, as well as the student's development over the course of the program.

Academic Standards

One challenge some students face on CRC is our limited access to traditional library and internet resources. This challenge offers some positive opportunities: 1) the chance to read carefully and closely the texts that are available; and 2) the chance to test classroom learning in daily experience and to examine experience in light of classroom theories. These opportunities also serve as two important criteria used for evaluating students' work, for as the advisor reads students' papers, he or she will be asking how well the students relate their classroom learning to their experience and vice versa. All Global College students receive a library access code which enables them to use Long Island University's online databases as well as e-books. The Long Island University Library's Web site can be accessed at:

<http://www.brooklyn.liu.edu/library/RemoteSites/GlobalCollege/>

Experiential education nevertheless entails a commitment to high academic standards and scholarly ethics. Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, is discouraged. Any such misconduct adversely affects a student's learning and its evaluation by faculty. Egregious cases of academic misconduct may result in a student being placed on academic probation, or suspended. Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas misrepresented as one's own original work. Downloading papers from the internet or using direct quotes from the work of another constitute plagiarism unless these sources are clearly accompanied by appropriate references and citations. This usually takes the form of footnotes and a complete bibliography.

LANGUAGE STUDY

The most time the CRC students will spend in any one country is 6 weeks. Within this time, considerable domestic travel will take place. This structure allows for language study in some locations, such as Thailand and Turkey. However, this language study will be at a very basic, "survival," level. Intensive language study is best pursued during a year long residence at one of the Global College centers.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

As with language study, multi-credit independent study is best pursued during residence at one of the Global College centers. Enrolling in CRC means enrolling in the CRC curriculum. There is room to develop individual interests within this structure, of course, but it is not feasible to design and carry out free-standing independent study projects for credit while on CRC. Students will have the opportunity during the spring semester to research and prepare a proposal for the senior-year Independent Study Semester. While on the CRC program, it is better if students focus on the curriculum at hand, which will give them an invaluable theoretical and practical foundation for the proposal they will prepare in the spring semester.

CRC AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

The success of the program depends on the willingness of the individuals to make a commitment to the group and to work with the group. Students are encouraged to — and naturally do — share their work with one another. There are frequent formal opportunities built into CRC for working as a learning community, too. Also, learning extends beyond the academic curriculum. Social change is a social process and it starts with one's own group! Working to resolve issues within the CRC group will give you some idea of the challenges that lie ahead in pursuing societal change — it is an important part of CRC. There are regular community meetings where group issues can be raised and resolved if necessary.

CRC ACADEMIC COURSES

The following course descriptions are for the 2009-2010 academic year. All students are required to take all courses. While these descriptions give a good indication as to the courses that are offered this year, some details may change to reflect specializations of local faculty.

Fall 2009

16 credit semester

Comparison: Theory and Method (4 credits)

A philosophical and practical introduction to comparative and cross-cultural study in a globalizing world. Students are introduced to theoretical and practical “tools” with which to begin learning about others’ – and their own – ways of making sense of the world. Yet, comparison is not a neutral act. The person who compares necessarily reduces the reality of the things compared, but also adds to their reality with the product of that comparison. What are we looking for when we compare? How might we recognize “it”? Students develop answers to these questions through seminar discussions of readings drawn from such fields as neuroscience, cultural anthropology, philosophy of religion, and social criticism. In addition, students are introduced to basic skills in field research design. Learning is documented through short response papers to readings, presentation and critique of field research and a final essay identifying and extending key insights from the semester.

Religions and Modernity in Taiwan (4 credits)

An introduction to religion in the Republic of China (principally Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and popular religion). Special attention given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include the use of Confucian ritual in civil religion, the internationalization of Buddhist monastic and lay organizations, efforts to revive Daoist institutions and the regular appearance of new religious movements.

Culture and Society of Taiwan (4 credits)

Introduction to the Republic of China and its peoples. Topics considered will include the idea of Chinese identity in domestic and international politics; the self and its relations to others; cultural tradition and innovation.

Religions and Modernity in Thailand (4 credits)

An introduction to religions in Thailand, mainly Theravada and popular animism. Special attention given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include the engagement of the *sangha* in health and environmental issues, and the coexistence of spirit worship, Buddhist devotion, and consumerism. Attention is also paid to Buddhist ideas of social justice and social issues such as human trafficking, border control, sex work, and corruption.

Spring 2010

16 credit semester

Comparison: Practice and Critique (4 credits)

This course is a companion to “Comparison: Theory and Method,” offered in the fall semester. How can we track the process of comparing, and what might we do to make our comparisons better, in a

variety of senses? This seminar-format class deepens students' critical reflection on the limits of the "tools" acquired in the fall, as well as their use of them. The course includes a substantial independent study component and a long capstone essay, in which students revisit their crucial learning events, analyzing them to disclose the (stable and/or changing) ways they try to make sense of others and, finally, speculating on practical lessons to be drawn from this analysis as they prepare to return home.

Religions and Modernity in India (4 credits)

An introduction to religions in India, especially Hinduism Sufi Islam and Tibetan Buddhism. Special attention is given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include India's distinctive experiment in multi-religious "secularism," and the globalization of *bhakti* movements. Attention is also paid to social issues and humanitarian concerns.

History and Society in India (4 credits)

This required course is an introduction to the Republic of India and its peoples. Topics considered will include arguments over Indian identity in domestic and international politics; the self and its relations to others; cultural tradition and innovation.

Religions and Modernity in Turkey (4 credits)

An introduction to religions in Turkey, principally Sunni Islam, Sufism, and Alevism. Special attention is given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include the role(s) of women in the modern Turkish Republic, Islamism and secularism, and Turkish candidacy for membership in the European Union. Attention is also paid to Islamic mysticism.

ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR

The schedule of classes and activities for each country is relatively self-contained, although the presence of the traveling Faculty Advisor throughout the journey facilitates an ongoing, cumulative learning experience for students. Thus, each new country marks a new set of topics and approaches reflecting that country's religious and cultural experience.

Semester Dates

Taiwan

September 8

September 9 – October 23

Air Travel (San Francisco to Taipei)

Program in Taiwan

Focus: Mahayana Buddhism, Taoist Popular Religion, National Identity

Highlights: Dharma Drum Meditation Retreat, Tzu Chi Buddhist Service Organization

Thailand

October 23

October 23 – October 31

Air Travel (Taipei to Bangkok)

Fall Recess

Students may explore Bangkok or other locations in Thailand

October 31

November 1 – December 23

Travel to Chiang Mai

Program in Thailand

Focus: Theravada Buddhism, Thai Language, Inter-religious Dialogue, Social Issues and Human Rights

Highlights: Loi Krathong Festival, Wat Suan Dok Meditation Retreat, Social Issues at the Thai-Burmese Border

India

January 10

January 10 – March 6

Air Travel (Bangkok to Delhi)

Program in India

Focus: Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Refugee Issues, Human Rights

Highlights: Dharamsala, Tibetan Nuns Project, River Ganga, Sarnath, Yoga, Himalayas

March 6 – March 13

Spring Recess

Students may explore India independently before making their way to Delhi

Turkey

March 13

March 13 – May 4

Air Travel (Delhi to Ankara)

Program in Turkey

Focus: Islam, Sufism, and Alevism, Turkish Language, History and Culture

Highlights: Konya and Sufi Lodge

Keep in mind that itineraries can change in response to events in the countries to be visited, and the advice of the U.S. State Department.

THE FIVE AGREEMENTS

As a CRC student, you should see yourself not only as a student who is experiencing other peoples' religions and cultures, but also a person *being experienced by others*.

You will not only learn about others for your own benefit, but you will contribute directly to a better or worse understanding of your own society and culture.

It is with this reflection in mind that all CRC students are expected to agree to the following five principles. These principles are not only for the benefit of individual students, but also the group as a whole, and indeed, for future groups of CRC students.

Please read the Five Agreements carefully. Your enrolment in CRC is an implicit commitment to abide by the principles they express. Failure to comply with them is grounds for a student to be removed from the program.

- 1. Attendance:** *Attendance is expected at all times unless otherwise stated by the Director, or when exceptional circumstances prevent it. An effective learning community requires trust as a foundation. Trust is undermined and resentment fostered when the entire group is not present for the work that needs to be done. By enrolling in CRC, you are agreeing to attend all aspects of the program.*
- 2. The “CRC” – Compassion, Respect and Compromise:** *It is essential when traveling in a large group that we practice *compassion* for each other; listen to and *respect* others' opinions even though they may differ from our own; and *compromise* if and when possible. We must try to question our own assumptions about others, be open and honest with each other, keep things in perspective in terms of what is important and what isn't and, finally, remember that we all have our annoying quirks. By enrolling in CRC, you are agreeing to attempt compassion, respect and compromise with one another.*
- 3. Controlled Substances:** *CRC trips are drug free. In most of the countries we visit, people do not view drug use as simply an individual's decision. Drug laws in these countries are far stricter than in the United States. Furthermore, penalties for drug use or alcohol abuse may fall not only on the individual, but also on the entire group and on groups that follow. By enrolling in CRC, you are promising to refrain from using illegal drugs. *Students who feel unable to refrain from illegal substances during the semester should withdraw from the program.**
- 4. Safety:** *The CRC group will not travel to areas in which its safety will be threatened. CRC students are free to travel between countries or within a country during vacation breaks (except to countries named in US State Department Travel Advisories or Travel Warnings). Students should, however, inform the traveling faculty and staff of their whereabouts. In general, students are advised to travel in groups of two or more to guard their safety. By enrolling in CRC, you are promising to abide by these safety provisions.*
- 5. Health:** *CRC is an intense educational experience. Students should be in good physical and emotional health. The kinds of support services students might expect at some of the Global College centers are NOT always available on the road. Students presently seeking assistance (or currently in support programs) for emotional or substance abuse, or for affective disorders should consider seriously whether participating in the CRC program is appropriate. *The Director may require a student to take time out of the CRC programming if it is determined to be in the student's best interest.* By enrolling in CRC, you are agreeing to these conditions.*

CRC and Religious Belief

As an academic program, Comparative Religion and Culture is committed to scholarly, critical study of religion. It is not committed to a particular confessional perspective, nor to the privileging of some particular tradition over others. It is not a program of religious instruction, but a program in the study of religion.

At the same time, though, CRC does not exclude theological questions (i.e. questions about truth in religious matters) as if they are beneath serious consideration. CRC students can and have explored such questions. Some recent alumni of the program have gone on to studies at seminaries and yeshivas and to internships with organizations promoting interfaith dialogue.

The experiential methodology of the program allows a distinctive approach to the study of religions. On the one hand, the commitment to critical study implies reliance on “outsider” understanding, for example, examining religions through the lens of the social sciences. This is a vital part of the program, with its theme of “Religion and Modernization.” On the other hand, simply by virtue of joining the program, CRC students commit themselves to going out of their way to encounter “insiders,” and trying to understand how they, the members of the various religious traditions, understand themselves and the world about them.

It is through such encounters that the experiential nature of the program achieves its full significance. Committing to the attempt to understand others from their own points of view means committing to put ourselves in question. This can mean many things, depending on the situation. It may mean asking ourselves whether what we have believed is true in religious matters is still adequate to our current situation. It may mean being willing to be flexible about our dietary habits. It may mean giving up our usual religious observance for a time, in order to share in someone else’s.

In general, this means that while allowance is made for any and all religiously-observant students to follow their faith, it is impossible to guarantee that there will never be situations that demand compromise. We will always encourage students to look for ways to view such situations as beneficial opportunities for discovery.

CRC LOGISTICS

SAFETY

In 2009-2010, studies in Taiwan, Thailand, India, and Turkey are planned. Sometimes changes in itinerary may be called for at short notice in response to well-grounded concerns about safety. The safety of students is the program’s top priority and, to that end, the Director, traveling Faculty Advisor and local coordinators seek advice on local conditions from local scholars and officials and from US embassies and consulates. The advice of the US State Department is a guiding factor at all times.

TICKETS AND TRAVEL

Global College negotiates the least expensive multi-site ticketing option at a group rate for CRC students. Students are responsible for arranging their own travel to and from the designated starting and ending points. Once the ticket price is negotiated and flights booked, students will be asked to contact the travel agent

directly to pay for the tickets individually. Look for future emails giving more information about the itinerary and ticketing as it becomes available.

PASSPORT INFORMATION

All students must have passports that will be valid for at least 3 months beyond the end of the program. Applying for and receiving a US passport will take at least 4-8 weeks. *If you have not provided the Global College Admissions Office with a photocopy of your passport (opened to the information photo page) please mail, fax or attach as an e-mail attachment as soon as possible!*

VISA INFORMATION

Apply for tourist visas. Do not apply for student visa(s). Visas for Taiwan, Thailand, and India should be secured in advance of departure. US citizens can obtain a visa for Turkey at the point of entry to the country. Note that countries vary in when they initiate the beginning date of your visa period. India begins the visa time period upon granting the visa. Thus, if you obtain a 6-month visa for India July 1st it terminates 6 months from that date. Keep this in mind when applying for your Indian tourist visa. The Thai tourist visa period begins at the date of entry. You are advised to contact the Consular offices closest to you for specific information regarding what steps to take and how much time to allow to ensure that you receive your visas in time. Citizens of countries other than the US should check visa requirements for their nationality for all the countries visited.

PHOTOCOPIES OF DOCUMENTS

Make a photocopy of your *passport* (front page and the pages with your visas) and keep it with you, as you travel, in a safe place. You should also photocopy all of your *airline tickets* when you receive them and keep them with your passport copies. In past years several people accidentally lost or threw away part of their airline tickets. Without photocopies, trying to get a new ticket issued is much more complicated. Finally, you should make a list of account numbers of all of your *credit cards, ATM cards, etc.*, and the phone numbers to call if the cards are lost or stolen. Keep one copy of this with your other photocopies. One year a student lost her wallet and did not have any information to cancel cards.

You should also leave one copy of all these documents at home with a relative or trusted friend.

HEALTH & MEDICAL ISSUES

Vaccinations (Immunizations)

Global College of Long Island University *requires* all enrolled students to have certain standard immunizations (listed on the “Health Examination Form” enclosed in the deposited student mailing). For other vaccinations for international travel, go to <http://www.cdc.gov> and perform a search under the countries we will be visiting to see what inoculations and other prophylaxes are required and/or suggested. Consult your doctor, local clinic or health department early, as some series of vaccinations may take weeks. Please discuss the potential side effects of particular malaria prophylaxes with your medical professional. Many students travel with the “International Certificate of Vaccination.” This booklet will contain a record of all your vaccinations.

Personal Medications

It is recommended that you bring required medications for the duration of the program, as it is difficult to find most North American medications overseas under the same product or name brand. **Please carry copies of your prescriptions**, especially if you are on long-term prescription medication. This helps if you happen to be stopped for a Customs inspection. **Bring strong sunscreens and DEET-based insect repellents with you.** Additionally, tampons can be difficult to find in Thailand and India so bear that in mind when preparing for your trip.

Illegal Drugs

Drug use threatens not only the health of students, but can easily lead to criminal charges. It also can jeopardize the standing of the entire group, as well as the reputation of our hosts. If you feel unable to refrain from using illegal drugs during the semester, then please withdraw from the program. Please also refer to the “Five Agreements” for more on the prohibition of drugs on CRC.

PACKING

Luggage

Don’t run out and buy a huge backpack for CRC. If you have a good rolling suitcase, that may be as good as or better than a backpack. The vote is split among past CRC students. Some people, who started out with backpacks, eventually sent them home and purchased rolling suitcases because they were easier to pack, unpack and handle at the airport. Others swear by their big backpacks. It seems to be a personal preference, but there is no need to spend a lot of money on new luggage for CRC.

How much to pack

As for what to pack in your luggage, try this test: can you load up all the things you would like to bring and carry them by yourself around a quarter-mile track? Can you carry them up two flights of stairs? You WILL have to do this—don’t make things difficult for yourself, you will be sorry. You will have opportunities to purchase items as we travel. For example, you will be able to buy excellent and inexpensive clothing in Turkey, Thailand and India.

Clothing

As a general rule for packing, bring clothes you can layer and feel comfortable in. Backcountry wear is not necessary. You do not need a sleeping bag or sheets for CRC, though some students bring slipcovers. Bringing a lightweight towel is also a good idea.

The best advice is to bring versatile clothes that you really like to wear because you will wear them over and over and over again. Comfortable, sturdy shoes are a must (sport sandals are a CRC favorite).

When packing, bear in mind that in all the countries you will visit; clothing customarily covers more of the body than does the clothing worn by young Americans. Moreover, to be a university student is considered an honor. Most students dress rather formally by American college student standards. Both men and women should bring one slightly dressy outfit: there will likely be some occasions when you will want to dress up, such as thank you luncheons or an evening at a concert.

Men will want *at least* one pair of long pants. One regular and one lightweight pair of cargo pants are a good start.

Women will need a long skirt and a scarf to cover the head when visiting mosques and temples. In virtually all places of worship, it is appropriate to dress modestly – shoulders covered and at least knee-length pants or skirt. Tank tops and sleeveless shirts may keep you cool in hot weather, but they are not always appropriate. Make sure to carry something that you can throw over your shoulders when necessary.

One benefit of buying local clothes is that they are more often culturally appropriate and designed for the weather and terrain on the place you are visiting.

Laundry facilities will vary from laundromats to buckets – expect it all.

COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS

A laptop computer is indispensable. It is not necessary to bring a printer, although it certainly is convenient. However, most students choose to save their work to portable devices and print at local print shops or libraries. For the purposes of backing up your work and portability, USB storage devices (flash/pen/thumb drives) are recommended by past students in lieu of portable printers. Oftentimes assignments can simply be emailed to your faculty advisor, and printing is not necessary. All students should bring a power converter/transformer as well as plug adapters or “shape changers.” Most laptops nowadays are equipped with a power converter, in which case only the plug adapter is needed. For other appliances (e.g., battery chargers, hair dryers), both converter and adapter are necessary. A helpful website on electrical requirements and accessories is www.traveloasis.com. The use of a surge protector is recommended whenever possible, as the electrical current in countries traveled to on CRC is much less stable than in the United States.

MAIL AND COMMUNICATION

Since the CRC program involves so much travel, it is impossible to guarantee that mail sent from the US will be received by students. Email communication and/or blogging are the preferred modes of communication for most CRC students.

We have had problems in every country receiving packages. What is dutiable varies from country to country. It is best not to send massive quantities of any one thing to any country we visit. Also, it is better not to send any electronic equipment through the mail: usually it is dutiable and additional charges that must be paid to receive the package can be very high.

It is possible to mail items home from every country in which we study, so if you find that you packed too much or have bought too much you will be able to mail some of it home. Airlines impose strict limits on the permitted weight of luggage, and students are individually responsible to pay the penalties for excess luggage.

MONEY

ATM cards are the best way to get money everywhere we go. Make sure that the card is on either the PLUS or Cirrus network (you can tell by looking at the symbols on the back of the card). However, there may be instances when, inexplicably, your ATM card will not work. Bring some back up money in the form of cash or travelers’ checks (probably not more than a few hundred dollars) and/or a credit card.

Some of the things students spend their own money on are entertainment (going out, movies, concerts, etc.), internet, coffee, laundry, phone cards, transportation (buses, taxis), gifts for family and friends, books (both for pleasure and for classes), copying and printing, newspapers, etc.

The amount of money spent by former students has varied greatly. Each student receives a food stipend to cover basic meal costs. You will need extra spending money to cover food beyond basic meals, nights out, transportation (buses or taxis to use during your free time); and buying clothing or souvenirs along the way. Students are also responsible for all expenses during the fall recess. Over the course of the program, some students manage to stretch their food budget to cover some personal spending, while some end up spending a lot of extra money.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD & PASSPORT PHOTOS

This card can be used for discounts on travel, museums, and lodging worldwide, and provides a limited amount of health insurance (but can NOT be used to waive the program’s health insurance requirement). It is

recommended, but not necessary. STA travel at www.sta.com issues these cards. In addition, bring 6-10 passport size photos. The group has used them on several occasions in the past when encountered with unexpected bureaucracy.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Over the course of CRC, students reside at a mix of dorm-style university accommodations and modest hotels “close to the action,” which makes it easy for students to explore on their own in free time. It also offers opportunities to get to know people from the host countries and begin seeing the world through their eyes. However, students should be ready for anything. Past CRC groups have stayed at primitive camps, slept on hard surfaces and encountered the cold bucket shower and other rustic experiences on field trips.

FOOD

At various times during the year our hosts may offer meals to you. Take some time to think about what dietary compromises you are willing to make in order to engage your hosts and their religious and cultural heritage better.

That said, for most meals you will be free to explore the culinary delights of all the places we will visit on your own. It can be hard for vegetarians and for picky eaters, especially when you don’t know what might be lurking in your *lo mein*. India, on the other hand, is easy for vegetarians. Restaurants designate whether they are veg or non-veg. Paneer is easily avoidable for vegans and that is the only cheese we’ve seen in India. Great fruit is available in almost every country we visit.

The food is just as much an adventure as anything we encounter during the year and, fortunately, everywhere you go, you can find chocolate, which can make even the worst of meals seem not quite so bad.

OTHER ADVICE FROM CRC ALUMNI

- ✓ You can’t have too many pairs of underwear.
- ✓ Don’t pack for the entire time of travel. There are plenty of places to pick up clothes. Your bags will be lighter and it is more fun to find things locally. No need to bring 4 months of shampoo, deodorant, etc. unless you are very particular about the brand you use.
- ✓ If you start CRC with a bag full to the brim, it is hard to pick up anything along the way. Accumulation of stuff is inevitable.
- ✓ White clothes won’t stay very white.
- ✓ Not many people wear shorts in Asia.
- ✓ Portable Music Player is recommended. Bring your favorite music, rechargeable batteries and a battery charger.
- ✓ Bring a Nalgene or other brand camping bottle.
- ✓ Small items from your home state (magnets, pins, etc.) make good gifts for hosts along the trip.
- ✓ Ziploc type bags are a great cheap way to keep things waterproof and organized.
- ✓ Do not bring any item of value, sentimental or monetary, that can be lost, stolen or damaged. On the other hand bring items that you cannot do without (specific toiletries/cosmetics) as they may not be available.

FUTURE MAILINGS TO WATCH FOR

Detailed Travel Itinerary
List of books to bring with you for the program
Rendezvous information for September departure from US

Please keep the admissions office informed of any contact updates/changes in phone, e-mail or mailing address

SUGGESTED SUMMER READING

Alain de Botton. *The Art of Travel*. New York: Pantheon, 2002.

The newspaper. Look for stories concerning the countries you will visit. What topics are covered? What section of the newspaper does the article appear in?

FACULTY AND STAFF

Director and Faculty Advisor: Kerry Mitchell

Kerry Mitchell's experience in international education began during his undergraduate years, with a six week summer abroad program in Austria. He never fully recovered. His travels have taken him throughout Europe, and to Central and South America, Asia and the Near East. He is an experienced teacher, working with undergraduates since 1997, with particular skills in social scientific and anthropological approaches to the study of religion. Kerry began studying religion at Indiana University where he developed an interest in religion outside of traditionally recognized institutions. After receiving his B.A., he spent two years in Europe, at the Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg in France and Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg in Germany studying philosophy and literature, before returning to the United States to pursue graduate studies. Kerry received a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara, upon completion of a dissertation on the state production of spirituality in national parks, and is now entering his third year with CRC. Outside of his academic life, Kerry enjoys kayaking, yoga, and French and German poetry.

Assistant Director (Fall): Heidi Hillman

Originally from Portland, Oregon, Heidi joined the Friends World Program (Global College) in 1998 after a year of studying and traveling in Britain and Europe. She began her studies with Friends World in Long Island, NY, and then moved to Sydney, Australia, where she worked under a folklorist/playwright and lived in a truly international family composed of a Norwegian host-mother, British host-father, and Swiss "sister." She spent the bulk of her Friends World career in London and Copenhagen, and wrote her undergraduate thesis on "Scandinavian Conceptions of Nature and the Self."

Upon graduating from Friends World, Heidi worked as an au pair in Switzerland and realized that she was not yet done studying. She enrolled in a MA/PhD program at Pacifica Graduate Institute in

Santa Barbara, California, in 2001, and received her doctorate in Mythological Studies and Depth Psychology in 2007 after completing a dissertation on the mystical poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi.

Before joining CRC, Heidi lived in Boulder, Colorado, where she taught Creative Writing, Literature, and Comparative Religion at Shining Mountain Waldorf High School. She is entering her second year as Assistant Director for CRC.

Assistant Director (Spring): Debi Goldman

Since 1994, Debi has been working and traveling abroad throughout Australia, Thailand, India and Nepal. Following her undergraduate studies, Debi spent a year on a study abroad program in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and then stayed on to work with a local NGO teaching leadership and journalism to Burmese refugee youth leaders. She then transitioned to southern India, where she worked for two consecutive years writing a masters thesis on anti-caste education and facilitating a summer study abroad program through Keene State University designed to give college students the opportunity to live and study at a school for untouchable caste children. Continuing on her long track of education, Debi then joined a doctoral program at Brandeis University, where she began studying the refugee education system in a monastic setting amongst Tibetan refugee nuns living in Dharamsala, India. Her time in India eventually influenced her departure from academia into the non-profit world. She has since spent six years working in India and the U.S. as Development Director for the Tibetan Nuns Project, supporting over 600 refugee Buddhist nuns living in exile. Most recently, Debi has been leading gap-year programs in Varanasi, Ladakh and Dharamsala for Where There Be Dragons.

Local Program Coordinators

A Local Program Coordinator in each country is responsible to the CRC Director for organizing and overseeing programming in their respective countries. Coordinators are hired for their community standing and/or academic experience.

Local Faculty

Vary from country to country, depending on availability and program focus.

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