Imagine learning about how Apple iPads are manufactured in Chinese factories where tens of thousands of rural workers live and work in one compound, and then traveling to the Foxconn factories in Shenzhen, China to meet and interview the workers. Imagine studying the intersections of rural poverty and climate change, and then visiting a farm in South Africa’s Western Cape where climate-adapted crops are raised to give nutrition to the children of farm-workers as part of a program in leadership development of rural youth. Imagine exploring the relationship between religion and the environment, and then visiting the sacred Ganges River in India and watching Hindu pilgrims bathe in Mother Ganges, one of the holiest sites in India, but also one of the world’s most polluted rivers. Imagine studying the aftermaths of nuclear war and then visiting with survivors of the first atomic bomb at the International Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima, Japan to learn first hand of their experiences.

Imagine spending four months at sea, studying in shipboard classrooms whatever most interests you – politics, literature, biology, anthropology, music or philosophy – and then meeting the people in countries and cultures around that are living out the issues you study. This was my experience this past year, when I spent four months of my sabbatical leave teaching for Semester at Sea, a shipboard academic program sponsored by the University of Virginia. From August – December 2011, my partner Pat and I circumnavigated the world aboard the Institute for Shipboard Education’s MV Explorer with 500 students and 35 other faculty, teaching classes and visiting 14 countries while traveling over 29,000 nautical miles.

Sailing West to East, we began our global adventure in Boston, and then sailed the St. Lawrence Seaway to Montreal, where the students boarded the ship. We spent a week crossing the North Atlantic to Africa, where we spent time trekking the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, visiting the slave castles in equatorial Ghana, and meeting with people working to rebuild post-apartheid South Africa, including Nobel Prize laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu. Rounding the Cape of Good Hope, we stopped briefly on the island nation of Mauritius – once home to the now extinct Dodo – as we traversed the Indian Ocean northeast to India, where we tried to absorb everything from the pervasive mass poverty to the magnificent Taj Mahal. Crossing the Bay of Bengal we explored rain forests and palm oil plantations in Malaysia, passed through the Straits of Malacca and past Singapore to SE Asia, where we spent a week looking at the effects of climate change on the Mekong Delta in Vietnam and the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, side by side with the stunning temple complexes at Angkor Wat. Then on to Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai to immerse ourselves in rapidly changing China, contrasting the factories of Shenzhen with modern universities in Beijing and the soaring, glittering skyline of Shanghai. Bullet trains in Japan took us from Hiroshima to Tokyo where Japan recovers from last year’s massive tsunami. Then a 19-day crossing of the Pacific Ocean to brief stops in Costa Rica and Honduras, and a fascinating traverse of the Panama Canal, before disembarking in Fort Lauderdale.

Semester at Sea enabled me to put real people and places on the issues I research and teach about at the University of Montana, a once in a lifetime opportunity to circle the globe in a shipboard community of likeminded travelers. I am grateful to UM for making this sabbatical experience possible and now look forward to incorporating these experiences into my classes.
IDS Alumni Adventures

IDS Alumni Anna is currently pursuing her Master of Public Health (MPH) in Global Health & Population at the Harvard School of Public Health, she will finish in May. Her most recent work includes a cross-sectoral capacity building project with Physicians for Human Rights (http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/) and legislative advocacy with Congo Action Now (http://congoactionnow.weebly.com/).

Anna recently completed a practicum with the Physicians for Human Rights' Program on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones. This cross-sectoral training project is designed to build local capacity of medical, psychosocial, legal and law enforcement sectors to collaborate and respond effectively to sexual violence through timely and proper collection of clinical and forensic evidence, provision of care and referrals for survivors, and increased communication across sectors in 5 conflict-affected countries: Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, South Sudan and Central Africa Republic.

Anna has been with Congo Action Now for almost a year, advocating for the passage of Massachusetts bill H.3982 'An Act Relative to Congo Conflict Minerals.' This legislation would prohibit the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from contracting with companies that do not comply with federal regulations for the certification of minerals originating in the DRC. This policy measure is aimed at increasing transparency in the mineral supply chain of "conflict minerals" that end up in our everyday electronics products (cell phones, laptops, iPods, digital cameras, etc.). The trade in these minerals fuels a devastating conflict in the region in which militias warrengf for control of the mines perpetrate mass human rights violations against civilians.

NEW IDS DIRECTOR ELECTED

We would like to congratulate Dr. Teresa Sobieszczynk who has been elected as the new IDS Program Director. Teresa’s term as director will be delayed for one year because has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant from the US State Department for academic year 2012-13. Her project will focus on Teaching and Developing Curriculum on Sustainable Development in Vietnam. Teresa will study intensive Vietnamese at the Southeast Asian Summer Institute in Madison, Wisconsin, over the summer to prepare Teresa for her project. The current IDS director, Dr. Peter Koehn, will continue in that role until Dr. Sobieszczynk returns from her Fulbright adventures. In addition to a new Program Director, we also would like to welcome Dr. Dan Spencer as the newest member elected to the IDS.

IDS Completes First Program Review

IDS has completed its first program review. In fall 2011, we submitted an in-depth self-review that identified our strengths and the resources we need to grow as an academic program that better serves students. In spring 2012, Dr. Krishna Tummala, Professor of Political Science at Kansas State University, visited UM to conduct the IDS external review. Dr. Tummala had two very full days of meetings with UM administrators as well as IDS faculty and students. In addition, Dr. Tummala offered an IDS seminar presentation on, “Affirmative Action in International Comparative Perspective.” In his external review report, Dr. Tummala found that IDS is a “very impressive program,” with highly qualified faculty and enthusiastic students. He also noted that the program is in need of additional institutional support for long-term sustainability. IDS is currently working with the UM administration in order to secure the support IDS needs to fulfill our potential as a distinguished international program for the University of Montana.

IDS FACULTY TO SERVE AS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

IDS Professor Jill Belsky (College of Forestry & Conservation) was recently selected to serve as Editor-in-Chief of the flagship international journal, Society & Natural Resources, from 2012-2015. Dan E. Williams, a research social scientist in the United States Forest Service, shares this position. The journal publishes cutting edge research pertaining to a broad range of topics addressing the relationships between social and biophysical system. Printed as well as downloaded electronic copies of articles are fully accessible to all UM faculty and students through the Mansfield Library. You can read more about the journal, the International Association of Society and Natural Resources which sponsors the journal, and welcoming comments by the editors in chief on the following web page http://www.jasnr.org/?page_id=272.

International Development Studies
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Doctor Solomon Gofie, visiting professor from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, spoke on the politics of identity and sustainability of development in Ethiopia this April. His talk discussed how the politics of identity in Ethiopia revolves around the discourse of ‘nations, nationalities and peoples’. The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front/EPDRF or its leaders believe that ‘nations, nationalities, and peoples’ form the ‘organizing principle’ of the state in post Derg Ethiopia. He went on to talk about the political leadership in Ethiopia in the post 1991 period and how it has continued to assert that their form of federalism is a guarantor of peace, development, and democracy in the country. He stated that this experience in Ethiopia during a period of two decades calls for the reassessment of the reality of the politics of identity and the broader implications. His talk was met with much applause and a quality discussion period following the presentation.
Two IDS Steering Committee Members Teaching New Course in UM’s New Global Leadership Initiative

Teresa Sobieszczyk (Sociology) and Peter Koehn (Political Science) are two of ten faculty members selected to teach a new freshman seminar for the UM’s Global Leadership Initiative in Spring 2012. Teresa’s course, “Food and Society in a Globalized World,” will investigate broader social, political, ecological, and economic issues behind the production, distribution, and consumption of food. Drawing on materials from Sociology, Women’s and Gender Studies, Economics, Environmental Studies, and Political Science, her interdisciplinary course will give freshman an opportunity to explore various dimensions of the global food system. As Dr. Sobieszczyk notes, “when we examine where our food comes from and how it gets to our table, we become aware of how little knowledge we have of the processes involved in producing, trading, and distributing our food. When we examine these questions, ‘we open a Pandora’s box…whose hands have planted, cultivated, picked, packed, processed, transported, inspected, sold, and cooked it?’” (Barndt 2002, 2). How do food production and distribution relate to structures of power and inequality nationally and in the global system? How is our disconnection from food production, distribution, and consumption impacted by and reflected in our disconnection from the communities within which we live? I am excited to be given an opportunity to develop this new course and hope that it will attract some incoming students to the study of global issues and even to the IDS minor.” Peter’s course, “Issues in Global Public Health”, addresses the overarching question “What transnational, national, and local policies and skills will help us address current and future challenges to global health?” While they cover varied topics both should be intriguing and worthwhile courses for 2012 freshman.

USAID Launches New Website for International Development Work

In an effort to expand upon its long tradition of engagement with universities, colleges, research institutes, and other institutes of higher education, USAID has launched a new website that will serve as a centralized resource for students, faculty, and administration interested in engaging in the field of international development. Rajiv Shah, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, announced the website at a meeting of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. “By working openly and directly with universities and other key partners, we can realize significant new opportunities in development, delivering results more effectively and efficiently than ever before,” Shah said.

Visit the new website at: http://universityengagement.usaid.gov

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