

FULBRIGHT CHRONICLES



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FERTILIZATION

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About and Contributing

The journal provides a welcoming space for Fulbrighters to share their work and reflections on global issues with a broad audience. It features thoughtful, accessible articles that reflect on how Fulbright experiences have contributed to knowledge and cross-cultural understanding, or that comment on contemporary issues that affect the Fulbright program or cultural and educational exchange more broadly.

The *Fulbright Chronicles* can only succeed with the engagement of the Fulbright community. The editors strongly encourage Fulbrighters to contribute articles or commentaries on topics related to your research and practice and the critical issues of our times. Author Guidelines are available on our website (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

The journal is an independent publication, overseen by the Editorial Board members under the guidance of the Co-Editors. Rob Ellis serves as Publishing Editor. For further information, visit the *Fulbright Chronicles* site (www.fulbright-chronicles.com).

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WHAT A FULBRIGHT AWARD REALLY MEANS

BRUCE B. SVARE AND KEVIN F. F. QUIGLEY

In a recent opinion piece in the *New York Times*, Roger Rosenblatt analyzed the meaning of prestigious academic awards that are given every year. He stated: “A Nobel or Pulitzer, for instance, says, ‘Congrats, you’ve hit the jackpot!’ while a Fulbright or Rhodes says, ‘Congrats, you’ve only just begun to live!’ A Guggenheim says, ‘Congrats, good work so far, keep it up!’

Rosenblatt astutely captures the uniqueness of Fulbright awards in that they often mark the beginning of a life-changing transformative journey into new scholarly and cultural experiences.

Mark Twain famously stated “the two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” Fulbrighters often say that their time spent in a different country on their awards marked that time in their life when they really felt as though they were making a difference in the world and/or had found new meaning and purpose in their life. Indeed, the ability to give back to something larger than yourself can be powerful and transformative.

There are three important stages of the process of becoming a Fulbrighter. First, there is the competition phase of applying for a Fulbright award and receiving that wonderful notification that you have been selected. Second, there is the cooperation phase of the award where you recognize that your goals will not be realized without the collaboration of your hosts. Last, and perhaps most importantly, there is the giving back phase of your Fulbright award. At this stage, you realize how indebted you are to the world’s greatest exchange program and you commit to ways of repaying your good fortune.

Fulbright alumni quickly realize how lucky they are to have an award that allows them to experience the world in new and life-changing ways. As a result, they feel obligated to give back to the Fulbright program in ways that truly make a difference. *Fulbright Chronicles* is the vibrant journal that it is today because alumni volunteer their time and talents; they serve on our editorial board or they inspire us by contributing articles, commentaries and book reviews. We invite you to join us in giving back to the Fulbright program by getting involved with *Fulbright Chronicles*.

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In this issue of *Fulbright Chronicles* we have more Fulbright alums that have successively competed, cooperated and given back to the Fulbright program. Gregory Fowler’s Fulbright experiences in Germany and Belgium challenged his assumptions about effective education and prompted him to advocate and

embrace “student-centered” approaches in his teaching practices. Katherine Kerr and Craig Goergen relate how the participation of student researchers in biomedical engineering Fulbright projects in France and Germany can boost academic productivity, cultural understanding, and community exchange. Tomas Valdes and Cole Grumbach’s Fulbright experiences in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) allowed them to witness and now play a role in the dramatic political, cultural, economic and social changes that have transformed and opened up the country in recent years. The research and workshops executed by Fulbrighter Johana Zapata in her home country of Honduras allowed her to promote interest in STEM fields in young children. College science dean Claire Phillips participated in a Fulbright funded administrator’s trip where learning about the French higher education system allowed her to further internationalization recruitment efforts at her own institution. Maria Montoya’s Fulbright stays in Colombia permitted her to develop partnerships in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a program that allows faculty and students to exercise critical thinking across cultures and to solve problems that are international in scope. Flavia Cavaliere, a Fulbrighter from Italy, spent time in the United States teaching college courses that were designed to dispel stereotypes about ‘Italianness’. Her experiences in the US simultaneously changed her own perspectives on American values and ways of living. Finally, in these pages, there are also more inspiring book reviews of work authored by Fulbright alumni.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said, “The essence of life is to serve others and do good.” Fulbrighters from around the world do this all the time during and after their award period ends. Their Fulbright experiences uniquely position them to give back and continue this essential value of the Fulbright program of serving others and doing good. Please enjoy this issue of *Fulbright Chronicles* and consider how you can give back to the Fulbright program.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST: THEMED ISSUE ON CREATING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

MELANIE C. BROOKS

Fulbright Chronicles is pleased to announce a call for expressions of interest for contributing an article or commentary for publication in a themed issue on focused on “Creating Sustainable Futures.” The world is currently facing an environmental crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Deforestation, pollution, and overconsumption are disrupting the delicate balance of our ecosystems. The consequences are far-reaching, including rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, species extinction, degradation of natural habitats, and diminishing freshwater resources. These crises pose severe threats to human health, food security, and socio-economic stability.

As cultural ambassadors, Fulbright awardees have played a vital role creating sustainable futures through cross-cultural collaborations in research, policy development, education, and technological innovation. To highlight these contributions to protect the planet and its people, we invite Fulbright awardees from around the world to share their experience building sustainable futures with others. Topics can include, but are not limited to:

- Education for sustainable development
- Environmental literacy and awareness
- Eco-friendly campuses and educational institutions
- Climate change mitigation
- Indigenous knowledge and sustainability
- Policy development for sustainable futures
- Renewable energy
- Natural resources and vulnerable communities

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Expressions of interest should be no more than 300 words. Please include the type of submission (article or commentary) and address how the Fulbright experience contributed to creating sustainable futures. Final manuscripts should be prepared according to the journal’s guidelines available on the *Fulbright Chronicles*’ website. <https://fulbright-chronicles.com/submission-guidelines-for-authors/>

The deadline for expressions of interest is **15 September 2023**.

For inquiries and manuscript submissions, please contact the Guest Editor of the special issue: Melanie Brooks, melanie.brooks@ecu.edu.au

COMMENTARIES

MY FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE: SEEING PEOPLE, NOT JUST PLACES

GREGORY W. FOWLER

ABSTRACT

My Fulbright experience was more about understanding people, in contrast to places. Humanity is a mass of contradictions, and while we are very much the same the world over, we are also different in ways that words cannot describe. My experiences challenged my assumptions about effective education, expanded my definition of “student-centered,” and encouraged me to hold *people* sacred rather than traditions. Today my Fulbright experience continues to inform my every discussion of policy or practice.

Keywords: reunification • Bologna Accords • education • student-centrism • competencies



When I look back on my Fulbright experiences, people come to mind first.

My first Fulbright, in 2002–2003, took me to Berlin as a Senior Lecturer at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at Freie Universität. The second, in 2006, I served as a Senior Scholar in Brussels for the European Union. In both instances, the question of national and transnational identity was a central focus. What did it mean to be a citizen of either a newly reunified Germany or a rapidly expanding European Union?

Yeygeny Yevtushenko’s poem “People” is one of my favorites. It begins, “No people are uninteresting. Their fate is like the chronicle of planets.” Humanity is a mass of contradictions, and the truth is that we are very much the same the world over—and different in ways that words cannot describe, no matter the language.

There were several reasons why I chose Germany for my first Fulbright. My oldest brother was stationed in Germany while serving in the Army. I also had a nephew living in Germany. In addition, reunification efforts were underway. There were fascinating opportunities to research the impact of social constructs, particularly in Berlin where, just a decade earlier in 1989, the constructs of East German and West German as absolutes—a reality that had existed for a half century—had been wiped out almost overnight. I was eager to understand how societies change when the constructs that shape them collapse.

Post-9/11 events were playing out in real time amid debates about “just wars” and shifting post-Cold War alliances. Germany was deeply engaged in these discussions, even as it struggled to reconcile its new role as a power player in Europe with its determination to suppress militaristic tendencies.

DIFFERENT ROLES, DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

While in Germany, I taught international studies and literature to students from a variety of countries and at many different levels. Fascinating moments stand out. In one class, I asked students to identify the most important role of government. I was surprised when the class divided into two groups. One group, the Western European students, agreed that the role of government was to provide a social safety net. The other group, the Americans and Russians, insisted it was the role of government to keep their populations safe from external threats.

Predictably, emotions ran high. While attending a large dinner welcoming me to a university, I found myself in an animated exchange with a professor over whether the US would invade Iraq if weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were found. I didn't propose the topic; everyone in Europe was talking about it. But what I took to be a purely academic discussion—after all, neither of us would be involved in the decision-making—was far greater to my colleague, who was so infuriated that he left before the main course. While I came from a large family where such dinner-table discussions were commonplace, he clearly experienced our exchange very differently, and it heightened my awareness of how interactions themselves, beyond simply a discussion of facts, require that you understand the effects they can have on people.

Given the geopolitical environment, I should not have been surprised when the US Department of State asked a few Fulbright scholars to join a speakers' circuit to discuss American culture and listen to concerns from various populations around the country. This took me to places that were not on my original itinerary and introduced me to new and unexpected experiences.

We discussed Mark Twain, his experiences abroad, and the way different elements of American literature reflected American culture. We delved into African American literature from the 1930s and 1940s and how it, too, reflected American culture, perhaps differently. This also led to discussions on how issues, such as race, play out in higher education.

I was part of a cultural exchange, and not simply lecturing. Europeans were talking about many of the same things Americans were and facing similar challenges. Yet, they viewed these topics from different perspectives. For example, Americans seemed to support the Iraq war. Germans, however, were reticent to endorse the use of military force. In addition, there were protests across Europe.

In one city where racially motivated incidents were on the rise, I was assigned a bodyguard. In that same city, 20 or 30 people came together along with their families to host a Thanksgiving dinner for me, complete with turkey and pumpkin pie. Of course, it wasn't a holiday for them, and I was touched by their kindness and the lengths to which they went to make me feel welcome.

REALITIES VS. EXPECTATIONS

At the heart of everything were the students. Wherever I went, I was eager to hear their stories and understand how educational systems and policies affected the way they saw themselves and the world. How did the social support for housing and other necessities shape ambitions and expectations?

Given the cost of an American education, I was surprised to meet one student—of whom I grew quite fond—who had been taking classes for a decade and had no intention of stopping. Another group of students led protests opposing legislation that would have charged students \$100 for their education.

When I served on the selection committees for German students who were applying to Fulbright to come to the US, I struggled to keep my face neutral as they voiced their expectations of American higher education and culture. Many had an unrealistic image of American wealth—no doubt based on American movies. To me, it seemed that they misunderstood the complexity of American lifestyles and culture, expecting all of the US to be like New York City. Even distances—and the ubiquity of American car culture—were new concepts. I had to explain that while one could drive from Berlin to Paris in eight hours, one could also start in California, drive eight hours ... and still be in California. I wish I had the opportunity to interview those who came to the United States after they returned to hear how their perceptions might have shifted.

By the time my second Fulbright took me to Brussels, the discussion around higher education expanded as the European Union sought to establish common degree standards outlined in the Bologna Accords. For example, discussions were underway as to whether or not a teacher could say that x equals y in such a way that is transferable across borders. Could students going to school in France receive credit for this learning in Germany or England?

At the time, my own career brought me to Salt Lake City, Utah, where I was working with Western Governors University to define competencies across learning experiences and certify skill levels regardless of the learning path a student followed to acquire the skill.

My interactions with learners across Germany—with their disparate backgrounds, goals, and resources—had fundamentally shaped my reflection on what worked and what didn't work for typical students. Among the things that I found increasingly clear was the way that a traditional, one-size-fits-all higher education model could perpetuate a class system and in fact de-democratize a population.

I was also acutely aware of how various EU countries were working to create pathways for articulation across different frameworks, and those discussions continued to inform the conversations I was having with community colleges, registrars, and academic colleagues about transfer credit policies. These conversations remain ongoing. We frequently confronted questions as to whether perceived differences in common courses or learning experiences were rooted in reality or rooted in ego. Were the differences between learning experiences real, or were they simply based upon accepted practices or traditions that people were hesitant to challenge?

LOOKING THROUGH THE FULBRIGHT LENS

Looking back, I can see that the way I have approached many of the difficult questions I have confronted over the past quarter century was shaped by my time as a Fulbright scholar. My Fulbright challenged my assumptions about how education must be structured and helped to expand my definition of “student-centered” in terms of what students believe they are buying, rather than what we hope to sell or impose upon them. Instead of suggesting that we think outside the box when considering the role of education, those experiences pushed me to enlarge the box and embrace a greater willingness to hold people sacred rather than tradition.

Looking back, I can see that the way I have approached many of the difficult questions I have confronted over the past quarter century was shaped by my time as a Fulbright Scholar.

I still carry with me the memory of those students who had been taking classes for more than a decade. I thought of them when I met octogenarians at a recent graduation who told me that it took them 50 years to earn their degrees. I carry with me the echoes of cultural and political debates from Berlin classrooms. I hear them resonate when I visit our Education Centers in more than 20 countries around the world. My Fulbright experience has taught me to reflect on our presence and purpose and what they represent.

When I join my colleagues in debating policy or practice, I bring to the conversation the insights I gained from European educators who had the courage to question curricular smokescreens as they struggled to reconcile systems that were centuries older than the United States.

THE FULBRIGHT LEGACY

Today, I travel more than I ever dreamed I would when I stepped off the plane at Berlin's Tegel airport all those years ago. Each time I land in a new location, I do so with the full benefit of the Fulbright experience. I feel that same sense of curiosity and excitement about engaging culturally and learning something new, coupled with the anticipation of meeting new people, hearing their stories, and further broadening my experience of the world.

NOTES

1. A podcast that delves into the definition of student-centered learning: <https://plexuss.com/n/university-of-maryland-president-gregory-fowler-podcast>
2. More about the Bologna Accords and their impact on European higher education: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/bologna-process>



Gregory Fowler, in 2002 with the German Fulbright group in Husum, Germany

BIOGRAPHY

Gregory W. Fowler, PhD, is president of University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC), the largest provider of postsecondary education in Maryland and recently designated a minority-serving institution by the US Department of Education. At UMGC, he is leading a transformation that aligns the entire learning journey with the needs and expectations of nontraditional populations and the global workforce. Prior to joining UMGC in January 2021, Dr. Fowler served as president of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Global Campus. He also held senior-level academic and administrative positions at Western Governors University (WGU) and Hesser College in New Hampshire. A two-time Fulbright Senior Scholar and a graduate of Morehouse College, Dr. Fowler holds master's degrees from George Mason University and Western Governors University and a PhD from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo. He may be reached at gregory.fowler@umgc.edu

ARTICLES

HOW MY FULBRIGHT AWARD ENABLED ME TO IMPROVE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) EDUCATION IN HONDURAS

JOHANA ELIZABETH THOMAS ZAPATA

ABSTRACT

In the summer of 2022, I led the first Lego workshop to take place in a Garifuna community in Honduras. The Garifunas are Black-Indigenous people who live in the Caribbean coast of Central America. By planning and executing the first Lego workshop in this context, I aimed to give back to my community and expose children to creative and fun ways of learning that spur them to pursue STEM disciplines.

Keywords: Honduras • Garifuna • Lego blocks • STEM education



I am a mathematics educator, teaching assistant, and doctoral candidate in the Mathematics and Science Education doctoral program at Washington State University (WSU). My research uses equity-based teaching strategies to support students from historically underrepresented groups acquire sociopolitical knowledge, a sense of independence, and a positive social and cultural identity. Having the chance to study in different academic settings, helps me to contribute with diverse viewpoints to investigations and projects about education. I came to the United States under a Fulbright LASPAU Scholarship. One of the main reasons why I applied to Fulbright was because I shared its conviction that education is the key to promoting positive change in countries around the world through academic exchange.

The idea of a Lego workshop for Garifuna children in Honduras started in the spring of 2021. One afternoon, I was walking from campus to my apartment when I found two boxes of discarded plastic construction toys, Lego blocks. Evidently, someone had left the boxes with Legos next to the dumpster. The boxes contained approximately 3,000 blocks from multiple sets that were all jumbled together. When I saw them, I thought, “Wow! I know school kids in Honduras would love to have these Lego sets.” I knew that many children in my community had never played with Legos because they’re too pricey—the reason why many students from underserved groups or low socio-economic backgrounds have no access to them. It was then that

the dream of a Lego workshop was born. I carried the boxes of Lego blocks up to my apartment and cleaned them so that they would be ready for the next time I traveled to Honduras. Almost a year later, in the summer of 2022, I returned to Honduras to visit my family and to launch the Lego workshop.

I am part of the Black Indigenous ethnic group called the Garifuna. The Garifunas is a representative ethnic group of the country's folklore and culture. Being a teacher educator gives me the perspective to look at educational issues through different lenses. I know that it is important for teachers, students, and parents to have access to innovative ways of approaching and solving problems. STEM education provides a venue to achieve this goal. I exchanged knowledge with members of the community to execute a Lego workshop that would be meaningful for students in a way that will elicit their creativity and imagination. The implementation of the project for advancing STEM disciplines sought to contribute to developing skills now needed by the changing global environment and society in which we live. Thus, innovation was the project's driving force. Fulbright has been a life-changing experience for me and its impact is now also seen in Honduran Black-Indigenous communities.

LEARNING ABOUT STEM EDUCATION

When I started the PhD program at WSU, I did not know much about STEM education. I remembered knowing what the acronym stood for but not understanding it as a discipline. Given that my doctoral program is in Mathematics and Science education (two of the STEM disciplines), I have a better understanding of how it is studied and put into practice. Making designs with Lego blocks is part of the engineering piece of STEM. These Lego blocks can help children better picture two basic principles of engineering: static and dynamic loading. Static loading includes the weight and pressure on the structure while it's stationary, while dynamic loading refers to how outside forces act on the structure while it's being used. Lego robotics elicits students critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Thus, it lets kids explore STEM in a fun, hands-on way.

Community projects are one of my passions. I love collaborating with people from the community to learn about their interests. Even though I am Garifuna, I did not grow up in a Garifuna town, and I do not speak the language fluently. Therefore, one of the biggest motivations for completing this project was the cultural exchange I would have with my own people after being abroad. When completing the first year in my doctorate program, I often wondered how I could combine the theories I was learning with practical actions in educational settings. I realized that creativity is important when it is made visible to others. Learning about STEM education and knowing it is not common in my country made me look for ways to plan and

enact the first LEGO workshop as a community-based pilot study. Although neither teachers nor students from the school had used Lego blocks before, creativity allowed them to find alternative ways to create ideas for their first Lego designs.

THE LEGO PROJECT

The project was executed in Cusuna, a Garifuna community with 2,000 inhabitants. Cusuna is a special place for me not only because it is where my father was born and raised but because it holds many family and childhood memories. There is a sentimental bond to the school because it is where my father first went to school in the early 1950s when it was founded. To build rapport with the school authorities, I first met with the principal and teachers to share ideas about the workshop. There were not enough Lego blocks to have all students participate, so the teachers decided to select students from 4th, 5th, and 6th grades and make the workshop a competition. We met twice before the activity and came up with a plan. Homeroom teachers selected four students per grade, and the workshop was conducted with twelve students. Three community leaders were chosen as judges to listen to students' presentation of their design and select the winners (1st, 2nd and 3rd places). The judges were one teacher and two young community leaders who are well-known for their skills in technology and innovation. This all helped to connect the learning from the workshop to the community.

The workshop took place over three days in an afterschool schedule (2.5 hours/day – 7.5 hours in total). From the participants, only one had had experience working or playing with Lego blocks. For the rest of the group, it was their first experience building Lego blocks. The guidelines were open-ended. I told them to work in groups and create the best design they imagined with the available pieces. As mentioned above, some of the Lego sets were not complete; therefore, students needed to be creative to come up with designs.

The school principal accompanied me on the first day. Students were curious about what they were going to do. They saw it as a game at first, but after a couple of hours, they were fully engaged and working collaboratively. The teacher said seeing them working so quietly and calmly was hard. When they were called to stop their design for the day, they wanted to continue working. Day 2 was nothing short of excitement and eagerness to work with Lego blocks. All the students were on time. I have to confess some of them were in the place already waiting for me before the time we had set to meet. They were too excited to start working and did not want to waste time. Another group knocked on the door at my house to see if I was on my way already. They were certainly engaged and excited. Many objects they created were familiar to them, but others were not. Some were building parks, cities, houses, cars, etc. Others were building satellites and objects for space launches. Certainly, building designs with Lego blocks boosted their creativity. I was thrilled to see the children getting inspired and enjoying the process. Again, at the end of the activity, they wanted to stay longer, and on

their way home, they talked about their projects. Finally, on the third day, the community leader came to meet the contestants and the winners. The three first places were given to those students who created original designs. They also were asked to explain what they created. Although they worked in groups to make the designs, the judges chose the winners individually.

BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS

Through this activity, I aimed to encourage the development of programs and contests that inculcate in Honduran children a passion for studying science, technology, engineering, and math. Also, the activity helped teachers see the power of STEM education and how they can do these activities at school by engaging students in such meaningful work. This activity helped build bridges between Honduras and the United States. Since returning to the States, I have been a guest speaker in various schools in Washington State, where they want to learn more about students in Honduras and how the project was developed. The video added in the notes section of this article presents the joy and enthusiasm of students, which is certainly contagious to other kids who have seen the video in the US

Something that stood out to me was the kids' interaction in their home language. Although Spanish is the first language in Honduras, children speak mostly Garifuna. Cusuna is one of the communities where people still speak their native language. Children are fully bilingual in Spanish and Garifuna and during the activity they communicated fluently among the group members to make the best decisions for their designs. Furthermore, children were discussing ways to create designs of organic ways to generate electricity, given that they live in a community that lacks access to this service. Through this project, students learned to develop important problem-solving and collaboration skills that will support them in applying their knowledge to solve local issues in the future.

Given that this was a pilot study, I wanted to see a small-scale Lego project as the first approach to STEM education in the community. Even though it was a positive activity for all, there were some challenges. For instance, some students evaded working in groups. Some students mentioned they were not used to working in groups. Therefore, there was discussion about who owned the pieces and what they wanted to build with them. On the other hand, some parents considered the activity a game and did not let their children participate in the activity over all three days and so some students only attended one or two days. These challenges were not a reason to stop the initiative; on the contrary, the challenges provided better ideas to navigate the process. For instance, when parents went to pick up their kids, I talked to them and explained what Lego blocks are and why they are important in children learning. I also invited members of the community to see the students' designs. A key result of the project is not only the impact the activity

had on children, but on the larger community as well. The Lego blocks were donated to the school after the activity. In that way, other students who did not participate in the workshop could also have the opportunity to build with Lego blocks.

FOLLOW-UP AND FINAL REMARKS

After the pandemic hit, I noticed many possibilities of global connection to communicate with people abroad through online platforms. Although, I came back to the United States to complete my academic program, I continue in communication with teachers and students in Cusuna. I have shared a video, photos, and ideas about the project with colleagues and mentors at WSU. Two of my colleagues are Lego robotics coaches, and they have provided me with new resources to be better informed on the project. In Honduras, I am in contact with the Honduran STEM foundation, and I have become a STEM education ambassador for ethnic groups and minorities in the foundation (Honduras STEM foundation, 2023).

Currently, my commitment is to be an agent of change and incorporate cultural and academic aspects in all of my activities. I aim to become a true member of a research community that promotes equity, access, and inclusion. The Lego project and future projects will align with Fulbright's mission to create academic exchange programs for the advancement of STEM education in Latin American countries.

Being a Fulbright grantee is a profound experience that remains alive. During the workshop my commitment to creating impactful societal activities became stronger. Now I am a Fulbright alumnus for life, and the impact of that experience will enrich my contributions as an educator for the rest of my career. Through my work, girls in my community now know that they can study mathematics, science, engineering, or anything they set their minds to do. It is an honor to be a role model for them. Thanks to the Fulbright program people from ethnic and underserved groups are benefiting from innovative educational approaches. I envision more Lego robotic competition and STEM workshops in Black and Indigenous communities. The Fulbright program provides a unique opportunity for educators to broaden their knowledge and skills, and to deepen their commitment to promoting education as a means of social and economic development. I am grateful for the support and guidance received through the Fulbright program, and I remain committed to applying the knowledge and skills that I gained to make a positive difference in Honduran children and in the field of education more broadly.

The Fulbright program provides a unique opportunity for education to broaden their knowledge and skills, and deepen their commitment to providing education as a means of social and economic development.

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Johana with a group of Garifuna children during the Lego workshop in Cusuna, Honduras.

BIOGRAPHY

Johana is a mathematics educator from Honduras. She is a Graduate candidate in the Mathematics & Science Education Doctorate Program at Washington State University. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies, Johana pursued a B.Ed. in Mathematics in Honduras and continued her graduate studies in Ireland, with a master's in applied mathematics. Johana's research interests focus on three areas (1) teacher education and professional development, (2) mathematical modeling, and (3) language and culture in mathematics. In 2022, she completed the second year of her doctoral program under a Fulbright LASPAU scholarship (2020-2022). Johana can be reached at johana.thomaszapata@wsu.edu or jthomzap@gmail.com

STUDENT-DRIVEN RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH FULBRIGHT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

KATHERINE E. KERR AND CRAIG J. GOERGEN



ABSTRACT

International biomedical research collaborations are incredibly fruitful endeavors that can be enhanced by the inclusion of students and trainees. Our experiences in France and Germany demonstrated that participation of young researchers in Fulbright projects focused in the field of biomedical engineering can boost academic productivity, cultural understanding, and community exchange. Mentees also benefit in numerous ways from the in-person experiences associated with international partnerships. Future Fulbright-supported researchers would benefit from including students and trainees in their international collaborations.

Keywords: biomedical research • student-led projects • France • Germany • global pandemic



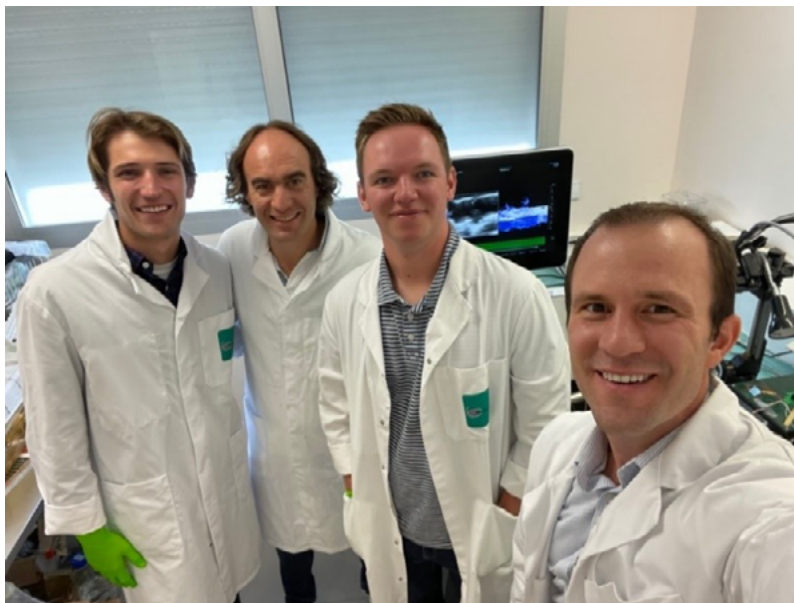
THE BENEFIT OF INCORPORATING STUDENTS IN RESEARCH

Many Fulbright participants, both as scholars and students, have had enriching experiences that spurred joint projects, increased cultural exchange, and helped address pressing global challenges. However, a frequently overlooked component of research collaborations, including international collaborations, is the benefit of incorporating students in projects. Early career and trainee researchers can be a key link between two different research groups, especially for in-person projects. Here we describe two international Biomedical research experiences supported by the Fulbright France US Scholar Program (Dr. Craig GOERGEN to Montpellier) and the Fulbright Germany US Student Program (Katherine KERR to Frankfurt). While the experiences differed in some ways, the opportunity to have students connect with several different laboratories was instrumental to the success of projects related to traumatic brain injury, cardiac remodeling, and aortic dissection.

A frequently overlooked component of research including international collaborations is the benefit of incorporating students in projects.

COLLABORATION WITH MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

Craig is a professor of Biomedical Engineering at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, United States (US). He leads a research group that uses advanced, noninvasive imaging techniques to study cardiovascular disease in rodent models. Through a mutual contact, he connected with a research group in Montpellier, France, led by Dr. Pierre Sicard who has shared research interests. Through the support of the US Scholar Program, Craig was able to work in France for five months in early 2022 with his wife and two young children. While it was an amazing experience for him and his family, the research projects were a success mostly due to the efforts of Purdue students, John Salvas and Luke Schepers, who were able to travel with him and assist with laboratory experiments and data analysis. Indeed, the many administrative requirements of academic faculty can be distracting and potentially delay progress when a project is PI-driven. Fortunately, the trainees Craig worked with were creative, motivated, and innovative, thus the student-driven efforts in both France and the US progressed smoothly and led to multiple publications (Note 1).



Craig Goergen with John Salvas, Pierre Sicard, and Luke Schepers at the Hôpital Arnaud de Villeneuve, Montpellier, France.

COLLABORATION WITH FRANKFURT, GERMANY

Katherine began working as an undergraduate research assistant in Craig's laboratory at Purdue University in August 2018. Having always been interested in international cultural exchange through research, Katherine reached out to Craig about her goals during her third year in college, which happened to be 2020. Like many students, the Covid-19 pandemic made the experience

of an undergraduate study abroad unlikely for Katherine. At the same time, the pandemic helped drive virtual collaborations, expanding opportunities internationally. Katherine was able to meet virtually with a research group at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences led by Dr. Christopher Blase and Dr. Andreas Wittek and plan an in-person project through a previous relationship Craig had developed from conferences over the years. Although the pandemic accelerated the development of infrastructure to enable more effective international virtual communication, Katherine wanted to pursue a Fulbright fellowship to work with the group and experience research in-person abroad. During her time in Germany, Katherine investigated markers for non-invasively predicting biomechanical properties of the aorta *in vivo*. She evaluated patient 4D ultrasound images to assess elasticity and strength of the aortic wall. Her experiences were varied, enriching, and memorable – both from research and cultural perspectives.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic required an unprecedented amount of flexibility and patience from Craig, Katherine, and their international hosts. Hybrid work provided a way to work effectively while following Covid-19 restrictions on social distancing, vaccinations, and travel, especially internationally. This was especially valuable when initially establishing these international research collaborations, as video calls with large groups and online data sharing became more common place. Further, Craig's start date was repeatedly postponed as case counts continually rose and fell, making it difficult to plan travel and housing. Despite the challenges, the Fulbright program was incredibly accommodating and worked with Craig and his family to accommodate these delays. Although Katherine's Fulbright experience was at the tail end of the pandemic, she still had to account for travel restrictions, vaccine requirements, and masking policies when travelling overseas. The Fulbright Commission was flexible regarding travel dates, provided current information about the latest travel advisories, and held pre-departure orientations to assist with logistics prior to arrival. Additionally, the handbook and the alumni network provided by Fulbright was especially useful for tips on adjusting to life abroad.

VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

Although virtual work has improved remote collaborative efforts, in-person strategic connections are beneficial for biomedical research, especially for trainees early in their careers. While working in the Goergen Laboratory before the Covid-19 pandemic, Katherine found in-person conversations with more senior laboratory members about animal training, and imaging experiments to be paramount to her learning. Once the pandemic began, Katherine found it difficult to have the same meaningful exchanges virtually. Additionally, transitioning to a German institution with different cultural

norms and systems was a challenge from a student perspective. For example, Katherine found that the bureaucratic process both takes longer and typically requires more paperwork than in the US. This can be especially difficult when all of these processes are not in English, as even small language barriers can make describing technical specifics challenging. Additionally, Katherine was ultimately unable to use an ultrasound imaging system located within a hospital in Frankfurt because of access limitations to clinical spaces during the pandemic. Similarly, Craig enjoyed working with a talented and diverse team in Montpellier, but virtual and hybrid work schedules meant he occasionally found it difficult to connect in-person with others on campus. While this did not ultimately interfere with research progress, it was a challenge when initially developing personal relationships. Although both Katherine and Craig found general research practices to be fairly standard, it was always helpful to keep in mind cultural differences when working with a diverse team. For example, Craig would make an effort to always begin conversations with “Bonjour” and Katherine turned to fellow graduate students for help filling in any gaps in communication.

While our international project planning and early discussions benefited from the normalization of virtual work due to the Covid-19 pandemic, being able to work in the laboratory can clearly enhance a trainee’s experience. Daily interactions in the laboratory can lead to intellectual and cultural exchange in ways that would not be possible in an exclusively virtual environment. It is easier to discuss ideas with other students and get involved in side-projects, which can be difficult to do when working remotely. As a student, Katherine was able to engage organically with both the graduate and undergraduate student communities, sharing experiences about research, perceptions, stereotypes, and more. As a faculty member, Craig found it easier to have conversations in-person with several research groups in Montpellier about mutual research interests, data analysis strategies, and funding proposals.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to academic engagements, both Craig and Katherine were able to engage with the local community. For example, Katherine was able to participate in the MeetUS program through Fulbright and the US Consulate in Germany. Katherine visited approximately 20 different German classrooms, talking to over three hundred students. Not only was she able to share her experience as an American and answer students’ questions, she also got enlightened about German perceptions of Americans from a different point of view. When she would return to the laboratory after visiting a school, Katherine would often share interesting questions the students asked with her coworkers. Student questions ranged from the composition of a typical daily American diet, to the experience of being an American high school student, to the nuances of American politics. These questions often prompted further

discussions about cultural differences, giving Katherine more insight into the German school experience. Talking with German middle school and high school students, graduate students, and even professors, provided an interesting range of perspectives.



Katherine Kerr at a MeetUS event hosted by a middle school near Frankfurt, Germany.

Craig had a similar opportunity to interact with French families that had children in the international elementary school that his son and daughter attended. The teachers, parents, and other students at the school were initially somewhat curious about the American 4- and 7-year-olds that joined mid-way through the year, but within just a few weeks, both had integrated into the daily routine and were making friends from countries all over the world. This international school connection also gave Craig insight into the French family life he did not observe directly in the laboratory. For example, French culture, customs, and language are very apparent at 8-year-old birthday parties, early morning drop-offs, and school performances. Overall, both Katherine and Craig learned nearly as much through cultural exchange as they did through their research projects.

BENEFITS OF IN-PERSON COLLABORATION

As peak pandemic-era restrictions begin to lift, in-person collaborations and experiences have once again become possible. Although the pandemic vastly improved virtual collaborations, community engagement and everyday exchanges that lead to enhanced cultural understanding are difficult to replicate without in-person interaction. Additionally,

these in-person collaborations can lay the framework for long-term research collaborations. In student communities, the daily interactions between co-workers can turn into potential future co-authors. For example, Katherine was able to assist in proofreading and provide insight on data collected in Indiana during her time in Frankfurt. Although her own research focuses on blood vessels, she learned about a variety of topics and different data collection techniques through conversations with her coworkers. Similarly, efforts by Craig, John, and collaborators in Montpellier led to publications describing heart changes after traumatic brain injury (see Note #1) and what happens to brain tissue oxygenation after cardiac arrest (see Note #2). Both Katherine and Craig have plans to continue these collaborations in the future and are exploring options for additional collaborative projects.

NEW PERSPECTIVES AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

The Fulbright experience provided Katherine and Craig with new perspectives on scientific research, education, and European culture. For example, Katherine enjoyed having a first-hand experience observing components of the German educational system. Her work in local schools changed her view on styles of learning, as she had only been previously exposed to the American system. Given that science and physics are relatively universal, the teaching methods in Germany are fairly similar to those in the United States. However, there are some key differences. Katherine found the professor-student relationship at the university level to be more formal in German classes compared to classes in the United States. Additionally, the grading system, degree options, and testing philosophies all differ when comparing educational programs between the United States and Germany. For example, public school system in the United States typically expect students to attend the same high school through year 12. Conversely, the German system offers students the opportunity to attend different schools for varying amounts of time, providing additional flexibility depending on the student's interests and career plans. Furthermore, in Katherine's experience, there is a huge priority placed on the final examination in Germany, while in the United States, students are evaluated in many different formats and assignments beyond a final exam. Overall, the opportunities to observe and participate in both educational systems have provided Katherine with a better understanding of the differences between German and American education, lifestyles, and culture.

During his five months in Montpellier, Craig had a chance to interact with co-workers from a variety of countries and backgrounds (i.e. Brazil, Italy, Morocco, Thailand, and the United Kingdom). While many universities have large international populations of students, staff, and faculty, the environment in Montpellier was both welcoming and yet, distinctively French. Lunches were always more than an hour and eating at your desk was actively discouraged. The copious amount of espresso machines made coffee drinking both easy and ubiquitous. And while formal scientific communication is typically in English, it was helpful to be reminded that there are certain difficulties

associated when using second language. Having that perspective is helpful when interacting with international collaborators who are not as confident when speaking and writing in English. Both Katherine and Craig observed that much of the informal communication in laboratory occurred in native languages, meaning it was beneficial for both of them to learn enough French or German to follow along. Becoming truly fluent in a secondary language is a challenge, but making an effort and getting over the fear of making mistakes can go a long way to bridge the cultural divide.

ENDURING IMPACT

Craig is continuing his collaboration with several research groups at Université de Montpellier. He has already traveled back twice to France over the past twelve months and was able to host Dr. Sicard in October 2022 and April 2023. Having the opportunity to experience American Halloween with Pierre and his family was a special experience, especially with the costumes, candy, and interactions with neighbors. Additionally, two PhD students from Craig's lab were awarded Chateaubriand Fellowships, a grant offered by the Embassy of France in the United States to support "outstanding PhD students from US institutions who wish to conduct part of their doctoral research in France" with fellowship ranging from 4 to 9 months (see Note #3). The ability to conduct part of their graduate research in Montpellier has meant new collaborations have begun and the students can take advantage of strengths from both institutions.

Katherine is strongly considering postdoctoral training in Germany when she completes her PhD research. As a student researcher, she has gained confidence through her Fulbright experience and connected with a large network of German researchers. Her improved language skills have also helped spur these interactions and she has identified several groups she may be interested in receiving training. If Katherine decides to pursue an academic position, she would certainly be open to cross-cultural collaborations, hosting students, and traveling internationally again as a Fulbright Scholar. The collaborative research between Frankfurt and Purdue has led to one journal article currently in review and two conference presentations, one of which in May 2023 allowed our collaborators from Montpellier and Frankfurt to meet in-person in Paris, France. None of this work would be ready to present if it was not for students like Katherine, John, Luke, and many others who made it possible.

CONCLUSION

In summary, inclusion of students in Fulbright-supported research collaborations is an effective way to assist in making international efforts successful and aid in student's professional development. Katherine was instrumental in bridging cultural gaps and sharing a unique perspective on

top of the research she performed during her Fulbright experience. Likewise, the work that Craig helped lead was made possible by inclusion of several US students that were vital to experiments, data analysis, and manuscript preparation. Future scholars and researchers should consider including students and trainees on projects as they can have a positive impact when establishing and conducting international collaborative research.

NOTES

1. To learn more about the study linking cardiovascular changes to mild traumatic brain injury in juvenile mice, see this 2023 publication (Leyba *et al.*, *Acta Physiologica*, 2023 January, doi: [10.1111/apha.13933](https://doi.org/10.1111/apha.13933)).
2. For more information about the study reporting on physiologic changes after cardiac arrest and resuscitation in a murine model, see this 2023 publication (Salvas *et al.*, *IEEE Transactions on Ultrasonics, Ferroelectrics, and Frequency Control*. 2023 April, doi: [10.1109/TUFFC.2023.3265800](https://doi.org/10.1109/TUFFC.2023.3265800)).
3. Additional information about the Chateaubriand Fellowship Program can be found on their website: <https://www.chateaubriand-fellowship.org/>. (Accessed June 9th, 2023).

BIOGRAPHY

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FULL SPEED AHEAD: HOW OUR FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE TAUGHT US ABOUT THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES' PLANS FOR ITS FUTURE

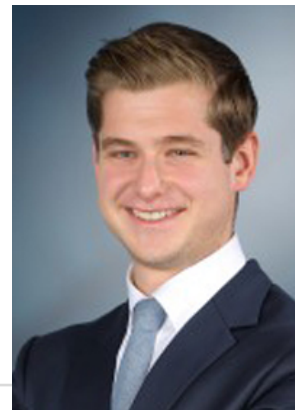
TOMAS VALDES AND COLE GRUMBACH



ABSTRACT

When we applied to Fulbright in late 2020, we weren't sure if we'd be even able to go, with the pandemic surging around the world. Luckily, we not only made it to the UAE, we were able to witness the country's reopening and research how it implements its full speed-ahead strategic vision, while becoming friends who built off each other's insights developing a close friendship lasting beyond our Fulbright year.

Keywords: Dubai • Covid-19 • tourism • crisis management • nation



THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES IN THE PAST YEAR

Living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), you understand how fast some things change. In the past year alone, during our Fulbright experience, we witnessed the passing of legislation that is irreversibly transforming the country's traditional socio-economic composition. Since the summer of 2021, the UAE has switched the weekend from Friday-Saturday to Saturday-Sunday, allowed 100% onshore corporate ownership to investors and entrepreneurs in almost all sectors, decriminalized possession of marijuana, legalized relationships among the unwed and recognized children born out of the marriage and instituted a swathe of new visas that allow expats to stay without corporate sponsorship, among others. On the political front, it has hosted meetings with high-level officials from Iran, Israel, Qatar, and Syria, underscoring the country's push to turn the page on the period in which those relationships were marked by blockades, mistrust, and serious threats to national sovereignty, all while bracing for a change of leadership upon the death of the country's ruler, Sheikh Khalifa, in May 2022.

Yet, everything has not changed this fast. Even now, change is specific to certain parts of life. There are several reasons for a whirlwind of reform the past year – normalization with Israel in 2020 coupled with a perceived US retreat and de-prioritization of the region inevitably meant that momentum would grow towards shifting alliances. Intensifying competition from Saudi Arabia for global talent created the need for policymaking to be more nimble

and agile. Meanwhile, the pandemic impacted humanity, and each country leveraged its sovereignty to respond appropriately. Through our Fulbright research, we observed that two themes added color to the UAE's experience, regardless of the causes of changes in legislation and society. First, decisions are made top-down. There is no activism, lobbying, or grassroots movements that impact policymaking. That is not to say that leaders do not consult extensively with industry experts by mobilizing their in-country army of expat professionals, nor consider diverse public stakeholders before deciding a path. Nevertheless, policymaking decisions and power are concentrated in hereditary monarchies. Second, everything is carried out in a federal scheme, including groundbreaking legislation, responses to crises, mammoth events, and the like. The country is a federation of near-absolute monarchies that turned 50 during our Fulbright. The Emirates never had to fight for independence from a colonial power (it was not a colony but a British protectorate) and therefore the UAE has no legacy of colonial struggle. Instead, each emirate is granted broad autonomy but reports to authorities in Abu Dhabi, the wealthiest emirate and largest by land and oil wealth.

While Tomas' research focused on the UAE government's response to the pandemic, Cole concentrated on the country's national brand strategy with Dubai's Expo 2020 as its most recent manifestation. Even though we explored what appeared to be unrelated on the surface, we continuously built off each other's insights. Both topics were mandated by government officials and demonstrated the tension between Abu Dhabi's priorities and those of the other emirates.

UAE'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Examining the UAE's policymaking process during crises, including the pandemic, was not meant to place value judgments on particular courses of action or benchmark the country vis-à-vis other global responses. Rather, the aim was to showcase the characteristics, motivations, and rationales that explain the leadership's navigation of the country through times of stress. As a 50-year-old country, UAE has experienced three major crises – the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s that led to a severe economic contraction, the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic. The latter two could be considered existential threats: the global financial crisis threatened to break the federation while the first phases of the pandemic felt like the end of times. Underlying these crises is another simmering yet omnipresent existential threat – the fact that the land of the UAE cannot support a larger population without modern infrastructure and facilities. As such, this is constantly on the leadership's mind as it grapples with how to grow and develop the country sustainably, including a purposeful and articulated national brand strategy meant to attract talent, business, and tourism through megaprojects such as Expo 2020 Dubai.

Against this backdrop appears the first defining characteristic of the UAE's crisis management – that, over time, a lack of regular change in leadership has created deep institutional knowledge that is leveraged and expanded with each period of tumult. The UAE has had three presidents since its inception. Zayed al Nahyan and Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan served as presidents for 33 and 17 years, respectively, and Mohammed bin Zayed became ruler in May 2022. Other emirates experience similar ruler longevity. Beyond the monarchs themselves, their ministers and cabinet members stay long-term, and the government agencies don't experience the kind of revolving door employment customary in frequent executive leadership changes. Tangible outcomes of this dynamic include creating agencies, particularly during the financial crisis, whose leadership was the same when the country confronted its next problem, the pandemic. The National Emergency, Crisis, and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) was created in 2012 after the financial crisis. Its mission was to develop a national plan for responding to emergencies while clarifying the roles of the state and private sector in achieving disaster reduction goals. When the pandemic struck, it was instrumental in the rapid development and expansion of systems to scale-up response protocols that allowed for wide-scale testing, surveillance, clinical trial development, internal collaboration, and vaccine distribution. Alongside the Covid-19 Command and Control Center (CCC), it liaised with state authorities, healthcare providers, and volunteers to prioritize providing treatment where most required. Its efforts are partially responsible for achieving significant population vaccine buy-in and one of the first vaccination rates over 90%.

Government responses are buttressed by existing public-private partnerships that allowed for rapid cooperation and strategic implementations during the pandemic. Existing partnerships in the healthcare sector were critical. It is illustrated by the government's ties, often through its holding companies, with institutions like the Cleveland Clinic and New York University, which have branches in Abu Dhabi. While the UAE has a government-funded health service, it is increasingly complemented by a growing private health sector, and collaborations that create a nexus between healthcare and complementary industries like research and academia are even more useful for countering informational silos. This translated into a unified federal response in the pandemic's early months, followed by a policy bifurcation starting in the summer of 2020 between Abu Dhabi and the other emirates. Dubai, for example, opened its borders to tourists in July 2020, while Abu Dhabi created a hard border with the rest of the country to insulate itself. We witnessed this border that extended into our Fulbright a year later first-hand, where the hour-long drive from Dubai to Abu Dhabi meant passing through a security checkpoint with armed guards ensuring each entrant was vaccinated or had

Government responses are buttressed by existing public-private partnerships that during the pandemic allowed for rapid cooperation and strategic implementations

been PCR tested in a specific duration (testing period requirements fluctuated over time). Abu Dhabi kept closed for longer because it contains a higher percentage of local Emiratis among its population than the other emirates, which have higher rates of comorbidities than their expat counterparts. Furthermore, Abu Dhabi could wield its oil-financed deep pockets to sustain itself. Dubai, on the other hand, is more reliant on tourism and capital flows, therefore incentivizing it to open much sooner. This policy split tested the federation by allowing different emirates to meet their priorities but establishing a hard border within the country.

FROM THE PANDEMIC TO THE MEGA EVENTS: EXPO 2020

Dubai's pandemic response was bolstered by a robust tourism strategy inviting visitors to the world's first post-lockdown mega-event. Without sharing the same oil wealth as Abu Dhabi, Dubai has continually focused on its brand image to invite tourists, investors, and consumers to the emirate. Expo 2020 Dubai, the latest iteration of the World's Fair, is a capstone to the emirate's recent branding efforts. Expo 2020 Dubai was the first mega-event of its kind to take place in the MENA region. The event occurred at an important moment in the nation's history, with the UAE celebrating its 50th anniversary. By extension, the event was critical for UAE's national branding and soft power efforts.

World expos have long served as an important tool for nation branding. Expos naturally encourage many visitors from around the world and provide opportunities for future development and investments in the host country. Under the motto "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future," Expo 2020 Dubai focused on worldwide progress in three thematic areas: sustainability, mobility, and opportunity. These themes are apparent in Dubai's branding efforts, as displayed through Expo 2020. First, the UAE positions itself and Dubai, in particular, as crossroads of the world. Dubai's strategies and hosting mega-events aided its quest to connect the global East and West. Second, the nation highlights hidden aspects of its heritage that may otherwise be disregarded. Branding policies highlight Arabian hospitality, tolerance, co-existence, and a distinct Emirati culture. Third, the UAE promotes its vision for the future as a country always planning and moving towards the future.

In accordance with the first theme, Expo's layout mirrored medieval maps that customarily showed Jerusalem as the meeting point of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Similarly, it positioned Dubai as this same meeting point as a global hub of the twenty-first century. Instead of three central continental petals, Expo split country pavilions into the event's main theme: mobility, opportunity, and sustainability. The UAE pavilion was centrally located and manifesting how the country sees its place in the world. Expo 2020 Dubai further highlighted lesser-known aspects of the nation's heritage through architectural elements and spatial design. In re-branding these aspects for Expo 2020, event planners featured a primordial history of Dubai that

contrasts with today's hyper-modern city image and represents it as classically "Arabian." For example, Al Wasl Plaza, the center point of the Expo grounds, was named after the Arabic word for "connection." The domed trellis of the Plaza was inspired by an ancient gold ring found at Saruq Al Hadid, an important archaeological site in Dubai.

Expo 2020 also strengthened Dubai's position as a global trade, investment, and tourism hub. While its long-term impact remains to be seen, event planners anticipate that Expo would accelerate the UAE's efforts to diversify its economy, support the growth of a knowledge-based economy and smart connectivity, and provide a stimulus for cultural life. Indeed, 24 million visitors contributed to overall growth in the UAE's post-pandemic tourism sector. Q1 2022 saw six million visitors to the country's hotel establishments (spanning 25 million hotel nights), which reflected a growth of 10% compared to the same pre-pandemic period in 2019. Dr. Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Chairman of the UAE Tourism Council, noted the role of Expo 2020 as "one of the best years in terms of economic growth in general and tourism in particular" for the UAE.

Real estate and other economic records indicate a strong pandemic recovery bolstered by Expo 2020. Since winning the Expo 2020 bid, the UAE received investments worth \$37 billion. The country is expected to receive another \$8 billion in investments because of Expo 2020, representing a total investment of \$43 billion. At the end of 2021, the volume and value of transactions were the highest since 2013. The Investment Corporation of Dubai (one of Dubai's sovereign wealth funds) announced revenues of over \$46 billion and reported a net profit of \$2.75 billion in 2021, up 25% compared to the prior year and resulting in part by the positive impact of the hosting of Expo 2020.

DUBAI'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS INVITE A FRIENDLY COMPETITION

The success of Dubai's branding efforts has inspired development across the Gulf, wherein regional leaders seek to follow Dubai's lead. Saudi Arabia has announced progress on the hyper-futuristic city of Neom, which will purportedly be bigger than Dubai and have more robots than humans. Many undertones and overt messages in Neom advertisements position it as a global competitor to Dubai, especially using the "smart city" terminology. Likewise, Saudi recently launched a bid to host Expo 2030 in Riyadh. The proposal received support from UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.

Although publicly united under a federal umbrella, a spirit of 'one-upmanship' exists between Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi has lacked the same level of diversification as Dubai because of the plentiful oil reserves. As such, Abu Dhabi attempts to outpace Dubai with high-end cultural tourism, featuring international museum branches like the Louvre and Guggenheim museums. This friendly competition encourages economic development and advancement around the Gulf while encouraging Dubai's continuous transformation.

OUR FULBRIGHT ENDS, BUT OUR EXPERIENCES IN UAE CONTINUES

The UAE's dynamic and ever-changing environment piqued our interest in the region to the point where we both decided to continue our careers in Dubai in ways that further Fulbright's mission of building mutual understanding and advancing knowledge worldwide. Cole now works at the American management consulting firm Kearney, based in Dubai, with projects around the Arab Gulf that focus on implementing the countries' strategic visions. Tomas is now with Gulf Intelligence, a Dubai-based strategic advisory that provides thought leadership solutions to the regional energy sector with an emphasis on companies looking to implement sustainability strategies for the first time. The local expertise we acquired through our Fulbright research served as a launchpad for our respective positions, and we continue to build off each other's experiences and insights through the friendship we cultivated during the program.

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2. Stratfor. "In the UAE's COVID-19 Response, Abu Dhabi Puts Itself First." *Worldview* (blog), <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/uae-s-covid-19-response-abu-dhabi-puts-itself-first>.
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Tomas Valdes and Cole Grumbach in the United Arab Emirates

BIOGRAPHY

Tomas Valdes is Senior Associate at Gulf Intelligence. He received his Fulbright research grant for the 2021-2022 academic year, exploring the UAE's crisis management and pandemic response. He can be contacted at tg7@georgetown.edu

Cole Grumbach is a Business Analyst at Kearney Global Management Consulting Firm. He was a Fulbright award recipient for the 2021-2022 academic year. He explored the UAE's national branding strategy. He can be reached at cgrumbach@colgate.edu

A COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR'S FULBRIGHT TRIP THROUGH FRANCE: DISCOVERING WHAT OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

CLAIRE PHILLIPS

ABSTRACT

As a participant in the 2022 International Education Administrators award trip to France, I took advantage of the opportunity to compare and contrast French and American higher education systems, using the dual lens of someone who worked and studied in France, along with my current position of STEM dean at a community college. My dual goals during the experience were to evaluate the French education system and resource internationalization opportunities for my institution.

Keywords: community college • French education • higher education system comparison • international education administrator's program



USING THE FULBRIGHT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AWARD (IEA) FOR RESEARCH

As a long-time proponent of internationalization of curriculum (in particular, STEM curricular areas as I oversee the science and engineering division of my college), my interest in other countries' educational systems led me to look for opportunities available through the Fulbright organization to expand our division's international reach. Covid put a temporary halt to any travel-abroad plans, but this delay fortuitously expanded my interest in virtual study abroad and course internationalization, as well as allowing me the time to do a little "pre-research" prep related to higher education in Europe-and specifically France- since that was the targeted country of my application.

In preparation for my Fulbright trip, I first wanted to get a perspective on the relative breadth and depth of the American and French higher education (HE) systems; please note, for administrators thinking of applying for an IEA grant, that creating a research study is *not* a requirement for this particular Fulbright grant. Starting with a review of available US government data, and looking at various sites such as "Statistica", I found out that the percent of HE enrollment in France to total population was analogous to what we see

in the United States; although naturally a lower number of students (since France's population is 1/5th the size of the US) - 4% of their populace was enrolled in higher education last year while, in America, currently 5.9% of our population takes part in HE coursework.

The structure of HE in both countries has evolved into a tri-partite system, with three levels distinguishing different types of institutions. At the top of both systems sit the highly selective research institutions. Think of the Ivy League colleges in the US while, in France, these institutions are known as *Grand Écoles*. While on my Fulbright trip, we visited one of the most famous of the *Grand Écoles*, the Sorbonne, and their administration took great care in describing to our group how selective they were-in student acceptance, in faculty appointments, as well as in the foreign institutions with which they chose to collaborate for research purposes. Our Fulbright group members chuckled after the visit, noting that, although we considered our Fulbright award to be a prestigious and positive reflection on our institutions, none of our colleges were considered being potential future collaborators to Sorbonne administrators, leading me to more fully understand that all countries apparently experience elitism in educational circles.

The middle range of HE in both countries consists of the university system which, in France, are primarily public systems (I found, during my Fulbright trip, that there are significantly fewer private institutions of higher education in France than in the US). Like their US counterparts, French universities are comprehensive in scope but, unlike most American universities, they accept virtually all secondary education graduates, which accounts for the fact that 40% of French university students drop out before tertiary school completion (more analogous to American community college completion rate).

The third level of HE in both countries comprises two-years and specialized schools. As an administrator at an American community college, I was very interested to see if they had developed a French counterpart system, and the answer is.....“yes-and no”. Our Fulbright group visited a very impressive two-year institution in Seaux (a Paris suburb) that is part of a recently developed country-wide system called *Instituts Universitaires de Technologie*, more commonly known as IUTs. Although somewhat analogous to America's community college system, one major difference-about which I expressed some jealousy, is that IUTs are highly selective in their admission protocols-the Seaux IUT accepts one out of twenty applicants. IUT student graduates may choose to either enter directly into the workplace, or transfer into the French university.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Possibly the most marked difference between the French and US higher education systems that I discovered is their difference in administrative/regulatory structure. While the US higher education system is highly decentralized (reflective of our nation's culture), the French education system is managed by a strong centralized governmental presence that controls everything from financial support to the awarding of all tertiary degrees. Alcouffe and Miller, who have written extensively on structural differences between French and American educational systems, point out that this centrally controlled funding mechanism has resulted in a far lower cost for French students to complete their higher education (less than half the cost the average American students pays). At first, I was envious, on behalf of our students, that a higher education degree could be obtained at such a relatively low cost. But our counterpart French administrators (usually over the cocktail hour) were quick to point out that there are both advantages-such as low tuition costs-but also marked disadvantages, to such a degree of centralization and governmental oversight.

For example, French university administrators have relatively little authority to make overarching budgetary strategy plans and it is the central ministry, not the individual institution, that makes major financial decisions. This difference is also reflected in regulatory processes. American higher education prides itself on its ability to self-regulate and this quality assurance process has traditionally been one of peer review. So far, this has allowed colleges in the U. S. to withstand considerable outside pressure, sometimes from political forces, to be controlled by governmental entities. In contrast, the French quality assurance system is controlled by the French Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES). Some HE analysts, like Alcouffe and Miller, believe that this difference in quality assurance control is based on deeply embedded cultural differences (i.e. Americans have long balked at any sort of nationally based control system).

STUDENTS' PATHWAYS DIFFER

The US system offers students a great deal of flexibility and freedom in their higher educational choices. Higher education in the US is generally designed to offer a breadth of offerings, exposing students to a variety of fields in the freshman and sophomore years. In juxtaposition, most French universities concentrate on depth, offering a specific course of study from day one of the students' higher ed experience. While US students entering college usually identify a proposed field of interest, they take general education coursework (often termed core curriculum) which is designed to be accepted at most colleges, should the student decide to transfer schools (which is a common practice in the United States).

In contrast, French students usually must apply to a specific degree program and start immediately into that field of study. Students then take exams after years two, three, and four of their higher ed experience in order to move forward in their educational pursuits. French students also have much less opportunity to “swirl” from one educational institution to another (this seemed to be a foreign concept to French administrators). Especially in the IUTs, all coursework is oriented towards their future industry focus, with no general core courses taken.

During our trip, we visited a college prep academy and had the opportunity to speak with students (primarily those in what we would call their junior year of high school). Those students described how they were already studying many hours each week outside of class, prepping for their high stakes college entrance examination that would determine where and how they would spend the next three to four years of their academic life (as well as their future career path). When asked about test prep courses, they seem dumbfounded that parents would pay for that extra help and pointed to a stack of study guides in their library as their primary test prep resource. This made me ask myself such questions as “do we coddle our children through the academic process?” and “are the French students better prepared, as they enter the workforce, for the expectations they will face?” On the other hand, I keenly felt the pressure the French students we interviewed were under and wondered if such high stakes testing and early narrowing of academic and career choice had any negative bearing on the students’ mental health.

DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH TO DEI INITIATIVES

In recent years, the importance of diversity and inclusion has vaulted to the forefront of American higher education policy, and institutions have been motivated, through both “carrot and stick” efforts, to provide additional opportunities for equity and inclusion—both for students and employees. Indeed, as a community college administrator, this movement is constantly in the forefront of decisions I make regarding who to hire and how to best serve our students. As my college is a Hispanic serving institution, a plethora of statistical information is available on our efforts to make progress on diversity measures, starting with data published by US governmental entities, as well as data compiled by the individual institution.

In juxtaposition to US efforts, although there seemingly is interest in France on improving HE student diversity, there is relatively little information on French HE student racial breakdown. Because I was puzzled by this difference in approach, I did some research in advance of my trip and also queried my French counterparts on this phenomenon, discovering an interesting reason for the difference. In general, France has an aversion to collecting data on race and ethnicity; in fact, French constitutional law prohibits the collection of data on an individual’s race, ethnicity or religion, and French culture shies away from legitimizing racial identity.

When I asked about this propensity to shy away from such analyses, (in informal conversations) I was told that this restriction has its derivation from the last world war, when French authorities classified Jewish citizens in such a way that enabled their deportation to Nazi concentration camps. The French political establishments now tend to dismiss any attention paid to race and shy away from discussion of ways to fight inequalities in education, citing that such discussions contradict the idea of French universalism. During our informal conversations, my administrative counterparts in France acknowledged that, while they realize the benefit of diversity initiatives, their hands are tied by governmental regulations and they would “get their hands slapped” should they attempt to create a diversity profile for their campus.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IMPACT

One might begin with this question: “who would *not* want to participate in an all-expense paid trip through France, especially one where the accommodations overlooked the Seine, with Notre Dame Cathedral in the background?” Certainly, I consider myself fortunate to have been chosen to participate in this incredible experience and it provided an opportunity to both professionally re-energize and reconfirm my commitment to international education. But I want to ‘warn’ those who might consider applying for a Fulbright IEA that it’s an extremely intense experience-and certainly not a vacation! During our 14-day trip, we received only one-half day off, and our days often started before 8am, with us dragging back into the hotel well after dark.

I consider myself fortunate to have been chosen to participate in this incredible experience and it provided an opportunity to both professionally re-energize and reconfirm my commitment to international education.

The French Fulbright organization (and I’ve subsequently heard this is true for other IEAs) wanted to afford us maximum exposure to every genre of education, in various parts of France, so we visited over twenty educational and governmental entities during the trip. If such an experience was planned in the US, it would be natural for the planners to reserve a luxury bus to drive the group around from location to location. But we soon learned that, whether for cost-savings purposes or perhaps due to cultural differences, Europeans travel more on foot and by more economical modes of transportation. So those of us with smart watches clocked many thousands of steps each day and quickly learned to navigate public transit systems. I returned to the US exhilarated-but also exhausted!

In terms of what I was able to bring back to my campus and immediately implement from my Fulbright experience, I returned with a notebook full of contacts and ideas on new ways to internationalize our curriculum. I have been able to set up a number of Webex discussions and presentations between

French and American faculty counterparts, which may well lead to virtual learning communities in STEM curriculum areas. By sharing my Fulbright experience in meetings and conference presentations, I have motivated both faculty and administrators to apply for 2024-25 Fulbright award opportunities.

One of the difficulties I find that must be overcome is community college employees' lack of knowledge regarding Fulbright, in general, and the requirement of a research component, in particular (our faculty are not required to conduct research in their work). My enthusiasm has also been tempered somewhat by reality. Bureaucracy exists on both sides of the Atlantic, budgets are tight, and already overworked faculty are sometimes reluctant to take on new projects. But I am practicing patience and believe that what I learned during my Fulbright experience will pay off for our students in the long run. I can honestly say that, as someone who has been in higher education for over twenty-five years, my Fulbright experience has reenergized me, so I approach each day with a renewed effort to support both our students-and our employees-achieve their goals.

NOTES

1. Alcouffe, A, & Miller, J. (2010). *A comparison of the organization of higher education systems in France and the USA*. Working Papers, University of Delaware, Department of Economics.



Entering the University of Angers to discuss potential virtual NASA collaborations

BIOGRAPHY

A 2022 recipient of the Fulbright International Education Administrator's award, the author currently works as a STEM dean at Lone Star Community College in Houston, Texas. She is a graduate of the Higher Education Administration doctoral program at Texas A&M University and, with her master's in business administration, previously worked as a business professor and business marketing manager for various companies. A strong advocate of giving back to the local community, Claire serves as a board member of a foundation that raises scholarships for first generation college students. Claire can be reached at claire.phillips@lonestar.edu

MY FULBRIGHT AWARDS IN PURSUIT OF COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING (COIL)

MARIA CRISTINA MONTOYA

ABSTRACT

The Fulbright mission supports quality education, fosters service and advocacy for all people's needs. The values of diversity and respect are at the core of Fulbright when providing opportunities for global mutual understanding. My Fulbright missions in Colombia focused on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), promoting intentional and structured academic partnerships. COIL allows faculty and students to exercise critical thinking crossing-cultures and solving problems in an authentic communicative interaction, aligning with the Fulbright vision.

Keywords: online collaboration • interculturalism • Colombia



THE GLOBAL EDUCATOR

The world has changed, and technology is a valuable tool in organizing youth across the globe. My participation in global education has been facilitating the use of technology in education to create academic/social networks to fight social injustice. Through my work, I help individuals become more respectful intercultural citizens of the world. In the past few years, the implementation of “COIL” (Collaborative Online International/Intercultural/Integrative/Interdisciplinary/Inclusive/Institutional Learning), with multiple “I”s, have become a very successful tool to foster the development of global intercultural competencies across institutions at all grade levels. It impacts students with limited international mobility experience, hence fostering equity in accessing global education. COIL facilitates faculty professional growth by creating course content that becomes enriched with the possibilities of collaboration with diverse others. My pedagogical work accomplished through two Fulbright missions (2019 and 2022) has allowed me to serve as a bridge for a global network to cross and connect education institutions. My concrete skill is to assist in the infusion of COIL into the curriculum of teaching partners, or trios, that connect their students to collaborate and learn from one other.

FULBRIGHT MISSIONS: SCHOLAR 2018-2019 AND FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST 2022

My personal and professional lives were first transformed after my Fulbright Scholar mission (2018-2019), a process that continued through my Specialist experience in 2022. I was able to live through the struggles that all encounter in their journey to make a better world for themselves and their communities. My first mission focused on fostering COIL practices for Intercultural Maturity (acceptance, respect, and embracement). I was invited by “*Universidad del Valle*” (*UniValle*) in Cali, Colombia, after having implemented COIL in my courses since 2014. I expanded my academic contacts with my COIL partner institution, and I was fortunate to be selected to conduct a Fulbright Scholar award. My first mission “Intercultural Competence through COIL”, allowed me to form relationships and build bridges to contribute to communities becoming global productive and caring citizens. My main assignment was to teach a graduate seminar to eleven PK-12 teachers and college instructors in the use of new technologies in foreign language education, and to strategize in the dissemination of International/Intercultural pedagogical practices. One mission was not enough to accomplish the three stages required for the pedagogical plan proposed which included dissemination, faculty matching and training, and institutionalization. Therefore, I was invited a second time as a Fulbright Specialist to continue the work. The aim of the second Fulbright award was to promote and plan the implementation of the COIL module, seeking institutionalization of this practice. *UniValle* recognizes that institutionalizing COIL as an academic practice, would bring inclusivity in global education for all and specifically, bringing equity to underserved populations to access Quality Education (SDG #4). These are requirements mandated to *UniValle*, as a public higher education institution seeking government accreditation.

COIL MODULE DESIGN ALIGNED WITH FULBRIGHT VALUES

I centered my Fulbright work using the COIL applied learning approach to assist students from Colombia and the US in becoming interculturally mature. COIL activities help students recognize differences. Meaningful negotiations occurring during their interactions make students aware of diverse perspectives in a safe, monitored academic environment. In a virtual classroom experience, learners are guided to understand multiple perspectives and lifestyles that are different from their own. In this process, they get out of their comfort zone by developing acceptance of others and not feeling threatened by their differences. Students are exposed and encouraged to think about the “Other,” the foreign element, and to respect, accept, and eventually become advocates for multiple perspectives, lifestyles, conditions, beliefs, and

issues experienced by others. This enhances their ability to foster social justice, seek peace, and use their educational institutions as channels for delivery and collaboration, which aligns with the Fulbright values of “Respect, Diversity, International Education and Mutual Understanding”.

Connecting students globally is about the relationships built and maintained, and COIL provides an opportunity to accomplish this task at a lower cost, engaging a larger number of students, and teaching content with a global perspective across the disciplines. Students involved assess their own understanding of cultural norms and expectations by comparing behaviors, values, and practices with the Other. Courses with a COIL component enhance the students’ view on diversity. They share stories through purposeful designed interactive prompts, and collaborative learning projects. The COIL designs by my graduate students at *UniValle* in 2019, proposed different modules, all addressing various grade levels (PK- college), social environments, languages, and contents. They include the following: *Flavors of the World*; *Interactive Tales*; *The Tale: The Little Kid who Lost his House--House/Home Vocabulary and Natural Disasters*; *My Village, My Likes and My Future*; *My New Amigo*; *Crossing Borders*; *The Wonderful Freedom: Tales about the Admiration of Power*; *Know the Other Face of Colombia*; *My City... My Bike*; and *Immigrants in Cali*. Languages involved in the designs were English, Japanese, Spanish, and French. I was able to accomplish this first intercultural experience for all participants through my Fulbright mission. Multiple institutional contacts were made after concluding the first mission and I felt ready to network and strengthen institutional collaborations, until Covid pandemic put us all on “stand by.” This period served COIL projects positively by preparing teachers with an understanding of applied technology to deliver content. Educators worldwide had to “solve a problem” and for its purpose, they needed to blend Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), and Content Knowledge (CK) to expand their classroom instruction to the student’s homes. By the same token, administrators were urged to re-evaluate resources available and curricular planning to accommodate to the new worldwide circumstance.

In 2019, during my first Fulbright mission, one of the contacts I established was with the *Cerro Alto* School in Caldono, Cauca. One dedicated teacher from this rural school started to teach science during online learning using public radio broadcasts to reach students in remote rural areas. This strategy was shared with college students in New York who were pursuing their education career. In 2021, college students who are future educators connected with *Cerro Alto* through a COIL lesson. A synchronous meeting was planned between the bilingual college student/teachers and a group of high school students. At this meeting, we observed the influence of socio-economic, cultural differences, and the availability of technological tools for the students’ learning at each institution. Later, the *Cerro Alto* teacher requested continuous academic cooperation. In 2022, the educators involved obtained administrative support to propose a curricular assessment and

advisement project at *Cerro Alto*. A team of professors in pedagogy at SUNY Oneonta (NY) was invited to become the international audience, observing, and supporting the teachers at *Cerro Alto* while they engaged in a curricular self-reflection and actions moving forward.

At SUNY Oneonta, students who were taking the Spanish translation class participated as linguistic and cultural brokers between the two institutions while meeting an applied service-learning requirement. Other college students offered a tutoring program of math and English to 9th and 10th graders at *Cerro Alto*, which is currently developing. COIL partnerships are restricted by the age of the students collaborating. Since it is based on talks about common interests and knowledge, best practices dictate that COIL projects are developed with similar ages and grade levels. Consequently, college students were not partnered in a regular COIL module with the *Cerro Alto* high school students. A secondary school partner was needed to accomplish the COIL plan, and my former graduate student from *UniValle*, in 2019, now teaching at the Sioux school district in South Dakota in a Spanish immersion high school program (<https://www.sf.k12.sd.us/page/spanish-immersion-hs>), was invited to COIL with the *Cerro Alto* institution. This plan accomplished a triangulation of a COIL partnership between three public institutions: two secondary schools, one in Colombia and one in the US, and one university in New York. While the secondary schools conduct a COIL module allowing the teenagers from South Dakota to practice Spanish and acquire intercultural skills, their counterparts in *Cerro Alto* are individually tutored in English by the college student/teachers in New York. All student participants belong to public school systems, that include less privileged and diverse populations, allowing them to obtain quality education, seeking equity, fostering justice and peace in global collaboration. COIL becomes the channel for international, intercultural, interdisciplinary, and institutional cooperation. This is accomplished by the support of the Fulbright mission, which strengthens institutions worldwide that mutually serve.

BRIDGING THE US AND COLOMBIA

Colombia has been the country of focus for my COIL work. I have become a “COIL matchmaker” and provided an opportunity for college professors, schoolteachers, and students K-12 to connect and learn from each other. As a result, I conducted my second Fulbright mission with a specific assignment to recruit, orient, match, and design international curriculum. As a Fulbright Specialist, in 2022, my commitment to continue the work in this region was solidified. I feel part of the institution abroad and responsible to continue guiding the infusion of internationalization in its curriculum through COIL practices. I will continue to advise and support the faculty COIL practitioners and trainers, collaborating to create a systematic registry of COIL experiences, and expanding COIL faculty matches between the United States and Colombia. Lastly, I would like to assist in the planning

of future “COIL Academies” worldwide and will seek Fulbright support to continue this endeavor. To accomplish all the above, the first concrete official institutional commitment has been a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by *UniValle* and SUNY-Oneonta, for a second term. It is my duty to keep exploring all the possibilities that this official linkage provides. It is my aim, after my two Fulbright missions in *UniValle*, to assist in the exploration of Memoranda of Agreements (MOA) that would allow students to travel in both directions and conduct studies for academic credit, research experiences, and service activities. The door is open now and my goal is to educate our students to think holistically and responsibly about seeking mutual understanding beyond the classroom experience.

HOW MY FULBRIGHT WORK IMPACTED ME

My own COIL practice has led me to become interculturally mature (respectful and advocator of difference) yet educating others towards an action requires persuasive skills and the virtue of patience. For a university professor, it demands creativity in the teaching practice. I believe COIL is an invaluable pedagogical approach that connects through mutual experience and collaboration and promotes personal growth. Fulbright allowed me to use my practice to build a bridge to my country of origin. It empowered my capacity for action by recognizing a strength within me to connect people, cultures, lives, worlds. My Fulbright mission gave me the power to act, making a positive change from the space I know best- the classroom - I would implement educational policies at all grade levels where educators would have to find a way to include COIL to connect to another culture, locally, regionally or beyond national identities. I would embrace learning about the perspectives of other people, and the products, and practices within their respective communities.

I am a believer that educational practices such as COIL are part of a solution to world issues. It has been a long process for me to be able to become interculturally conscious. I have used my experiences, my socialization, and some group dialogues to recognize my inner self, my biases, motives, and emotions that may affect my interaction with others. As I relate to other human beings, I see that humanity is far from being interculturally mature. There is “noise”, obstacles that limit us from accepting others. I am lucky to be one of the most educated persons among my family and friends. I am a person of color who was fortunate to have an opportunity that allowed me to influence others positively. However, education alone does not make me better than others around me. Being educated, in my case, gives me the

I believe COIL is an invaluable pedagogical approach that connects through mutual experience and collaboration and promotes personal growth. Fulbright allowed me to use my practice to build a bridge to my country of origin. It empowered my capacity for action by recognizing a strength within me to connect people, cultures, lives, worlds.

advantage of looking at issues from different perspectives and being able to reflect before I judge, or express bias towards a behavior, or condition, that I have not lived or understand. If I could aid the world, I would make every classroom include a COIL experience and build bridges through education that promotes the values of mutual understanding, leadership, global problem solving, and impact. I have bridged privileged communities in the US with rural indigenous communities in Colombia and Spanish heritage immigrant communities in the US with urban tourist economies in Colombia. Through my service-learning initiatives, I allow my students to service communities abroad. My current undergraduate students tutor Colombian children and adults in ESL while applying their intercultural competencies and Spanish language acquisition. Fulbright and COIL talk the common language of human life sustainability.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

I came out of my Fulbright experiences with tools to be an activist to advance sustainable human life on earth. My commitment for the future involves assisting in the expansion of COIL interdisciplinary education, networking among educators who would like to try COIL, discussing digital spaces and their impact on human behavior, teaching others about digital channels and tools, continue expanding at the primary and secondary school levels, disseminating regionally, nationally and internationally, and organizing more COIL Academies globally that prepare instructors to teach their students the necessary skills to be prepared for global careers. We have the technology to create COIL bridges. We simply need partners to show us the way across, through structured reflection on and acknowledgment of interculturalism. Fulbright has been a wide-open door and continues to be the foundation for the international/intercultural bridge I aim to build from the US to the world. COIL provides opportunities for cultural connections that traditional schooling cannot. It brings diversity, equity, and inclusion for all faculty and students and the Fulbright vision is the inspiration to accomplish it.

NOTES

1. "SUNY COIL" Connect, Engage and Collaborate. State university of New York, Collaborative Online international Learning. <https://coil.suny.edu/>
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Students from the *Cerro Alto* Highschool COILing
synchronously with students at SUNY-Oneonta

BIOGRAPHY

Maria Cristina Montoya is a professor of Spanish and Bilingual Education at the State University of New York, at Oneonta. She received two Fulbright Awards, first as a Scholar (2018-2019) and later as a Specialist (2022) to Colombia. She can be contacted at mc.montoya@oneonta.edu

FROM ITALY TO THE UNITED STATES: REFLECTIONS ON A FULBRIGHT TEACHING AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN PITTSBURGH

FLAVIA CAVALIERE

ABSTRACT

I was a Distinguished Italian Fulbright Chair at the University of Pittsburgh. A key purpose of the Fulbright Program is to serve as a cultural ambassador to one's own country. I shaped my syllabus to dispel stereotypes about 'Italianness' and to enable my students to critique different types of discourse about 'Otherness' through a multimodal approach. In turn, my students modified my perspective on American values and the US way of living.

Keywords: multimodal misrepresentation • Italianness • cross-fertilization



PRELUDE TO A FULBRIGHT JOURNEY

The unexpected circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic not only resulted in a dramatic loss of human life worldwide but also brought far-reaching repercussions in many aspects of people's lives. Coincidentally, my interest in a Fulbright Scholarship was sparked precisely in the wake of the stresses and strains of the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 lockdowns. I have been teaching English Linguistics and Translation at the University of Naples Federico II, Italy for more than twenty years, and during the pandemic confinement measures, I missed interpersonal relations enormously. I have always found my daily interactions with my students stimulating and thought-provoking, but online teaching platforms only allowed minimal community connection and commitment.

Therefore, my need to experience something enlivening and new led me to apply for the 2021-2022 Fulbright Visiting Scholar Grant. Though highly motivated, I was aware that the Fulbright selection process is extremely competitive. I was not particularly confident about being chosen. My concerns primarily derived from my being a professor of (English) linguistics, a discipline that is remarkably well-researched and represented by eminent scholars, particularly in the US. Although my research is internationally focused, I kept questioning myself, 'Could my investigations and publications be of any interest to American college students?'

Much to my joy, the answer was YES! The discipline(s) requested from the universities offering the grant included Italian studies with a preference for interdisciplinarity (e.g., cultural studies, gender studies, media studies, European studies, Mediterranean studies). My course outline was evidently appealing because, apart from linguistics, it also covered many of the above-mentioned fields in the humanities, and utilized various interdisciplinary approaches (including Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis – with a major focus on the appraisal framework – and (audiovisual) Translation Studies). Since acting as a cultural ambassador of one’s own country is a key purpose of the Fulbright Program, I shaped my proposed syllabus as a way to dispel some stereotypes and misconceptions about ‘Italianicity’, i.e. the condensed essence of everything that could be associated with Italy and/or being Italian. On October 19, 2021, I received my final appointment as the Distinguished Italian Fulbright Chair at the University of Pittsburgh for the following spring semester. This was the official beginning of an unforgettable period of my life.

ARRIVAL IN PITTSBURGH

I opted for the University of Pittsburgh, located in the center of Pittsburgh, in its historic Oakland neighborhood. I felt (and was proven right, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic restrictions) that the urban environment could provide me with more chances to enjoy a vibrant city. Not only is Pittsburgh rich in history and socio-cultural events, with a renowned arts and theater culture, but it also proudly ranks among the top places to live, work, and visit in the US. Yet, before I could fully enjoy my Fulbright experience, there were some slightly troubling phases, partly due to Covid. Although I have always been supported by the Italian and US Fulbright Commissions, the application process involved months of preparation and many bureaucratic steps. Providing future Visiting Professors with more information about accommodation and life in Pittsburgh could be useful and prevent them from having to cope with practical / bureaucratic issues, like, for instance, getting connection to electricity, or opening a current account.

Nonetheless, at first, the main drawbacks of my experience all related to Covid measures, which were still in place when I arrived in Pittsburgh on January 1, 2022. Though I was only informed about the decision after arriving, in late December 2021, the Provost of Pittsburgh announced classes would be taught remotely for the first two and a half weeks of the semester. Consequently, January was the hardest month in terms of integration because of remote teaching, accompanied by frequent snowstorms and very low temperatures. This meant that I hardly had the chance to get to know people in person. My social life was exclusively ‘virtual’. I met my students through screens and had short meetings with colleagues online. However, this initial period of home confinement was really self-motivating on a personal level. Throughout my life, I have had the privilege of traveling around the world. I

already visited the US several times, but always as a tourist. This time, I had to live without the protective cocoon my family, and the rest of my support network, usually offer me. That said, it was only at the end of January, when in-person classes resumed and in-situ activities slowly began to take place again, that my journey through the American ethos really started. I joined the intellectual and social life of the university and the wider Pittsburgh community, historically known as a melting pot of cultures and lifestyles. I met a lot of fascinating people from many different countries and with various educational backgrounds. I learned first-hand about the mix of people who live in Pittsburgh and had uplifting conversations and exchanges of view with them. Once fully immersed in the language and culture for months, I gradually learned how to adjust to my new daily scenario until I felt like an ‘insider’ and totally settled into American life, which also meant eating the American way, moving up my meal time (in Southern Italy we have dinner and lunch much later), enjoying dressing more casually and even feigning an American accent. My Easter trip to Washington, D.C. enabled me to enjoy and gain a deep understanding of many American customs and habits. Thanks to a local friend’s invitation, my Easter Sunday was celebrated in the real American way: painting eggs and eating pineapple-glazed ham. Despite being middle-aged, I felt like a new ‘me’ was born. In most cases, my perspectives on the US way of living were modified and reshaped, but at the same time, I reconsidered and reconnected with my Italian life and my roots.

In turn, over the course of the semester, I introduced my friends and colleagues to my home country’s values, customs, and way of living, which always aroused great interest and curiosity. Pittsburgh and the University of Pittsburgh have a long history with Italy and Italians, and it is estimated to be the fifth-largest Italian American enclave. Not surprisingly, the Italian language has been taught at the University of Pittsburgh since the 1840s. Nowadays, the Italian division of the Department of French and Italian (FRIT) at the university is a very active hub of Italian culture, whose dynamic student-run Italian club was founded in 1914. Whenever possible, I always participated in the wide variety of events about contemporary Italian society offered throughout the semester, such as the annual contemporary Italian film festival. I also joined forces with my Italian colleagues to provide a fun and engaging environment for those interested in the Italian language or culture to continue to develop their passion outside of a classroom setting. This included the meetings on Thursdays at Tavola Italiana, an Italian conversation club that provided conversation sessions and opportunities to learn Italian customs and traditions.

UNDERSTANDING ITALIANICITY

My course, '(Mis)-representing Italianicity overseas', introduced six interrelated thematic modules – Representing Italy overseas; Enacting Italianicity; EATaly; The 'Italy and the mafia' equation; Translating Italy; and Advertising Italy – as different examples of (mis)representations of Italian identity. Hosted by FRIT, it was open to any undergraduate student in the School of Arts and Sciences and, therefore, was taught exclusively in English. My course aimed to enable students to examine the complexity of the Italian identity and how such a multifaceted identity is (re)shaped by/through the media and via the medium of English. The course intended to explore the implicit and intricate socio-cultural dimensions of the notion of Italianicity, to analyse the role of (multimodal) texts in building an Italian identity and an individual or collective image of being Italian abroad (i.e. what is considered to be peculiarly Italian or proper to Italians in language, character, customs, culture, civilization) and to investigate if/how the idea of Italianicity has evolved. I aimed to unveil many nation-based stereotypes where Italians are often misrepresented through anachronistic behavioral models, such as an ethnocentric sense of family, a fixation on food, theatricality of gestures, and, as recent surveys still confirm, having mob ties.

By drawing mainly on a multimodal critical discourse analysis approach, students were provided with the necessary theoretical and practical tools to examine how the complex notions of identity and Italianicity are re-mediated through inter/intra-textual references in a process of re-semiotization that frequently produces comic, grotesque, paradoxical, and even derogatory effects, such as the still recurring picture of the typical Italian as the pasta-eating peasant or the foul-mouthed mobster. Considering the realms of both linguistics and cultural studies, my class focused on the various (mis)representations, expressions, practices, as well as artifacts and cultural spaces that constitute the vibrant socio-semiotic landscape of Italianicity at the intersection of the Italian and North American lingua-cultural frameworks. Italian ethnic identities' complex issues were in fact investigated also from a cross-cultural perspective in juxtaposition with the American one(s) as conveyed mainly via advertising, films, myths and festivals, websites and new technologies, culture-bound terms, migrating words, and food. A range of semantic, syntactic, discursive, and visual devices utilized to depict Italy was considered as the possible unifying referent of diverse physical and anthropic environments and as a metonymic embodiment of various social and lingua-cultural paradigm shifts. Students, for instance, examined how Italianicity in Elena Ferrante's 'My Brilliant Friend' is represented and then perceived by US audience, compared some Italian and American pizza brands and their advertising campaigns, and juxtaposed Italian and English translations of some literary texts. All students' investigations served as excellent sources of analysis for different cultural values and helped to dispel widespread

misconceptions and uncomplimentary pattern of stereotyping. Students were encouraged to ponder derogatory reshapings of an otherwise rich and multifaceted cultural heritage, turned into trite stereotypes and sub-cultural norms.

My ultimate goals were to qualify my students for further investigation and multimodal communication research but also, more importantly, to enable them to critique different types of discourse about various kinds of ‘Otherness’ (whether it relates to ethnicity, gender, minorities, and so on), both from a linguistic and visual point of view in order to reveal hidden and taken-for-granted social and cultural trends.

This approach stimulated constant comparisons between American and Italian narratives and representations and thought-provoking intercultural exchanges with my students, who always seemed very interested in the course and demonstrated a high level of intellectual curiosity, as was confirmed by their final outputs, which were all very satisfactory.

Through my collaborative and interactive classes, I learned a lot, particularly about how young people in the US view and value Italian and American socio-historical scenarios. My teaching experience was revealing and provided me with new didactic insights, which are being positively trialed by my current students at the University of Naples Federico II. For instance, after long discussions with my colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh, I embraced some of their teaching techniques, such as more varied grading procedures and evaluation methods. I found that these could be more closely integrated into classroom activities, allowing for much more engagement and learning through assessment rather than simply having a final exam at the end of the course.

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Notably, materials, and references from my lectures and classes have also been ‘exploited’ (and still are) by other colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh, which will hopefully lead to future collaborative projects with colleagues from the Italian Department in terms of joint research, in particular focused on Translation and Film Studies.

I was mainly interested in advocating the value of interdisciplinary education and promoting (under)graduate student exchanges. FRIT already offers summer and semester-long programs (the former in Sicily and Florence and the latter in Florence and Perugia), but both the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Federico II intend ‘to dialogue’ about the possibility of including also Naples among the exchange programs, although this implies having to solve various bureaucratic and financial/organizational problems. Unfortunately, higher education institutions in both countries are often grappling with budget cuts, so recruitment efforts at fee-paying international

students are often targeted. Nonetheless, adequate financial support to undergraduates/graduate students for a semester or year-long study abroad program in either the United States or Italy is vital. Additionally, due to legal differences, administrators are not always equipped to handle issues such as students' full recognition for the study abroad academic achievements, or obtaining visas, so blending bureaucratic and adhoc tools and programmes would be first needed. Yet, I have great hopes that in a near future all these issues will be successfully coped with, in the pursuit of cross-fertilization and cultural exchanges, activities that are at the core of the Fulbright Program.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

As a Fulbrighter, I was invited to participate in the many activities (lectures, panel discussions, conferences) organized by the University of Pittsburgh. Among the major initiatives and events I took part in during my stay, I particularly appreciated the lecture given by Theresa May MP at the Pittsburgh Speakers Series, a series of lectures annually delivered at Heinz Hall by prominent national and global speakers. Mrs. May, having served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during the notorious Brexit referendum, offered exclusive insights about that historic moment, and being present at her talk made me feel like I had witnessed a piece of 'history' in person.

Another event that was particularly worthy of note in terms of intercultural dialogue/exchange was the Faculty Honors Convocation, a solemn ceremony that annually celebrates faculty members who have distinguished themselves through teaching, research, and public service. The ceremony not only made me feel proud of being (albeit temporarily) part of the University of Pittsburgh's academic community, but also offered me the chance to (finally) meet the Provost and many other colleagues with whom I discussed my research, syllabus, and teaching experiences.

Serving as an Italian Fulbright Scholar in the US was a fulfilling experience, providing unforgettable emotional moments and great fun, and it will have an enduring impact on both my academic career and my private life. Moreover, it gave me a unique opportunity to represent my home country in a flagship intercultural program and somehow (re)shaped my mindset as a fully-fledged scholar. I will always feel greatly honored by my Fulbright grant, and as a proud member of the worldwide Fulbright community and a convinced Fulfred – that is, a member of a network established in 2021 by Fulbrighters from the University of Naples Federico II who aim at disseminating Fulbright research and projects – I will always commit myself to promote any Fulbright experience.

NOTES

1. Learn more about Pittsburgh: In 2017, Pittsburgh ranked as the 7th best US city for an active lifestyle, and in 2022 it positioned 4th on the Most Liveable Cities List in the US. For more, see <https://www.visitpittsburgh.com/media/press-kit/pittsburgh-accolades/>
2. For more information about the University of Pittsburgh, see <http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/esc>
3. More details about Pittsburgh Speakers Series at <https://www.pittsburghspeakers.org/>



Prof. Cavaliere outside the Cathedral of Learning,
University of Pittsburgh

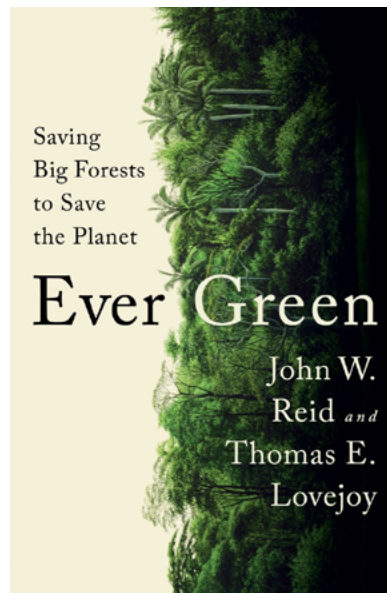
BIOGRAPHY

Flavia Cavaliere is Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Naples Federico II, Italy. She has been awarded Full Professorship and was Italian Fulbright Distinguished Scholar at Pittsburgh University, PA, for Spring Semester 2022. She has been a Visiting Professor at the University of East Anglia (2018) and University of Düsseldorf (2011) and lectured extensively at many other European universities. Her research interests include (audiovisual) translation studies, multimodal critical discourse analysis, language and media, and multilingualism. She has authored around 80 works (papers in international journals and volumes, and books, published by global publishers) and worked on several international interdisciplinary research projects. Email: fcavaliere@unina.it

REVIEWS

MEGAFORESTS TIE TOGETHER THE FABRIC OF CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITIES

JOCELYN L. AYCRIGG



John W. Reid and Thomas E. Lovejoy, *Ever Green: Saving Big Forests to Save the Planet*. Thomas E. Lovejoy was the Fulbright 50th Anniversary Distinguished Lecturer to Cyprus and Turkey in 1996.

Ever Green is a wonderfully written book on a highly relevant and timely topic. As is readily apparent, our world is changing, and the speed of this change is challenging for species, including plants, wildlife, and humans. Our own human activities are driving these changes through releasing large quantities of carbon into our atmosphere.

We have two main avenues to stabilize or reduce our carbon emissions and slow the speed of change. The first is to reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere. This is the avenue the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is often informing policymakers how to do—without great success to date. The second avenue is keeping our existing biosphere intact, which includes megaforests, in order to store vast amounts of carbon and to decarbonize the atmosphere through photosynthesis.

As stated in *Ever Green*, it is more affordable and effective by a factor of seven to keep megaforests, rather than regrowing them after deforestation. Keeping megaforests intact is vital because, as Reid and Lovejoy point out, plants have decarbonized our atmosphere twice before, and it's likely they can do it again.

Ever Green focuses on five megaforests across the world: the Taiga in northern Russia; the Boreal in northern North America; the Amazon in northern South America; the Congo in central Africa; and the island forest split between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. Reid and Lovejoy describe the unique characteristics of each of these forests, illustrate why they are considered megaforests, and explain the importance of their biodiversity and human communities.

The fabric of conservation is tied together with the local communities in and around these megaforests, and Reid and Lovejoy spend about half of the book introducing the people working to conserve these special places. In the Congo Forest, you meet Gaston Abea, a member of a Pygmy tribe, who is conducting his own research on western lowland gorillas under the larger umbrella of the Goulougo Research Project. He has documented the techniques used by gorillas for finding and eating forest truffles. You also meet Tamasaimpa, a member of the Marubo tribe in the Amazon Forest of Brazil. He works with the federal National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) to protect tribes who have not been in contact with people in our modern world; they remain unaware of the world outside their area of the Amazon Forest. These tribes have unique skills and awareness of their forest environments on which their survival depends; these people feel the living pulse of the wildlife, trees, and land. However, if these uncontacted tribes are contacted, Tamasaimpa ensures they survive their encounters and the diseases of the modern world.

Reid and Lovejoy tell wonderful stories of enchanting experiences and adventures in these megaforests.

Reid and Lovejoy share a story told by Tamasaimpa in which several Indigenous tribes in the Amazon Forest learned they had the power to protect their forest. In the story, with the support of Tamasaimpa, members of the Matsés tribe took possession of river barges headed to Peru loaded with illegally harvested mahogany trees from their tribal lands which caught the attention of the Peruvian police. You will have to read the book to learn the end of the story, but it was a turning point in how Peruvian and Brazilian governments viewed the Indigenous tribes in the Amazon Forest

The efforts of these local communities and their Indigenous populations within megaforests are benefitting all of us because, for example, the probability of carbon stored in an Indigenous-controlled forest being released into the atmosphere is thirty-six times lower than for unprotected land and six

times lower for protected land in the Amazon Forest. Additionally, research summarized by Reid and Lovejoy shows that higher amounts of biodiversity within megaforests help store more carbon, thereby keeping it out of our atmosphere and helping our world reduce its carbon emissions.

Reid and Lovejoy tell wonderful stories of enchanting experiences and adventures in these megaforests which draw the reader into these mystical places on which so much biodiversity and numerous human communities depend. There is the too-close-for-comfort encounter with a forest elephant in the Congo Forest that could have ended tragically if their Pygmy guide had not spotted the animal and had them run for their lives in the opposite direction. They also observed the unique phenomenon of co-feeding between apes. When the rare fig tree species, *Ficus recurvata*, produces fruit once every thirteen months, both gorillas and chimpanzees feed together on the same tree. This behavior has been observed only in the Goulougo Triangle within the Congo Forest.

For many of us Fulbrighters, including myself, the stories told by Reid and Lovejoy and the efforts of so many people to keep these megaforests and their Indigenous communities intact, are close to our hearts. They encourage me personally to continue my efforts to protect nature despite all the bad news about our environment. Thomas Lovejoy passed away in December 2021 after a long and highly distinguished career as a conservation scientist; he was known as “the Godfather of Biodiversity.” He will be sorely missed, but this book is a fitting finale for our fellow Fulbright scholar.

John W. Reid and Thomas E. Lovejoy, *Ever Green: Saving Big Forests to Save the Planet*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022. 302 pages, \$17.99.

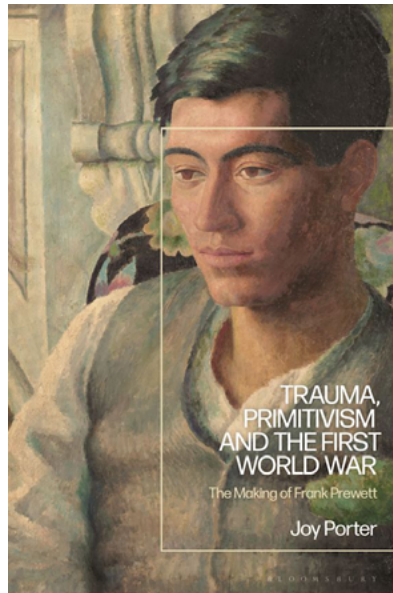
BIOGRAPHY

Jocelyn Aycrigg, a Fulbright Scholar to Tbilisi, Georgia, 2021-2, grew up in Colorado and has lived in California, upstate New York, Illinois, and Idaho. She received her PhD from the University of Idaho and has spent most of her 30+ year career in academia where her research focuses on landscape and wildlife ecology by providing a science-based context to conservation efforts. She has collaborated with numerous colleagues at universities, land management agencies, and non-governmental organizations, and has published her research in top peer-reviewed journals, including *BioScience* and *Ecological Applications*. She currently lives in Idaho where she enjoys rafting, hiking, and morel mushroom hunting. She can be reached at aycrigg@uidaho.edu



ONE POET'S REACTION TO WAR

STEVEN DARIAN



Trauma, Primitivism, and the First World War: The Making of Frank Prewett by Joy Porter, a Visiting Fulbright Scholar from the UK to Dartmouth College, 2015.

This book follows the life journey of the Canadian World War I poet Frank Prewett and the life-changing effects of that war on him and his generation. It was also a time of incredible change in almost everything: in politics; in physics and psychology; in business and industry; in social relationships; and in literature. The author, Joy Porter, a professor of Indigenous history at the University of Hull (UK) is brilliant in weaving together the incredibly complex interactions that encompass the events of World War I, that began before the war and follow on from it.

The book lays bare the reactions to the war, of people in general, and of writers of the times, especially the poets. These include those who observed it from afar, and those who fought in the trenches. This included Prewett, who experienced some of the worst fighting of the war (at the Somme and at Ypres), and was seriously injured. So much so that the trauma led him to adopt a second persona, a new identity—that of an American Indian, adding Indian colors to his clothing, alluding here and there to his Indigenous heritage, and adding “Toronto” to his name. (The Canadian’s city’s name is derived from a Mohawk word.)

The trauma of war led him to adopt a second persona, a new identity—that of an American Indian.

Prewett spent time recovering from his war wounds at a hospital in southern England, not far from Garsington Manor in Oxfordshire which attracted some of the early twentieth century's most significant and most influential literary figures, such as E.M. Forster, Walter de la Mare, and T.S. Eliot. And it was there that Prewett began to form an attachment to the literary set. Evidently he made a great impression on many of his fellow writers, some of whom (Virginia Woolf and Robert Graves) predicted greatness for him.

What made Prewett's poetry unique, according to the author, was the poet's focus on the iron will needed to withstand the brutalities of war, and the horrors that never left you, but remained, hovering in the shadows, waiting to leap out at the slightest provocation. Ultimately, he looked upon war as ageless in a world "alienated from the rhythms of nature" (45) and bereft of tradition.

As for his poems, apart from the love poetry that tends to be traditional, there are the lugubrious lyrics of war. Here is an excerpt from his "Mad Tom Beuly:"

Say boys, I saw my brother,
Which one ought to, you see
In a proud and well-connected
and loving family.

The rats had chewed his flesh for food,
He shows a bony knee,
But the smile upon visage
Is a cheering sight to see (158).

The condition Prewett had fallen prey to is called *Primitivism*, which we could define as a longing for an earlier, supposedly simpler world, where benevolent nature played a major part. It was a state of mind whose cause, in retrospect, could be viewed pathologically or culturally. In other words, it was induced by trauma or as a reaction to the times since it also expressed itself in other ways: among painters of the period, most notably, Van Gogh and Gauguin. It harkened back to a golden age that never was.

Some were convinced that the new flood of knowledge sweeping the world "heralded potential *disaster*" (200). The poet Yeats emphasized the Second Coming in his poem by that name: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold." Spengler's canonical *Decline of the West* predicted not just the end of German supremacy, but the whole of Western Civilization, including the United States. Such reactions engendered what Porter calls "protest memory" (199), remembering things that were not quite true—and especially in the case of many writers, never *intended* to be true. Alternative realities. Prewett himself "decided to tell dominant groups a story they wanted to hear" (197).

Porter cites examples from earlier and more recent times of Indigenous people amusing themselves in this way: of the Caribs in the West Indies telling Columbus of the gold and many-headed cannibals that existed just over the horizon. Or “the young Samoans who told Margaret Mead they were sexually promiscuous, as her 1960s reading public wanted to be themselves” (197). Memory, as your reviewer has often reflected, is at best, an act of imagination.

The tremors of WW I, as portrayed in this book, will ripple over time, and will continue on through many moons: the concepts of empires and nationhood; of colonialism and identity; attitudes towards race and gender; and the relationship between memory and reality. Prewett continued to be praised by the war poets and, according to the author, is still considered one of Canada’s finest poets.

Joy Porter. *Trauma, Primitivism, and the First World War: The Making of Frank Prewett*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. 289 pages. \$115.80 hc, \$39.75 pb.

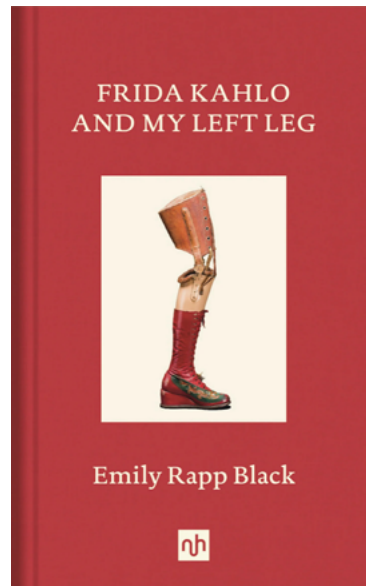
BIOGRAPHY

Steven Darian has a PhD from NYU in Applied Linguistics and is professor emeritus from Rutgers University. He’s taught at Penn and Columbia and lived, taught, and studied in many countries, three of them on Fulbrights (India, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan). He has more than 10 years experience as editorial director for a small publishing house in NYC and has written over a dozen books, ranging from *Understanding the Language of Science*, to *The Heretic’s Book of Death & Laughter: The Role of Religion in Just About Everything* (2022). He can be reached at darger27@yahoo.com



SIGNS OF NEW LIFE

CHLOË G. K. ATKINS



Frida Kahlo and My Left Leg, by Emily Rapp Black, who was a Fulbright Scholar to Seoul, Korea, in 1996.

Frida Kahlo includes monkeys in many of her self-portraits. In one of them, she depicts the face of a small black monkey as well as her own—two visages: one simian, the other human, stare intently out of the frame. Emily Rapp Black’s latest memoir, *Frida Kahlo and My Left Leg*, mimics this duality. Black, a *New York Times* bestselling author, ponders Kahlo’s disabled life, work, and posthumous exhibits, as she reflects on her own experience of amputation and loss. (Kahlo contracted polio as a child and then was further badly injured in a bus accident as a young woman.) Black creates a collage of observations, memories, and reveries. She muses about Kahlo’s paintings and disability experiences, interpenetrating them with that of her own consciousness of “exceptional bodies.” Black became an amputee at age four, and her first child, Ronan, died of Tay Sachs disease at the age of three. The book meditates on threads of loss and resurgence as they weave themselves throughout the narrative of Kahlo’s iconography and Black’s own life experiences.

In reflecting about Kahlo, the author focuses on the medical paraphernalia which accompany the artist, and which also continue to simultaneously intrude and facilitate her own life. She writes, “I began my toddler life in a metal brace secured to the body by Velcro straps and a foam bump under the left foot that made my legs even, or ‘line up’ as we said, ‘Is it lined up? Do you feel lined up?’” (103).

As she walks through the Kahlo Museum in Mexico City, Black feels the skin of her stump uncomfortably sweating and abrading against the sleeve of her artificial leg. At various interludes in the book, she recalls quasi-sexual encounters with prosthetists who sculpted her limbs over the years as she stood or hopped in her underwear through their workshops waiting for them to re-work casts or prototypes. Recent technology means that she has more than one prosthetic leg: one for running, one for high heels and another for everyday use. Black relies on these innovations to function, yet she writes, “Each night the body is reshaped with the removal of the prosthetic, placed next to the bed within easy reach, and each morning refashioned through the act of reattachment. Each day this rebirth” (32). Kahlo also captures this oscillation between separateness and wholeness when the painter transforms her plaster corsets, orthotic shoes, and metal braces into art. She covers the various accoutrements with images, in some way taming their foreignness but also highlighting them as objects to be manipulated by her creativity. Both women need, resent, rely on, and transform their assistive devices. The pieces of equipment are icons and tools, remaining external yet integral to both Kahlo and Black.

Black ponders Kahlo’s disabled life, work, and posthumous exhibits, as she reflects on her own experience of amputation and loss.

Because society judges women by their appearance, physical disability and/or disfigurement create particular psychic and social burdens for women. Black opines:

[A] woman is embodied, and she is judged accordingly. We want to think that we are beyond this, that we are more than our bodies, but, in the end, we are not. We are both easily reduced to the sum of our parts, but sometimes we are reduced only to our parts. As a woman who wears a permanent machine, I still feel this acutely. (110)

The admixture of femininity and disability is a difficult one. Kahlo navigates it through her visual art which also becomes a part of her presentation of self—there is a distinctive Frida style. Similarly, Black and her amputee girlfriends dress to accommodate their sometimes noisy, badly colored prosthetic limbs: “I select outfits even for the most casual event with great calculation: what to hide, what to reveal, a cautious consideration of how much attention and of what variety I am willing to withstand or absorb or explain or contextualize” (15).

Kahlo can sometimes be seen as a pathetic vamp, clinging to her lover/husband, the famous painter Diego Rivera, because she is desperate and disabled. Similarly, people objectify Black, staring at her in public. There are even men who are attracted to the seeming vulnerability of female amputees and who fetishize and harass the young woman. But both Kahlo and Black are not weak; instead they seek “immense joy in living” (8). Pain is a part of their lives but not the centrality of their existences.

Kahlo's plural miscarriages and Black's son Ronan's premature death from Tay Sachs haunt the book. As women who experience the chronicity of pain, maternity circulates through their lives. Ronan's short life occurs within the descent and destruction of the writer's first marriage. Her mothering is careful yet delimited. Ronan dies because his parents' genes betray him. The fault in some way lies with them, but he suffers the mortal penalty: "Everything was wrong with my son, and yet he was perfect and singular. He was my creation, but I would never, as Dr Frankenstein had, leave him. My love for him remains a burden I will never put down" (112).

Kahlo loses three children by either abortion or miscarriage –the consequences of her broken and endlessly, medically repaired body. Despite technologic interventions, none of these young lives can be saved, but their mothers endure and even thrive. Kahlo continues to create until her final moments on the planet. Black births and mothers another child—and writes this wonderful book.

Both women are testaments to the capacity, as Black tells us, of human beings to be "born through moments of rupture, again and again..." (30).

Emily Rapp Black, *Frida Kahlo and My Left Leg*. London: Notting Hill Editions, 2021. 158 pages. \$19.35.

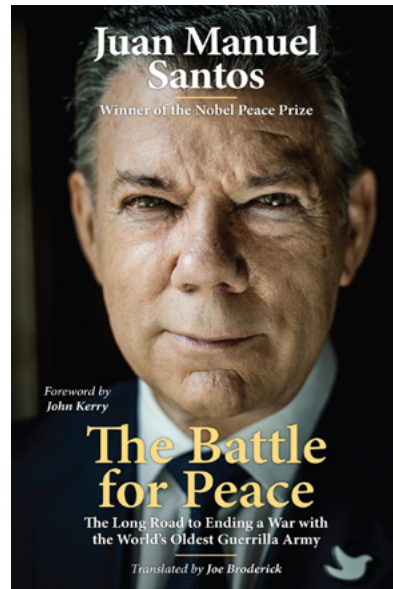
BIOGRAPHY

Chloë G. K. Atkins has a PhD in Political Theory from the University of Toronto and a postdoc in law from Cornell University where she was a Fulbright Scholar in 1999. Her prize-winning book, *My Imaginary Illness* (Cornell Univ. Press), came out in 2010, and she writes about disability, bioethics, health equity, vulnerable identities, human rights, and phenomenological and narrative scholarship. She is the primary investigator of "The PROUD Project" on Under-Employment and Disability, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; the Department of National Defense Research Council of Canada; TechNation, Catherine & Frederik Eaton Family Foundation; the University of Toronto Global Teaching Grant; and private donors. Besides her Fulbright award, she has held Killam, Clarke, and SSHRC fellowships. She can be reached at chloegk.atkins@utoronto.ca



AN INSIDER'S VIEW OF THE PATH TO PEACE IN COLOMBIA

JOE FOWERAKER



Juan Manuel Santos, *The Battle for Peace: the Long Road to Ending a War with the World's Oldest Guerrilla Army*. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Juan Manuel Santos was awarded the Fulbright-Fletcher Fellowship in 1981 and the Fulbright Excellence Award for Outstanding Alumni by the Fulbright Commission in Colombia in 2017.

This account, by Nobel Peace Prize laureate and the former president of Colombia, of the long search for a peaceful settlement to the armed conflict in Colombia is a heady mix of autobiography, history, memoir, political polemic, and instruction manual. After first exploring the historical background to the conflict, the story follows the series of failed attempts to reach an accord from the early 1980s to the early years of this century, before focussing on the crucial first six years of the Presidency of Juan Manuel Santos himself, and the successive stages of the prolonged negotiation between his government and the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), the principal organization of the armed insurgents. At this point the narrative closely reflects an insider's view of the process from the chief protagonist and lead architect of the settlement.

In fact, from the period of “conspiring for peace” (21) in the 1990s, this is always a personal history, its twists and turns mainly determined by the role of the author, who took an early lead in pursuing secret conversations and discrete contacts with both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries, to

try to find a viable way forward. This was a risky and informal initiative by Santos and distinguished figures from civil society that was eventually discredited by the government. But the role became ever more prominent in the subsequent years of “creating the conditions for peace” (41)

with Santos first serving as Finance Minister in the Pastrana administration (1998-2002) and then as Defense Minister during the presidency of Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010). In the latter role, Santos was at the forefront of the policy of waging war to make peace and strengthening the armed forces, especially their logistical and intelligence departments with financial and strategic support from the US under its Plan Colombia. There were military successes, above all in identifying and eliminating “high value” targets, and further success in demobilizing the paramilitaries, under the umbrella of the Law of Justice and Peace. But eventually, Santos came to doubt President Uribe’s commitment to a peaceful outcome, and this shaped his own approach when he was first elected President in 2010.

Almost inevitably, given the nature of the account, there are passages where the author seeks to defend his own moral stance or strategic approach, providing a measure of retrospective justification for his decisions. In compensation, he is always keen to recognize the essential support of political allies and professionals, both at home and abroad, in what was undeniably a collective enterprise that required discretion and loyalty; and Santos is at his most trenchant when delivering judgement on those deemed disloyal to the cause. The collective nature of the work becomes clear as the search for a solution enters the initial “secret phase” (103) from 2010 to 2012 that aims to bring the FARC to the negotiating table and establish the rules for the negotiations to follow. Once the pursuit of a negotiated peace settlement comes out into the open—and certainly by the time of Santos’s re-election to the presidency in 2014—this policy encounters considerable opposition, mainly from former President Uribe and his followers at home, and criticism from unsympathetic leaders abroad.

Here Santos’s political skills proved crucial in, firstly, bringing the presidents of Venezuela (Chávez) and Ecuador (Correa) onto his side, and, secondly, in winning a handsome electoral victory in the campaign for the presidency in 2014. In both instances, Santos took pride in finding common ground with opponents, despite ideological and political differences.

Santos understood that his government had to acknowledge the fact that it was engaged in an “armed conflict” with the FARC and was not simply seeking to suppress “terrorists.” This was a requirement of negotiating a peace settlement, as well as allowing the application of the Statute of Rome and international humanitarian law. (This apparently innocuous point of

A heady mix of autobiography, history, memoir, political polemic, and instruction manual.

language highlighted the key difference between his approach and that of former President Uribe). And this was consistent with continuing to wage unrelenting war on the FARC, which succeeded in eliminating its principal military (Mono Jojoy) and political commanders (Alfonso Cano).

This dual and combined strategy ushered in the final phase of intense negotiations in Havana, with Santos always insisting that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.” It took six months just to agree on the agenda for the talks, and this was followed by fifty-one cycles of negotiation over four years—averaging eleven days each—marked by ninety-four bulletins, three joint progress reports, and thirty-three joint minutes. The process was supported throughout by international advisers and guarantors and bolstered by the backing of everyone from US President Barack Obama to Pope Francis, and President Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for his success.

This is a fascinating and important story. It may lack the discipline and objectivity of history, but it is replete with the passion of political engagement and debate. It is polemical in places, but remarkably generous in its judgements of political friends and political foes alike. Finally, beyond any doubt, it makes clear that it is far easier to wage war and wreak destruction than to work to secure peace, prosperity, and a measure of social justice. Santos makes a good case for combining the roles of warrior and peacemaker as a precondition for a successful search for peace; and perhaps this is especially true of the internecine strife that plagued Colombian society for so many years. But he also demonstrates that only extraordinary patience and perseverance can eventually get the job done.

Juan Manuel Santos, *The Battle for Peace: the Long Road to Ending a War with the World's Oldest Guerrilla Army*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2021. 424 pages. \$23.00.

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