



# COMMUNITY STUDIES CENTER

**SPRING/SUMMER 2007**

## *Venezuela!*

Nineteen Dickinson students and six faculty/staff/friends of Dickinson spent two and a half weeks in Venezuela this January studying the Bolivarian process. From the capital city of Caracas to the coast and cacao plantations of Barlovento, from the mountain town of Sanare and the coffee plantations of Monte Carmelo to the beach town of Choroni, these Dickinsonians had the opportunity to talk with internationally known speakers and authors as well as with townspeople and workers.

Students took advantage of home stays with families in the village of Monte Carmelo and Barrio San Juan in Barquisimeto. They interviewed a range of people working in the education, health, media, women's, and cultural missions and cooperatives; picked coffee beans and made chocolate from cacao beans; and danced to the beat of Afro-Venezuelan drums on the Day of the Three Kings.

This trip was part of the innovative course Sociology/Economics 214, *Venezuela: Democracy, Development and the Bolivarian Process* taught jointly by Professors Susan Rose and Sinan Koont.



This course provided both historical background and first-hand exposure to the new model of participatory democracy, endogenous development, and regional integration that is evolving in contemporary Venezuela. With a focus on contemporary social, economic, and political realities of Venezuela, the course began with a brief history of Venezuela in the context of Latin and North American history, and then focused on the Bolivarian process.

Readings, lectures, and films during the 1/2 credit course in the fall semester 2006 prepared students to do their own research projects in Venezuela during January 2007. As part of the Winterim in Venezuela, students had the opportunity to do field work, service-learning projects, interviews, and video documentary projects. To complete the second 1/2 credit course in the spring, students returned to campus to integrate, analyze, and present their research.

The projects presented were as varied as the group itself. Many created photo essays about their experiences (see our website for links to the Venezuela Mosaic.) Here are some of their observations:

*“One of the cultural obstacles to our appreciation of the revolution was our failure to understand the communal mindset of the Venezuelan people. The citizens of Lara state, which consistently registers the highest national voting return rates, have a firm commitment to both political and social public life. As we descended from the small mountain town of Monte Carmelo one morning, we found ourselves in the middle of a large, funeral-procession induced traffic jam. The entire town took the day off work and school to mourn together the sudden passing of a schoolteacher.”*

David Schwerin '07

*“The students of La Pastora, however were able to change my view of an educational system in one brief meeting. The enthusiasm displayed by the students absolutely astonished me. Not only did*

*(Continued on page 2)*



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## “COWBOY IN CARACAS”



Frank Peralta '07

As the female student exited Denny 317, Charles Hardy (known as Charlie) was chatting about his experience in Venezuela. He automatically paused to kiss the student goodbye. He explained that the respect for women was one of the many things he loved about Venezuelan people. Charlie was familiar to most of his audience; he had acted as the tour guide for the Dickinson group that studied in Venezuela this past January. This Carlisle stop on April 25th was part of his book promotion tour through the U.S.

During his book talk, Charlie followed no ordinary outline. One minute he spoke of his dislike for yo-yo's and the next he talked about the misinterpretation of President Hugo Chavez in the international media. He wrote his book, *COWBOY IN CARACAS: A North American's Memoir of Venezuela's Democratic Revolution*, in much the same way. A former priest and originally from Cheyenne, Wyoming, Charlie moved to Nueva Tacagua, one of the poorest barrios in Venezuela on an assignment from the Superior General of the Maryknoll Missionaries. Knowing very little of Venezuela, he met this opportunity to serve its people with great hesitance. Little did he know when he accepted the mission that he was going to journey through such a beautiful and life changing experience.

He did two things that surprised me. First, he criticized his own book. He explained that U.S. citizens are somewhat at odds when finding a word to identify themselves. For example, since I was born in the Dominican Republic that makes me a Dominican, but someone born in the United States is known as an American. Charlie, like many Latin Americans, believes that referring to U.S citizens as Americans is very self-important, since everyone in the Western Hemisphere is technically an American. Charlie disliked part of his publisher's original title of his book, "An American's Memoir," and insisted that "North" be added. He has coined the term "USers" to refer to U.S citizens. I do not think we will be using the term anytime soon, but it definitely provides an answer to the ambiguities designating the different American citizenry, and pokes fun at our domination of the hemisphere.

Second, he conceded to his audience that his viewpoint is definitely of a biased perspective. Charlie argued that when it comes to Venezuela, most of the national media and the international media are biased against Hugo Chavez and his Bolivarian Revolution. The portrayal of President Chavez's recent decision to discontinue the 40-year license of CABLE VISION is an example this bias. Charlie shared with his audience an entirely blank page in a copy of "El Diario," one of the opposition newspapers in which former Venezuelan President Granier censored whole pages. He argues that since all of the privately owned news channels, including CABLE VISION, are owned by the Chavez's opposition, his government gets only a negative portrayal. Chavez's decision to discontinue the license to the news channel is nothing new in Venezuela. However, it is being given more importance now in the international media because Hugo Chavez is the president.

Charlie asked the students that studied in Venezuela if they had experienced anything special since returning to Dickinson. According to Nalylee'08, the reaction of some students to her study in Venezuela was a negative one. She felt as if no one was interested in knowing what happened during her time there. Some went as far as calling her a socialist. Another student expressed that people's negative opinions about Venezuela did not change after having spoken to her. She felt as if the students chose to disregard the fact that she had actually been there and interacted with its people. Despite this, the students all agreed that their time in Venezuela was one of the best educational experiences they have ever had.

*Venezuela!* (Continued from page 1)

*each and every student seem ecstatic to be at school, but they also had visions of a future education—every single one."*

Darcy MacDonald '09

*"At the outskirts of Caracas, you'll find Chavistas developing their leader's ideas. This land, equipped with electricity and water systems, had once been used for oil production. Abandoned for 12 years and finally recognized as an area habitable for food production, it has become legendary and an example of prosperity to those around them. It is an area where you will meet people like Maria, who will talk about the production of their goods as a communal effort, in which everyone in the community has input. "*

Judith Lopez '09

*"Prior to my field work in Venezuela I outlined a paper in which I would study the overall economic relationship between Cuba and Venezuela. However, what I found through my field study was not a synopsis of the two countries' relationship but rather the power of ethical and humanitarian beliefs between doctors and students. The role Cuban doctors' play in raising the health standards of Venezuela's most needy and their education of Venezuelan medical students is quickly changing the face of Venezuela."*

Kevin Riley '07

*"Since 1999, a lot has changed in Venezuela and the ones responsible are the everyday people that live in the barrios and have dedicated their lives to creating an inclusive Venezuela. While Chavez organized the missions, the people have carried on doing the work to start and maintain them. Education, healthcare, and equal opportunity are constitutional rights that no one can deny them."*

Alexis Henry'09

There were other presentation formats open to both students and faculty. Manuel Saralegui '09 and Professor Lonna Malmshiemer spent most of the trip behind a video camera, taping interviews with many

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people concerning the changes happening in Venezuela. They also interviewed the student participants before and after their trip abroad to record both expectations and reflections.

From this source material, Saralegui has created a hour-long documentary film as his final project, *“When the World Engages You: Dickinson College Students and the Bolivarian Revolution.”* Saralegui has received a Engage the World grant from Dickinson to continue his work and will spend three weeks in Venezuela this summer.

Gabriela Uassouf '10 also has had opportunities to share her Venezuelan insight and experience. She spoke about her research to the Foreign Policy Organization of Harrisburg this April. In addition, Uassouf and Professor Susan Rose will return to Venezuela this summer with a CSC grant and a student/faculty Research and Development grant from Dickinson. They plan to explore the continuing struggle of Venezuelan women with domestic violence. They will present their work at the 2007 Oral History Association Annual Meeting, [The Revolutionary Ideal: Transforming Community through Oral History] to be held in Oakland, California on October 24-28, 2007.

Venezuela so engaged our Dickinson students with this course, there are plans for another Venezuelan course in Environmental Sociology. A collaboration project between the Dickinson College Organic Farm and Student Garden and LA ALIANZA, a thirty year old organic cooperative in Las Lajitas, will be at its center.

## FIRST STUDENT TO USE NEW CSC GRANT PRESENTS PAPER ON VENEZUELA

Gabriela Uassouf '10, took her experiences in Venezuela over winter break and created a paper and visual presentation for “Women and Work,” the Women’s Studies Conference at Franklin and Marshall College on March 3, 2007. Gabi, a first year Dickinson student from Argentina, sat on the panel, “Global Variations of Work as Antidote/Protest.” Her paper, *“Women and the Bolivarian Revolution: Progress and Setbacks in the Struggle of Gender Equality,”* was a discussion of the dynamic forces at play in Venezuelan society concerning the role of women.



Uassouf told of her encounters on the streets of Caracas, where copies of the new non-sexist Constitution are pulled out of pockets so that specific articles can be cited. She shared the stories of women activists who are taking on the forces of *machismo* that have dominated the power structure and family dynamics in Latin America for decades. She provided insight into the long history of co-operatives in parts of Venezuela and how the Chavez regime has tapped into the hard working efforts of *Venezuelanas* with its policies.

She punctuated her presentation with video clips of her interviews with women about their co-operative work, new educational opportunities and the empowerment they have discovered under the new government of Hugo Chavez. She provided English sub-titles for these recordings and created a moving experience for the audience that was unique at the conference.



Uassouf impressed the audience as well as her fellow panel members, all professors, with her poise as a non-native speaker, her knowledge of the subject and her skills as an interviewer. The Community Studies Center is proud that its new grant program could sponsor this talented international student and her ground breaking work.

For more information about the CSC Grant application process, see the ANNOUNCEMENTS area on our website at [alpha.dickinson.edu/departments/commstud](http://alpha.dickinson.edu/departments/commstud)

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## Professor Lonna Malsheimer Retires

Shawn Nanan '07

In 2001, the Community Studies Center (CSC) at Dickinson College welcomed Lonna Malsheimer – a professor of American Studies – as their third director. For the past six years, Professor Malsheimer has served the CSC both proudly and fervently. During her tenure she has transformed the center into a central resource where both students and faculty who are interested in developing their professional skills through fieldwork research can flourish.

Professor Malsheimer began an illustrious career at Dickinson College in 1975 as an associate professor, and Chair, of American Studies. She received both a B.A. in Science and an M.A. in English from Pennsylvania

State University, and her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota.

At Dickinson, Professor Malsheimer has taught a variety of courses in American Studies on topics ranging from gender and sexuality, to diversity and the media. In addition, she has published articles dealing with issues of feminism, identity, and ethnography in the United States, and has produced documentaries on diversity, and gender and sexuality.

A highlight of Professor Malsheimer's accomplishments at the CSC involves her work on developing a comprehensive website documenting the catastrophic events which took place on Three Mile Island (TMI) in 1979. This site has been recognized by the Smithsonian Museum of American History as "the

most comprehensive site on the 1979 accident."

In the Fall of 2001, 2002, and 2005 Professor Malsheimer served as the Chair of the Central Pennsylvania Consortium African-American Conference. She has been nominated to the National American Studies Council, and has served as a member of the Program Committee of the Oral History Association (OHA).

Professor Malsheimer has also volunteered a great deal of her time towards community service and promoting diversity at Dickinson. She is a mentor of the Posse Program – a leadership program that identifies and recruits diverse students – and has served on the Dean's Task Force on Diversity, the Board of Directors of the Clarke Center (now called the Clarke Forum), the Commission of



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the Status of Women, and as Advisor of Spectrum – a student organization which promotes understanding, tolerance, and education for GLBT students at Dickinson College.

At the end of the 2007 Spring semester Professor Malmshiemer will step down as director of the CSC. She has been with the Center since its founding in 1997 and has been a very active member of the Dickinson community. Succeeding Professor Malmshiemer is Susan Rose, professor of Sociology and current Chair of the department.

Professor Malmshiemer has contributed a great deal to Dickinson College. Not only is she a formidable figure in the American Studies community, but she has dedicated much of her time and energy towards the success of community development through her work at the CSC and diversification efforts at Dickinson. Her extra-curricular involvement also reflects her passion for equality and cultural understanding.

Professor Rose, a former Dickinson undergraduate, teaches courses on systems of socialization with an emphasis on family systems and the interaction of gender, class, and race.

In Fall of 2007, Professor Rose will officially become the new director of the CSC. Her past involvement with the Center affirms her qualifications and vision which will continue to develop what the steering committee and Professor Malmshiemer started six years ago.

Professor Malmshiemer will be greatly missed. Her accomplishments will continue to affect the Dickinson community for many years following her retirement. Best wishes to her, and many congratulations on her graduation!



O'Brien, Fulnam-Winston, Malmshiemer

**“Not one of those stuffy testimonials, we like to dance!”** LMM

As per her wishes, there *was* dancing, but Professor Lonna Malmshiemer couldn't stop colleagues, friends, family and students from taking the microphone and telling stories of her effect on their life at Dickinson. And after thirty-two years, there were plenty! As part

of the Alumni weekend celebration on June 8, 2007, the retirement dance for Malmshiemer filled the Depot with music, laughter, Indian food, and misty eyes as the Dickinson community came together and celebrated this pioneer of the American Studies department.

Professor Sharon O'Brien, acting as emcee for the evening, started with her story of their early years at Dickinson. It was revealed that a soap opera, entitled “The Young Professors,” had been produced on the then new format, video, by Malmshiemer, O'Brien and Dean Neil Weissman, all new to the much smaller campus of 1975. A tantalizing thought for the archivists in the room. Professors Kim Lacy Rogers and Wendy Moffat spoke of the camaraderie shared by the women who came to the male dominated faculty and found a strong friend and spokesperson in Malmshiemer. Professor Amy Farrell and her husband John attributed the very survival of their baby daughter to the strong arms of Lonna and Melanie Lowe during a porch swing collapse one evening.

Former student, John Frisch, Class of 1980, rose and spoke eloquently about seminars he attended at Malmshiemer's house; small groups where you couldn't hide and were challenged to really think, not just regurgitate. “I believe I had my first original thought in one of her classes.” He said that she is one of those professors you never forget, and was happy to have kept her in his life after all these years.

Frank Peralta, a 2007 graduate and a member of Malmshiemer's **Posse**, the diversity mentoring program at Dickinson, told of her interest in his family and admitted when they first met, he had inadvertently told her a wrong name for his new born niece. The audience chortled when he took the opportunity to finally reveal this, after four years. **Posse** member, Nsenga Jenkins shared that Lonna's care and support had been invaluable to her in reaching graduation and that she considered her a second mother.

A visibly moved Malmshiemer took the microphone and thanked all for their love. She declared the career she had enjoyed at Dickinson College would have been impossible anywhere else. Then swiftly moving to the dais, she turned on some music, grabbed a partner and started to dance.



Frisch '80

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## Oral Historian of the Spanish Civil War Returns to Campus

Frank Peralta '07

This spring semester, Professor Fernando Arcas, a visiting international scholar from Spain, taught courses in the Spanish and Portuguese Department. The courses included Aspects of Spanish Civilization, Spanish Cinema and Conversation. During the last three months he participated in conversation every Wednesday at the Spanish table with many Dickinson students.

His relationship to the College dates back to 1985 when talks of a study abroad program in Málaga, Spain were initiated between the University of Málaga and Dickinson College. He has been teaching Dickinson students studying abroad in Málaga ever since the program started. I was fortunate enough to take his course, Spanish Political History, while I studied abroad during the 2006-2007 academic year.

He first visited Dickinson in 1998 when he was invited to take part in a symposium on citizenship, at which he discussed European citizenship through the eyes of a Spanish scholar. He visited again in 2003 for an Oral History Workshop put together by the Community Studies Center.

Professor Arcas recently presented his nationally recognized oral history project "La recuperación de la memoria histórica de la Guerra Civil y del Franquismo," (Recovering the Historic Memory During the Spanish Civil War and Franco's Dictatorship) to a Dickinson audience at the CSC. This project aims to recover some of the memory lost during the Spanish Civil War and Franco's Dictatorship by interviewing thousands of its survivors in the Province of Málaga. It involves creating an oral history archive of the Province of Málaga

about the Civil War and Franco's regime. It was a joint initiative by the County Council of Málaga and the University of Málaga. The project is being directed by Professor Arcas, with the help of other historians at the University of Málaga, graduate students seeking their doctorate in History, and many audio-visual experts.



*Guernica by Pablo Picasso*

According to Professor Arcas, after the transition to democracy in Spain there was a growing interest in the history during the Second Republic and Franco's era. He explained that the repression during the Civil War and the dictatorship left many Spanish families physically and emotionally wounded. They could not address these issues during Franco's dictatorship in fear of reprisal. However, with the turn to democracy, the need to recover and recognize the suffering experienced by those on the Republican side within Spain and in exile increased exponentially. The freedom to express their feelings and experiences gave way to a wave of oral history starting in 1970, which has continued with this current project. Professor Arcas explains that the oral history project has given them reason to express something that they have had to keep within themselves for many years. From his interviews, he realized that many survivors were forced to deal with a lot of trauma caused from having family members killed during the war and the dictatorship. Unfortunately, some even died

at the hands of the neighbors they had known for decades.

Last year, the group talked to over 200 Malagueños (natives of Málaga), and transcribed all of the interviews. From these transcripts, they have selected a series of fragments to create a documentary by 2007. They also plan to create a book from all of the transcripts and text surrounding the memories regarding the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship in the Province of Málaga. In June, the group working on the oral history project with Professor Arcas will be inviting a group of Dickinson professors to take part in a symposium in Málaga on oral history. The symposium will give professors from both Dickinson College and the University of Málaga the opportunity to share this oral history project. They hope to learn from each other, and find ways to improve their own oral history projects.

During my interview with Professor Arcas, he explained that his time at Dickinson provided him the opportunity for growth, both academic and personal. His trip to Dickinson was his first opportunity to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. He enjoyed the chance to learn and experience another culture. He loved the academic and intellectual enrichment that he received from his colleagues in the Spanish and Portuguese Department. He enjoyed being able to share his thoughts and experience with professors from other cultures, and countries. Finally, I asked Professor Arcas, what was the one thing that impressed him the most about Dickinson. With a grin on his face, he answered, its commitment to diversity. He admired Dickinson's diversity within the student's body as well the faculty and staff.

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## *A Letter from Cameroon,*

Imagine walking into a classroom at Dickinson and not being able to find a seat. Now imagine going back the next day, a half hour earlier to get a seat, only to discover a long line of students waiting to get a seat also. Now if you can also imagine going to class, ready to take an exam, but your professor doesn't show up and you don't know why or he didn't let you know before hand.

Exactly! As Dickinsonians, it is almost impossible to imagine these scenarios, but for students at University Yaoundé 1 in Yaoundé, Cameroon these are daily occurrences.

My good friend Samantha Brody and I decided to go visit the campus one day just to see what it was like at a Cameroonian University. The moment we walked through the gates it felt like I was anywhere but at a University. Everyone we passed stared at the two foreigners walking around clearly looking and feeling out of place. As we walked further we encountered a few students who came up and talked to us. They were all standing outside of a huge lecture hall filled with over 1000 students waiting for a professor that would never show up. We started to talk to them and asked them why they were waiting outside. We soon learned that they have been waiting outside for over an hour to take a geography exam. We asked if this often happened where a professor doesn't show up and they contently replied, "Yes, we always have to wait and sometimes they never show up and we don't know why." One of the students then gave us a tour of the lecture hall, which was a large room, with no ceiling or air conditioning, one microphone which didn't work and a chalk board the size of the message boards we hang on the doors of our rooms. I have never felt as grateful for my education as I did at that exact moment. We politely thanked the students for showing us around and continued our walk through the campus.

I was still in shock from our first encounter that it took me a while to really look at the campus grounds. Everywhere we looked was trash. At Dickinson we never have to worry about our garbage cans overflowing, we never have to worry about our campus grounds being neglected in any way because we can always count on someone to take care of it for us. I felt genuinely sorry for the students at Yaoundé 1 and I began to feel guilty at the same time. I started to remember all those times when I got annoyed with the cleaning ladies for waking me up with the sound of the vacuum or the garbage truck when they were being too noisy. I remembered those times when I got annoyed with my professors for talking too much

or for my classes running five minutes over time. What seemed like a burden to me at times, was something that so many students at Yaoundé 1 wish they had.

We then decided to go and check out the sports facilities; after all we were told that the sports facilities were good. What I didn't know was that 'good' is a relative term. The track field was a deserted piece of land covered in red dust, the basketball court had no basketball rings and the team only practiced once a week by themselves because they had no coach. Furthermore, the majority of buildings were vandalized and it didn't seem to me like it was going to be fixed anytime soon.



*Brody & Daniels*

Our next stop was the library. This large but strange piece of architecture was twice the size of our wonderful Waidner- Spahr library but it came no where close to possessing the resources that we have. Waidner is always clean, the internet always works even if it takes a while, our impressive collection of books and DVD's are updated regularly and we have a phenomenal library staff and students who work long hours to make sure our college experience is made a little easier. These are things that the students at Yaoundé 1 wish they had, things we have at our disposal whenever we want, but we sometimes take for granted. Some of the students I spoke to have never even seen what the president of their university looks like, but at Dickinson seeing our president is part of the daily routine, getting emails from President Durden is also pretty normal, but at Yaounde 1, this is unheard of.

Despite everything I saw at Yaoundé 1 there was something that was always consistent, and that was the fact that the students all seemed genuinely happy to be there. They seemed grateful for having the opportunity to receive an education, even if that education couldn't compare to that of Dickinson.

The point of writing this article is not to make anyone feel bad, because I am in no position to do so, but it is simply to give a realistic and accurate account of what university students experience two kilometers down the street from me. I hope that this article will make us a little more patient when classes run a little late, or not to get annoyed when the cleaning lady vacuums and wakes us up. Say hello, give a smile, start a small conversation and be thankful. Let's be grateful for punctual professors, swimming pools, track fields, books, small classrooms, and a great dining hall and above all else, let's be thankful for options and opportunities.

*Janey Daniels '08*



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