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Patagonia Mosaic: Students and Faculty Engage in an Ongoing Research Project in Argentina

By Lauren Cencic '05

As the Spring 2005 semester at Dickinson ends, so does the third phase of the Patagonia Mosaic. The mosaic which began in 2001, studies immigration to an oil town in Patagonia, Argentina. This year's nine student, three faculty member research team recently completed their sociological and historical studies based on materials gathered in Patagonia. In January, the group spent nearly three weeks in Argentina conducting research in the city of Comodoro Rivadavia, Chubut. At Dickinson, the mosaic continued, taught by Professors Marcelo Borges, Susan Rose, and John Osbourne.

Oil was discovered in Comodoro Rivadavia in 1907 sparking immigration from Europe and other parts of the world. Both national and private companies quickly began developing this natural resource and formulated company towns around Comodoro Rivadavia. Once again, the team studied immigration to Patagonia by conducting oral history interviews and preserving numerous documents and photographs. This research was a continuation from the first two mosaics, but it focused more specifically on internal migration from other parts of Argentina as well as Jewish and Chilean immigration. Additionally, the group studied immigrants who engaged in work not related to the oil field such as nearby sheep ranchers. This year, forty-five interviews were conducted and over 1,500 documents and photographs were scanned. In total, the project now boasts an archive of over a hundred interviews and over 3,500 images.

The mosaic was an exciting

opportunity for students to do hands-on field work. All of the students were involved in interviewing, (which was done in both Spanish and English) camera work, and archival preservation. Julia Deupree '07 described her experience with the Patagonia Mosaic saying,

The Patagonia Mosaic enabled me to gain first hand experience in the field of anthropology while simultaneously living an adventure I will never forget. While the interviewees taught us about their culture, life, and history, we helped them preserve these precious memories so they do not get erased with the passing of time. Their stories taught me a great deal about perseverance and the concept of identity. I will always cherish the memories they shared with us while also recalling my own memories of my classmates during this quick but memorable trip to Comodoro Rivadavia.

In Comodoro Rivadavia, the students stayed with local host families and many found the opportunity (and need) to practice their language skills. Additionally, host families provided the



Mosaic students and Professor Osbourne scan photographs and documents in the Biblioteca San Martín which is the Chilean Library.

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students with home cooked meals and an introduction into Argentine culture. Jason Hillis '07 explained his experience living with his host family saying,

I think the coolest thing about the Mosaic program was living with host families. For my experience in particular, I lived with a Paraguayan family who had moved to Comodoro Rivadavia years before. Since the purpose of our trip was to study and trace topics like immigration, culture and heritage, I found my experience with an immigrant family unique. Not only was I learning about immigration and others' heritage during the day, but I was living along-side others who had to undergo the same experience. This was their life, while my experience was only a "temporary trip," this concept brought the Mosaic experience home for me.

The overall welcoming atmosphere of Comodoro Rivadavia was incredible. Not only were the host families wonderful, but many members of the community freely volunteered to share their stories and personal family archives with the group. The Dickinsonians were also given special treatment at several of the local ethnic



Laura Quintana and other group members enjoy a meal celebrating Professor Rose's birthday in the Bulgarian Ethnic Association.

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The 2005 Patagonia Mosaic Group in the Bolivian Ethnic Association of Comodoro Rivadavia.

associations where they were invited to dinners and to use the building as a meeting and work place. The group was also treated to several musical and dance performances.

Through the mosaic, the group was able to meet many interesting people and to have many valuable cultural encounters. In Comodoro, they met several individuals who were extremely interested in preserving the history of the city and of their families. Through their efforts, large numbers of photographs and documents were saved from destruction and preserved electronically. They will become available on the internet for the use of the Dickinson community, residents of Comodoro Rivadavia, and other scholars.

Several short trips were taken during the visit as breaks from the hard work of the mosaic. The group arrived in Buenos Aires from Washington Dulles airport and managed to spend several days sightseeing in Argentina's capital where Professor Borges gave an extensive walking tour of the city both before and after the bulk of the trip in Comodoro. The group also spent a weekend at a sheep ranch situated several hours from the city. The ranch visit was a welcomed break from the group's busy schedule. After a long, tiring westward drive towards the Andes mountains, the group arrived at the serene Estancia Numancia. There, students rode horses, went for walks, played with barnyard animals, helped with milking cows, watched the cutting

of lamb's tails, and even went sheep herding with several of the ranch's gauchos.

The group was fortunate enough to have the help of Professor Susana Torres of the Universidad de la Patagonia San Juan Bosco in Argentina and Laura Quintana, a student from Comodoro Rivadavia. Both of these individuals were indispensable throughout the duration of the project. During the research in Patagonia portion, they assisted with interviews, organization, and coordination. They also returned with the group to Dickinson for half of the Spring '05 semester where they served as valuable resources and contributed a great deal to the group's work. Professor Torres' own research focuses on Comodoro Rivadavia and the surrounding company towns. This was Torres' third trip to Dickinson. She was also sponsored in part by the Community Studies Center after the 2001 and 2003 mosaics.

Upon their return to Dickinson, the group continued to meet as a weekly class studying myths about Patagonia, history of the area, immigration, photography, oral history interviews, and presentation. Students organized the resources gathered in Patagonia. The scanned images were catalogued and documented and many of the interviews were transcribed by students.

Students also spent the second portion of the semester working diligently on individual papers that



Dickinsonians Danielle Goonan, Tan Huynh, and Jason Hillis shop for souvenirs in Buenos Aires.

analyzed the oral history interviews and documents. The group designed websites and short videos that will soon be available on the current Patagonia webpage which also features projects from the previous two mosaics (<http://deila.dickinson.edu/patagonia>). Professors Borges and Rose are also currently working on a documentary video based on the research of the Patagonia Mosaic for the upcoming centennial celebration of the discovery of oil in Comodoro Rivadavia in 1907. All in all, the mosaic was a huge success and a very memorable and rewarding experience.

Trauma, Narratives, and Storytelling: Scholars Mary Marshall Clark and Arthur Frank visit the Dickinson Community and members of the Montserrat Program to Discuss their Latest Works

By Mara Waldhorn '06

As supplementary educational resources to the Montserrat program, (see page 4) Mary Marshall Clark, head of the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University and Arthur Frank, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Calgary, were invited to share their work with the Montserrat Mosaic group as well as with the general Dickinson community. Both Clark and Frank use Oral History as a way of capturing personal stories in times of trauma or disaster. Their work and presence on campus was a way to

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show students in the Montserrat program how issues of pain, trauma and suffering are being dealt with in the broader realm of academia and throughout the social sciences.

Mary Marshall Clark came to speak with the Montserrat class, and gave an evening talk at the college called "9/11 and Beyond: The Practice of Listening to Stories of Pain and Trauma." One of Clark's main projects at the Columbia Oral History Research Office is collecting stories from members of the New York community who were affected in some way by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Clark's project relates to the work which the Montserrat students have been conducting since the January term. During the winter trip, students conducted interviews with natives in Montserrat (where in 1995 and 1997 there were volcanic eruptions devastating the land and people of the Island).

Speaking to the students of the Montserrat Mosaic on the topic of traumatic narrative and storytelling, Clark first discussed the importance of developing a personal relationship with interviewees. With trust, interviewees will often be more comfortable relaying their traumatic stories, without fear of judgment. Clark further explained that some victims of traumatic events maintain a "residue of trauma," implying that because of emotional reactions to trauma, certain interviewees may have detached themselves from the event in question and are thus unable to provide comprehensive and accurate accounts of what happened.

One of the last aspects of Clark's discussion was to pose the question of whether or not there is a "culture of disaster." Are there common attributes to traumatic events in general which impact medical informants in similar ways in order to create a culture of traumatic circumstance? It seems as though the answer to this question lies in the fact

that every informant's story (whether they be interviewed for the 9/11 or the Montserrat project) is going to be different. Clark uses the example of two people who were standing on the same street corner in Manhattan when the twin towers fell. Due to an individual's primary senses, and how



Arthur Frank, author and sociologist, meets with professors and students in the Community Studies Center to discuss ideas of narrative selves and the power of storytelling.

they process different circumstances, these two informants provided completely different accounts of the same event. One of the interviewees (a musician, whose primary sense enables him to absorb information best through sound) explained "my retina refused the image, so I did not see." Neither account is wrong, but they display the importance of analyzing narratives on an individual basis instead of drawing generalizations across a number of informant accounts.

Art Frank's lecture entitled "Narrative Selves in a World of Stories," was a good supplement to Clark's discussion. The book, which Frank came to speak about is called *The Renewal of Generosity: Illness, Medicine, and How to Live*. As a sociologist, Frank works with hospital patients and caregivers, discussing the interactions between the two groups, and how doctors and nurses are helping

to restore generosity through dialogue with patients instead of maintaining impersonal relationships.

The stories Frank discusses in his book are also in a sense ones of trauma and misfortune. In his lecture to the Dickinson community, however, Frank focused more on the power of storytelling, and how stories affect our everyday lives, as well as the lives of those around us. Frank explains how stories instigate reality, and that imagination, suspense, and caring are three necessary aspects to being involved in stories and storytelling. Frank began his lecture with a story. He then explained that some members in the audience probably found themselves caught up in what was being said, while others may not have been as focused and not paid as much attention.

Frank attributes the difference in people's response to particular stories to what scholars call the "narrative habitus." This describes a blend between the stories we have grown up with as children (the ones we adopt from our families, friends, structural education and other outside forces) and the stories we associate with as we grow up into our adult selves. Each individual's "narrative habitus" is different, as we all have dissimilar backgrounds and histories. The stories we know as individuals come from aspects of community and culture. Frank explains that we learn through particular religious or familial (only two examples) communities whose stories are given power over others. He emphasizes that a Catholic, for instance, will be more involved in the stories of Jesus Christ's suffering than he or she would be with the stories of the Koran.

Clark and Frank's discussions of trauma, storytelling and personal narrative were effective supplements to the work being done regarding the Dickinson Montserrat program. Learning the tools of such distinguished and experienced scholars is sure to have helped the Montserrat field workers in the interview compilation and analysis process of their final projects.

January in the Caribbean: Montserrat Program

Tara Russell '06

"Want to spend January in the Caribbean?" That was the first advertisement that caught my eye, and sparked my interest in a new adventure. Reading a little bit further I came to understand that January in the Caribbean with Dickinson was going to be much more than a vacation. Led by professors Dan Schubert and Ben Edwards, fifteen other students and I spent two weeks this past January studying the Sociology and Geology of Disasters on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. During the mid to late 1990s the island of Montserrat lost two-thirds of its population due to an exodus that followed volcanic eruptions of the island's Soufriere Hills that buried more than half of the island. Due to both the social and geological consequences of the eruptions, professors of both the Sociology and Geology Departments came together to design these courses.

During our first week on the island we were able to get a glimpse of what many Montserratians would call the dark side of their experience, as we lived in one of the emergency shelters used during the evacuations that occurred in 1995 and 1997. The nights were long as rain and wind seemed close to ripping the roof off above our heads and the hallways and rooms were cramped. Although we spent little time in the shelters, I could imagine them filled with children and

salvaged material possessions, leaving little room for personal space or privacy. The accommodations for the second half of our stay were the exact opposite. Staying in the now empty villas built just outside Salem, a township just beyond the exclusion zone (more than half the island is now forbidden to residents), we had amazing views of the ocean, comfortable bedrooms and spacious living areas. Yet this great disparity between the two living situations displayed exactly what many Montserratians experienced, in reverse. Coming from new homes built just after hurricane Hugo, inhabitants were shoved into these inadequate living spaces void of any privacy and without some of their most prized possessions. The experience of these two living situations may be one of the paramount experiences while on the island. The struggle experienced by those who had so much before the eruption and suddenly so little only began to express the reasoning behind some of the changes that occurred on the island.

Beyond our personal experiences with living conditions, during our two week stay on the island our class was engaged in many different ongoing projects. As part of our sociological experience we learned a great deal about oral history both through lectures and personal experience. As we engaged ourselves with different people on the island, whether at Ram's the local grocer or

while walking along the beaches, each of us found unique people with whom to conduct oral history interviews. For my interview, I met up with a photographer and shop owner on the island. Briefly meeting only a few times prior to our interview I found him both incredibly open as well as unique. During our interview I learned not only about his experiences with the eruption, but also about life on the island and the reasons he had chosen to stay while many others left. Michael* (name changed for anonymity) had chosen to stay in Plymouth long after the evacuation in order to capture the changes both to the buildings and the volcano itself. The unique perspectives as well as the openness of each of these individuals has greatly enhanced our understanding of the experiences Montserratians had while on the island and enriched our curiosity about the impact of disaster on both communities and individuals.

As part of our geologic investigation we explored both past and present geological events on the island. We visited the Montserrat Volcano Observatory (MVO) and learned about how the Soufriere is still monitored today. Also with the MVO we were able to explore different locations on the island that have experienced geological change due to the eruption. One of the most impressive of these trips was into the exclusion zone where the airport used to operate. The Bramble Airport provided for much of the tourist business that came to Montserrat as well as transportation for Montserratians to other nearby islands. Today all that is left of Bramble airport is an abandoned



Plymouth, Montserrat 1/6/05

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runway and a skeleton-like terminal. As we hiked around the airport we saw evidence of old volcanic flows as well as realized the true power of the flows as the remaining lava flows stretched almost ten feet above our heads. In order to better understand the geological phenomena that occurred in the Soufriere Hills we also worked in small groups on road cuts, or outcrops, in order to ultimately create stratigraphic sections that would be part of a larger presentation on Montserrat's volcanic history. Working together our group measured, photographed and ultimately analyzed 325 meters of a mountain side identifying different types of volcanic eruptions and geologic changes that had occurred. Although I knew little about geology before arriving on Montserrat, the field experience truly taught me a great deal about how the shapes, sizes, densities, placement, organization and coloring of different clasts (rocks) indicate what type of volcanic eruptions may have originally shaped the island of Montserrat.

At the end of our trip we all left parts of ourselves behind and also brought small parts of Montserrat back with us. The work we have done since being back on campus has only added more depth to our experiences on the island. We have each transcribed our interviews and through sociological research analyzed them using many different approaches. Through our work we have developed a large website library including information on topics related to aging, housing,

infrastructure, transportation and gender as well as produced two videos that look at the changes to Plymouth and the development of new education and language related to the volcanic eruptions. Our geological work has also been reported on a website and will be presented at the Ten Year Anniversary Conference on Montserrat this summer.

Throughout the semester our analysis and understanding of disasters has been applied in many different ways. One of the ways in which the Community Studies Center has been very involved with this extension of learning is through the invitation of many different guest speakers. Through this course we discussed many different types of disasters as well as the processing of disaster stories. In this way the four guests brought to campus: Mary Marshall Clarke (director of the 9-11 oral history project), Arthur Frank (leader in the development of narrative illness), as well as Sir Fergus (former Governor of Montserrat) and his wife, Eudora (director of the Montserrat National Trust), have furthered my understanding and interest not only in Montserrat but in the processing and presentation of narrative experiences. As I now work towards the completion of the video of Plymouth these themes again seem re-current in that the processing of traumatic memories often comes to life through single experiences that further shape the memories that follow. For both the development of this video as well as the reflection on other Montserratian experiences the insight of scholars like Mary Marshall have been of great



Soufriere Hills Volcano

value.

Looking back upon my trip to Montserrat as well as the experiences I have had since the returning to campus I am often overwhelmed by what I have learned. It seems as if the most simple geological events now have a more comprehensive and realistic value. By understanding the ways in which society is re-organized in disaster and the ways in which these circumstances accentuate the normal problems and differences within a society is often awe-inspiring. In this way the experiences we had on Montserrat and the impact it has had on me is not only due to the actually geological changes on the island, but also due to the analysis of another culture's daily life. The ways in which Montserrat differs from the U.S. is monumental: the government, social life, cultural expectations, media and interpersonal relations are all aspects of the culture that display the ways in which their microstate is much different from the nation we are all so accustomed to. Overall the experience of this new culture both due to and separate from their great disaster expresses the true value of this program.



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Through the method of oral history the culture of Montserrat and the experience of disaster has been explained first hand, and through the exploration of different geological field sites the natural disaster was expressed through measurements and quantifications. Yet through all of these methods and the way in which each of these has been processed and analyzed has created a new interdisciplinary link and understanding of natural disasters. Overall my spring semester here at Dickinson would simply not be the same without this experience. The dedication and interdisciplinary approach to learning has widened my perspective and also engaged me in new experiences that have opened new doors of intrigue and curiosity.



Professors and students survey the damage caused by lava flows.

A Look into the Work of the Dickinson Faculty: Professor Michael Poulton

Katherine Wood '05

When you think about it, Professor Michael S. Poulton observes, organizations “are really just collections of people, of course.” Professor Poulton, a faculty member in Dickinson's Department of International Business and Management, spent his sabbatical this year doing an oral history project that examines the link between business

ethics and corporate storytelling. This combines his teaching of business ethics and his interest in storytelling from earlier Comparative Literature studies.

The focus of Poulton's research was a central Pennsylvania trucking company. He chose it, he said, because they were open to the idea of the project and very helpful. They provided him with a comfortable conference space where he conducted sixteen interviews, each about an hour long. To find narrators, he asked the company to provide him with a wide range of employees, diverse by factors including job, age, and length of time with the firm.

His overall goal was to see what stories circulate in companies and how those stories impact companies' ethics. Every business has a printed code of conduct, he remarked, but “people don't read them.” In his twenty-year career as a grain trader, Poulton said, he knew the laws that governed that industry, but he never actually read the company's code of conduct. People do not learn ethics that way, he says; they learn by listening to stories about what others have done.

The “dominating principle” of corporate ethics, Professor Poulton found, is what he calls the “Genesis story” the story of how the company was founded. In time, this story becomes a metaphor for the company's identity. For the trucking company that he researched, the “Genesis story” was that this was a “family business.” The firm was started in the 1930s out of the founder's home, beginning with one truck. Family members filled key jobs, and when more employees were hired, they too were treated “like family”.

With time, this concept began to frame employee behavior. Many new workers were relatives of other employees, creating a very tight-knit, inclusive organization. In the 1950s, Professor Poulton heard, one trucker had a daughter who was very sick and had to go to Harrisburg for therapy. The company's owner told him to borrow his Cadillac to take his daughter to her appointments, paying for the gas and in

the end even some of the medical expenses. More recently, when a trucker in Cincinnati was in a terrible accident, local workers took up a collection for him. Then they drove to Cincinnati to give him the check even though they did not know him personally.

Professor Poulton had already begun to think of doing a project like this when he attended the Community Studies Center Summer Institute on oral history a few years ago. But the Institute helped “a lot” with developing the idea. One speaker, after asking Poulton what he was interested in, mentioned that the World Bank had a “corporate storyteller,” Stephen Denning. After reading Denning's book *The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations*, Poulton's project began to crystallize. His research process utilized the latest digital technology. A big microphone, he said, is “way too intimidating.” Instead, he used a small microphone and a very compact DV recorder in his interviews. The computer program Audacity, a free download available at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>, allowed him to record through the DV onto a computer hard drive. During interviews, Professor Poulton connected the DV recorder to his laptop; the interview went right from the recorder onto the laptop's hard drive through a cable. He saved the interviews as .wav files and burned them onto CDs. To transcribe, he bought transcription software and a foot pedal to connect to his computer (Gear Transcription Software). The advantages of this approach are obvious: It is cleaner, more modern, and less intimidating for narrators. The down side? It takes tremendous memory. However, if the files are burned to a CD and then erased from the hard drive, memory use is minimal.

After this project, Professor Poulton has some other ideas in mind: He wants to research a few more trucking companies in the Carlisle area, to compare and contrast Genesis stories within that industry. At some point, he

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would also like to look at other types of companies and perhaps do a comparative study. Ultimately, he wants to develop a “topology” of Genesis stories and write a book.

Finally, Professor Poulton commented that a Genesis story only works as a way of framing company ethics if you stay true to it. In interviews with employees that had been working at the company for five years or less, he tried to find out if this specific “family business” Genesis story is dying out. Sadly, it is. Older narrators, mostly people who had worked there for many years, had a stronger sense of the company as a family. But this has weakened over time. So Poulton wrote up a set of recommendations for the company on how to keep their Genesis story alive. Maintaining such stories as the framework for a sound set of business ethics is certainly a worthwhile endeavor for the business world and, by extension, for any organization and for our society.

Student Research Describes His Experience with the Mexican Mosaic

Robert Shaw '05

In the fall semester 2003, twenty Dickinson students became nothing less than experts on the subject of Mexican migration. After intensive study and preparation, we conducted field research on a level which few undergraduates have experienced. In the course of the semester, we saw issues and problems from many perspectives. We formed relationships with migrants in Adams County, PA and befriended many of their families in Mexico. For an international studies major skeptical of the merits of non-statistical field research, the 2003 Mexican Mosaic

was by far the most enriching experience of my college career.

Professors Borges, Enge and Rose dedicated their fall semesters teaching and mentoring for this mosaic. Fully capturing the inter-disciplinary nature of the subject matter, the professors instructed us in anthropology, sociology and history courses. Mexican migration connected in some way to our entire semester's research, discussions and work.

The group was the most diverse I had ever worked with. We shared our experiences and knowledge and we learned from each other. We formed a network of support to help each other through both the academic and emotional demands of the semester. When the group split in late October half the students remained in Adams County and half traveled to Mexico we were the best of friends. The field research brought us even closer.

One day in November, I traveled up a mountainside with four of my classmates, under the supervision of the director of health for the municipality. While the health director gave a talk to the town, we interviewed the only female mayor in the entire region. As I was asking questions in Spanish, careful to allow Maria Guadalupe the chance to do most of the talking, I thought back to when I interviewed the President of the Municipality and Professor Borges allowed me to ask most of the questions, interjecting only the occasional question. I thought back to the dozen or so interviews that I helped to conduct, and how my professors showed me interviewing techniques by example, giving me more and more responsibility with each interview. My classmates have similar stories to tell.

In the Mosaic experience, our professors taught us how to research. They taught us about the complex nature of ethnographic field work, and how to maximize the opportunities presented through field work. With guidance, we designed our own research projects and flourished. We

Robert Shaw of the Class of 2005 in Mexico while conducting research on immigration.



learned about economics, culture, education and health. We learned about issues through the eyes of others and we began to see situations from another's point of view.

I returned to the region several months later and conducted an independent ethnographic study in a town called San Francisco Periban. I interviewed migrant families, return migrants and town officials to investigate how migrant clubs support public projects and events in their town. One of the public works programs, supported by the migrants, qualified the town for matching funds from each level of government. The migrant's dedication to the future of their town was nothing short of inspiring. Professor Rose and I worked in the summer of 2004 and we wrote a co-authored article which has been submitted for publication to Mexican Studies. Two more Mosaic students are returning to the region this summer.

Apart from lifelong friends, a love for rural Mexico and a passion for migrant issues, our professors left us with skills that go beyond migration or ethnographic research. I am one of twenty who grew from the Mosaic experience the experience that was the most enriching of my college career.



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