

FIELD NOTES

The Geography Students' Association Newsletter

Volume I

Issue 4

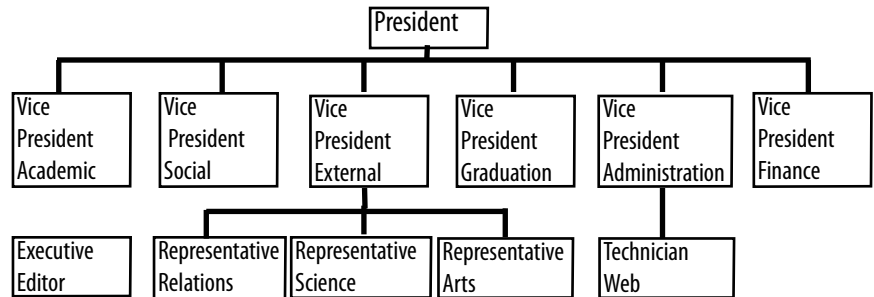
March, 2008



GSA News

The GSA has an exciting month ahead, filled with a lot of great activities and culminating in the year-end Geogala at Cecil Green Park House (see page 5 for more details). As we count down to the end of the semester, it's time to start thinking about the year ahead. If you have enjoyed coming out to GSA events, reading this newsletter, or even spending time with other Geography students and faculty in the Geography building, this is your opportunity to get more involved in the GSA. We are currently accepting applications for several positions on next year's executive. There have been some changes to the organization structure from past years, so take a look at the organizational chart for an idea of how the group will work next year. Details on positions and activities, are on the GSA website

(www.ams.ubc.ca/clubs/gsa). You'll also find information on the site about how to apply. Remember that **all applicants are welcome, regardless of previous involvement with the GSA!** Send us an e-mail at ubcgsa@hotmail.com or come out to a meeting if you have any questions.



*Only the President and Vice Presidents are being selected during the second term of the 2007/2008 year.

Thanks for a great year so far! We look forward to seeing you at the events coming up in the next month.

What's Up with the GSA? Upcoming Events

Come see for yourself! Weekly meetings are Mondays from 4:00-5:00 in Geography room 215. Everyone's Welcome!

We've got a busy month ahead to round out the school year!

**Apply to be a GSA Executive
Bake Sale**

**March 10th-30th – Apply to be an exec with the 2008/2009 GSA! See GSA website for details. www.ams.ubc.ca/clubs/gsa
Monday, March 17th outside the Geography Undergrad Lounge**

The GSA's skilled bakers will be back, serving up tasty treats to get you through the day.

St. Patrick's Day Geopit

Monday, March 17th (4pm-9pm) in the Geography Undergrad Lounge

We'll be rounding out the St. Patrick's Day weekend with a Monday evening Bzzr Garden. Look out for fun, sports-themed activities!

**Photo Contest Submissions
Due**

Monday, March 17th

Submit your favourite geography-related photos to the GSA's photo contest. Voting will take place from March 17th to 22nd.

For more information, please see page 4

Beach Volleyball

March 19th Registration Deadline

Email djameson@shaw.ca for details or to sign up on a subsidized team.

Storm the Wall

March 26th - March 31st (Sign up by March 26th)

Come represent your faculty in this UBC tradition. The GSA will subsidize Geography teams! Email Dave at djameson@shaw.ca to sign up, either as an individual or as a team. The deadline is Wednesday, March 26th.

**Pre-Geogala Bzzr Garden
and Journal Release Party**

Thursday, March 27th (4pm-6pm) in the Geography Undergrad Lounge

Want to meet up with friends before heading over to the big event? Well then c'mon out and celebrate the release of the GSA's Trail Six Journal for 2008. Journals will be presented to contributors and others will be available for a modest sum.

Geogala

March 27th, 6:30 pm at Cecil Green Park House

THE party of the year - not to be missed! All students are welcome so come out for a great night with the GSA. Tickets are \$25 and include a meal and a free drink. There will be door prizes and good times to be had for all. Invite your profs! Tickets will be available until March 27th, so speak to a GSA member or go to the main office to get tickets.

Wynn & Cheese

Friday April 4th (12:00-1:00) in Geog Room 217 - with Dr. Graeme Wynn and Dr. Elvin Wyly

A free lunch, lively discussion, and a chance to express your thoughts about the geography department to the GSA, department head Graeme Wynn, and the faculty. Special guest Elvin Wyly will be attending. Email ubcgsa@hotmail.com to sign up.

SPOTLIGHT

The Last Wild Places on Earth: Tourists Love'em to Death

BY UMMAT SOMJEE

A female cheetah, with a loud piercing cry, gives the command. There is a rustle close by and two cubs scramble out of the tall African grass. They stare wide-eyed after their mother, stumbling over disproportionately large paws. With awkward leaps and bounds the cubs finally reach their mothers side. Vigilance is life for a mother cheetah. As she stares into the distance something catches her eye, her body stiffens as she begins the stalk... she tries to ignore a tour van that pulls up behind her.

"Over here Larry!!" a loud yell disrupts her concentration. A herd of gazelle in the distance becomes aware of her presence and takes flight. The cheetah's body relaxes as she gives up the hunt. Within minutes she and her cubs are surrounded by cars and bombarded by flashing lights as tourists try to capture this disappearing creature on film. Another interrupted hunt, another day without food for the cheetah and her cubs. "Look at them, aren't they cute" a spectator comments, oblivious to the fact that the cubs are slowly starving to death.

Tourism was supposed to be the cheetahs' saving grace; compared to hunting, tourism was supposed to be sustainable and provide the economic incentive to preserve this cat, and its habitat. "Unregulated tourism" is one of the major threats to cheetahs today according to a survey by the Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI). Cheetahs are daytime hunters and they hunt on open grassland. Unfortunately this makes them very easy to spot by the tour vans that patrol national parks during the day. In Kenya's Maasai Mara reserve, a single cheetah may have as many as 30 tourist packed vans surrounding it at one time! As a consequence a cheetah's hunting success and therefore the very survival of this species is at stake.

Travel has become a rapidly growing part of the economy in developed countries, and as a result, businesses are making it more convenient and affordable.



The government-run Botswana Tourism site promotes local wildlife as a main draw for visitors.

Businesses and organisations are frantically exploiting modern consumer demands for travel. New and innovative catch lines are springing up such as "Travel with us, to the last wild places on earth". This fiercely competitive market is changing "... people are looking for adventure now, not just a holiday" as one tour operator put it. There is a huge and rapidly growing demand for places that are remote, untouched, pristine and wild, ironically these are the very places in which biodiversity can suffer the most from tourism.

In August 1994, a field officer named David Noble was bushwalking in Australia's Wollemi National park when he came across a grove of trees that he did not recognise. Noble later found out that he had discovered one of the world's rarest plants, the Wollemi pine, a 'living fossil'. Today only about 40 of these trees are known to exist in the wild. Unfortunately the Wollemi's existence may be short lived, a dangerous disease is sweeping across Australia and many plants, including this ancient tree are susceptible. Commonly called the root-rot fungus, the spores of this disease are found in soil, the same soil that tourists drive, walk, horseback ride and cycle over. A scientific survey has recently brought to light that tourists, who often travel widely, are a major contributor to the spread of this disease. The Wollemi Pines' fragile existence may be wiped out by a single outbreak, a single dusty tourist.

The very word Antarctica brings to mind images of a vast frozen wilderness, isolation and pristine beauty, perhaps that is why tourism here is increasing so

quickly. Wildlife, landscapes and outdoor activities such as Kayaking and Ice climbing are major tourist attractions in Antarctica. In 1990 there was a modest 2,500 tourists that frequented Antarctica in per year, now the estimates are well over 25,000! What does this ten-fold increase in tourists mean for Antarctica? For one it means more cruise ships! In 1989 a ship carrying tourists hit a rock in Antarctica, and although there were no injuries, an oil spill from the ship devastated penguin and seal colonies close by. More tourists in-

crease the risk of such catastrophic events. The most remote frontiers are a magnet for adventurers, making these places susceptible to the very pollution and exploitation that people are often trying to get away from.

Penguins can be found in Argentina as well, and here up to 50,000 visitors may come to see the penguins in a single year. Just as in Antarctica, concerns began to arise about the sheer volume of noisy tourists, and how this may be affecting the birds. These concerns lead scientists to study how stress levels of penguins change with increased tourist numbers. The results of the study showed that the concerns were well founded. The mere presence of tourists can increase penguin stress levels considerably. Prolonged stress in animals is known to reduce survival and breeding success. So should tourists in Argentina stop going to see penguins? Tourism is such a big part of the economy in Argentina that banning penguin watching is unrealistic. Fortunately there is another option, the study also found that penguins that had consistently high visitation rates from tourists got used to people consequently the stress levels of these penguins did not increase when visited. The scientists therefore advised that tourists should be limited to viewing a few selected penguin colonies, so that these colonies would adapt to people while other colonies could be left undisturbed. In this case a compromise was

Spotlight continues on page 4

Spotlight in the Department: The Geography Journal

BY RORY BABIN

and meet the authors of 2008's edition of Trail Six in the Lounge! Trail Six began as the brainchild of Danny Oleksiuk and Chris Chan, two keen Geography students who graduated just after the release of Volume One in 2007. Rory Babin and Eva Lillquist have taken the helm this year and are excited to have Volume Two hot off the press. Trail Six is quintessential undergraduate geography journal: it combines both human and physical geography, from the eyes of those who are experiencing it. It's written by students and for students, part of UBC Geography's effort to reach out to the global community and share ideas. Reserve a copy today!

Be sure to mark March 27th on the calendar; not only is it the date for GeoGala, but before that will be the Journal Release Party. Volume Two of Trail Six: an undergraduate journal of geography is set to be released to a fanfare of geography enthusiasts. Come enjoy a drink with your friends



WHERE ARE THEY NOW? Alumni Profile: Kyler Storm

BY REBECCA CHASTER

Kyler Storm completed his BA at UBC in 2003, graduating with a major in Geography. Even though he completed an Arts degree, his aptitude in the sciences is clear – prior to transferring to UBC he completed a two-year diploma program in computer science at Capilano College and took all of the GIS (geographic information system) courses offered by our Geography department. He now works as a GIS Analyst for the City of North Vancouver and before that he was a GIS Technician with the City of Surrey. Read on to find out what working in the field of GIS is all about, and learn about some helpful hints for following in Kyler's footsteps.

Why did you decide to choose a career working in GIS?

Like so many other people I really just fell into this field of work. University is all about figuring out what is right for you, so I didn't have a set career plan when I started. In high school I was good with computers, so decided to do the two-year diploma at Capilano College but realized programming wasn't my passion. I took some Geography courses as electives at there and enjoyed them. I also had a really great teacher for one of my Geography classes who suggested I try GIS since it would combine my liking of Geography and my experience working with computers. At UBC I did Co-op and in my second term worked in GIS for the City of Surrey. I highly recommend this program to anyone thinking of going into this field of work – when I graduated I was hired in a full-time GIS Technician position at the City of Surrey and my experience working for them through Co-op definitely didn't hurt my application.

What were the most valuable educational experiences for you both in and outside of school?

I think what was really beneficial for me was the fact that I did more than just take classes at UBC. I was involved in both the GSA and the Film Society, as well as other extra-curricular activities, so I felt like I got a lot out of my time at university. My favourite courses were those in cartography taught by Sally Hermansen, especially the more advanced class (Geography 472 – Advanced Cartography).

What was your favourite part of being a Geography major?

Something that really stands out to me is the fact that Geography is both an Arts and a Science, so you have both arts and science students in the same major. Even though I earned a BA I took a lot of science Geography courses, and I think this leads to a very well-rounded education.

Do you have an ultimate career goal in mind?

I wouldn't say I have one clear career goal I'm working towards. I still have a lot to learn as a GIS Analyst so I'm just taking things where they take me professionally right now. The next logical step up would be to get into the management side of things or move into the private sector, but I don't have a burning desire to move into either of these areas just yet.

Please describe for me 'A Day In The Life of a GIS Analyst'.

This definitely varies significantly from the public to private sector, and across municipalities. In my first position as a GIS Technician for the City of Surrey I did a lot of data maintenance and entering, so consequently there was quite a bit of repetition. As an analyst working for the City of North Vancouver I do more research and planning – looking for new ways to improve what we already have and making decisions, rather than doing strictly what I am instructed to do. I oversee the technicians now, as well as research, development, and maintenance. The big jump from technician to analyst is now I get paid to think for myself rather than just do what I am told to do.

Do you have any advice pertinent to undergrad students who are considering this as a possible career?

To move up to a GIS Analyst from a Technician you need to have completed a program like the Advanced Diploma in GIS offered at BCIT. It's nine-months of full-time coursework, and very intensive. I suggest taking a few of the introductory programming courses on a part-time basis before committing to the full-time program, either while you're finishing up your degree at UBC or in the summer. This way you can get a taste of what GIS is really about and figure out if it's right for you. UBC doesn't offer the technical side of GIS, so you graduate not knowing much about databases and hence don't have a full grasp on the entire field. This is what I did and I definitely don't regret it. The BCIT program only accepts roughly a quarter of the applicants each year, so if you have already completed a few of the courses with decent grades it should help you. You would also have a lighter course load in the first term of the program since you would already have taken some of the courses.

IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES

BY DAVE ABBOTT

Keep your mind sharp with these brainteasers...

1. Some months have 30 days, some months have 31 days. How many months have 28 days?
2. If a doctor gives you 3 pills and tells you to take one pill every half hour, how long would it be before all the pills had been taken?
3. I went to bed at eight o'clock in the evening and wound up my clock and set the alarm to sound at nine o'clock in the morning. How many hours sleep would I get before being awoken by the alarm?
4. Divide 30 by half and add ten. What do you get?
5. A farmer had 17 sheep. All but 9 died. How many sheep were left?
6. Take 2 apples from 3 apples. What do you have?
7. How many animals of each species did Moses take with him in the Ark?
8. If you drove a bus with 43 people on board from Chicago and stopped at Pittsburgh to pick up 7 more people and drop off 5 passengers and at Cleveland to drop off 8 passengers and pick up 4 more and eventually arrive at Philadelphia 20 hours later, What's the name of the driver?
9. The owner of the local metal scrap yard has worked there for 16 years. He is 6'4" tall, has a 36" waist, and eats 3 meals a day at McDonalds. What does he weigh?

Answers on Page 4

GSA Photo Contest

Submit your best, geography-related photos to the GSA Photo Contest. Images associated with Vancouver or BC are preferred! The winning image will grace the cover of this year's edition of Trail Six: an undergraduate journal of geography.

Images can be submitted until March 17th to gsa.imagecontest@gmail.com. One submission per person is allowed, so choose your photos wisely!



Voting will take place online from March 17th to March 22nd [see the GSA website (www.ams.ubc.ca/clubs/gsa for details)]. The contest winner will be announced at Geogala on Thursday, March 27th.

Continued from page 2 - Spotlight, by Ummat Somjee

found between conservation and tourism, the key idea here is that tourism was made sustainable.

On the Belize barrier reef there is a rule "All tourists must be accompanied by a local guide". Strategies such as this are used to help create employment and incorporate local people into the tourism industry. The Belize reef has a reputation for being one of the major sites for marine ecotourism in the world. About 30% of Belize's economy depends on the reef. Although tourism is one of the biggest threats to the reef it also happens to be saving it. Before tourism, fishing was the major source of revenue for most citizens of Belize, but as with many consumptive industries the fish stocks began to dry out. Tourism gradually began to replace fishing and according to a survey done in 2007, there seems to be a positive correlation between tourism and coral reef preservation. Tourism seems to be improving the quality of life of local people as well as increasing awareness and

support for conservation. Belize is an example of a balance that has used tourism as both a source of revenue and a tool for conservation.

In the 1980's the potential for tourism as a conservation tool was hailed as revolutionary. The money derived from tourism activities would be re-circulated into the parks. Tourism would create jobs for many local people in developing nations and would increase native awareness about the importance of maintaining biodiversity. The idea was brilliant, apparently flawless. Why, then, does discussion centre around the plight of hungry cheetahs, stressed penguins and rare trees? These examples show that tourism can be a double-edged sword. By creating pollution, altering landscapes and directly influencing animals, tourism is able to destroy the very qualities that make the areas attractive in the first place. For tourism to truly be a vehicle for conservation it must be regulated so that it is sustainable both economically and environmentally.

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The two faces of tourism <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/archive/1999-05-3-0.html>
Is the rise of tourism helping Antarctica or hurting it http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/08/0822_030822_antarctic_tours.html

Antarctica Cruise Disaster Raises Tourism Concerns news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/11/071127-antarctica-cruise.html - 27k
http://www.wollemipine.com/fast_facts.php

9.	Metal
8.	You are the driver
7.	Red Sea Noah was the man with the Ark, not Moses (he parted the
6.	2 apples, the ones you took
5.	9 remain alive
4.	70. Dividing by 1/2 yields 60 and then adding ten gives 70
3.	1 hour. A wind up clock has no way to differentiate between am and pm
2.	1 hour. The first is taken at, say, 1, the second at 1:30, and the final one at 2
1.	All of them have at least 28 days

From Page 3

It's all fun and games... ANSWERS

GEOGALA

- When:** March 27th at 6:30pm
Where: Cecil Green Park House
 6251 Cecil Green Park Rd., UBC
Who: Anyone taking Geography courses with an interest in the subject or the Department. Majors, Minors, Bachelors, Masters, Professors, Staff – *this means you!*
What: This year, we're doing things a little differently. We're classing up the event – and keeping it UBC-centric – by holding it at the beautiful heritage Cecil Green Park House. UBC Catering has provided a delicious menu – check it out below.
Cost: \$25. This includes dinner, a free drink, prizes, and a great time with your friends! Buy tickets from any member of the GSA Exec or from the lovely ladies in the Geog Office.

We're holding a Journal Release Bzzr Garden at 4:30 in the Geography lounge. Come and enjoy the essays, the prizes, and the company, and then come to Cecil Green at 6:30 for a night of dinner, dancing (only if you want!), prizes, drinks, and networking with your professors and fellow students.

Here's the menu:

Mains:

Italian Roasted Chicken with Basil and Garlic

- or -

Four Cheese Tortellini (vegetarian) with Creamy Alfredo Sauce

Other Fun Stuff:

Fraser Valley Salad

Oven Roasted Potatoes with Parsley

Seasonal Vegetables

Bread (for the Ukrainians!)

Tarts & Squares

This year, we're trying to be true to our Geography mission. Your GeoGala crew has worked with Catering and others to ensure that as much food as possible - and many of the prizes - are produced right here in British Columbia. Local production means less emissions used in transport as well as benefiting British Columbia businesses and farms. From the Fraser Valley Salad to the local tunes the DJ will be playing, British Columbia is helping us make this year's GeoGala as sustainable as possible - and the best yet!



Cecil Green Park House - the classy, cliffside location of this year's Geogala

ON THE ROAD WITH THE GSA Western Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers Annual Meeting

BY JANINE PHAM



"Greening Brownfields" - Nicci Theroux, Erik Blair, and Alex Burkholder after their successful research presentation at the 2008 WDCAG Conference.

The Western Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers 2008 Annual Meeting was a great experience! Thirteen students ventured down to Western Washington University in Bellingham to support Canadian undergraduate researchers who were given the opportunity to showcase their hard work. It was thought-provoking to hear what other students from B.C. consider to be hot topics, which includes everything from "using green sea urchins as biocontrol on fouling of aquaculture net pens" to "dendroclimatic reconstruction of the climate in northern, interior B.C.". Of particular note was the fantastic opening keynote speaker - our own Dr. John B. Robinson who spoke on the process of building the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability. Not only did we see and hear fascinating presentations, but our own students from GEOG 450 hosted a poster display entitled "From the Ground up: Greening Brownfields in Our Community". Overall, it was a fun opportunity to support other geographers, and the experience opened our eyes to the chance of presenting our own research in the future. This conference is a wonderful occasion to dip your foot in the pool of academia and possibly begin the on the path to future in research.

Thanks to the AMS and AUS for their funding support which made attending the WDCAG meeting possible!

THE CONTINENTAL DRIFT For Whom the Belgrade Tolls

BY RORY BABIN

An excerpt from Rory Babin's extensive trip to the other side of the wall in the summer of 2007. He travelled from Poland through the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and eventually Serbia. The following is an account of his passage through Serbia.

I'm really glad I have had the chance to travel throughout eastern Europe because I am definitely getting a broader education. In fact, I feel I have quite a distinctly Internationalist view on things. Take for instance the fact that I now, like the rest of the world, hate Serbia.

Okay, perhaps I don't hate so much as am just a bit thrown off by the whole place. Perhaps it was foolish of me to use Belgrade as a transit point, but how was I to know that it is not a well-connected international hub? Who knew that there is a stigma surrounding Serbia and that Belgrade offers no connections to Romania? And who knew that Serbian rail would not be up to Western standards? Who knew? I would tell you more but I wouldn't want you to lose faith in Serbian transportation infrastructure. I was as shocked as you all are right now, but believe it, we are not in Europe anymore.



Despite popular opinion, this is not a candid shot of Gage Towers, but rather a glimpse from the train crossing the Danube in Novi Sad, Serbia. While Serbian hegemony is fleeting, concrete is forever.

I took the train from Sofia, Bulgaria (which has got to be the ugliest and most drab city in all of Europe, and for many similar reasons I loved it), to Belgrade and was expecting it to be 9 hours. For 160km. Instead, at the Serbian border, two people in our cabin were caught smuggling (no, not drugs, but I wish) and had to bribe the Bulgarians and then pay a fine to the Serbians who then decided it wasn't good enough and hauled them off the train and sent their goods back to Bulgaria. It made for fun times in the cabin for a French girl and I who watched on with disbelief. Afterwards, the French girl started talking to a little Serbian girl who spoke very little English and seemed pleased to show off her skills. Instead, no one had any idea what was going on and I had to be the translator using everything I knew in Russian that sounded re-

motely Serbian. The girl was convinced I spoke Serbian and would talk to me non stop in rapid Serbian and wanted me to translate for the French girl, who had also given her a huge bag of candy worms. As the young girl ingested more and more sugar, I was unable to deal with the situation. I figured that only two things were possible: she would get bored with us and leave the cabin, or she would get diabetes. After the train finally docked at Belgrade 11 and a half hours later, I had spent 5 hours talking in broken Russian/English to a Serbian girl and was exhausted. I said to the French girl, "you've really opened a can of worms with that one" but the idiom and the well-placed double entendre was lost in translation. Nevertheless, I appreciated it.



I don't care what anyone else says: I like Magyar architecture! It makes you forget that the Hungarians were really just a Mongol tribe who got lost on the way to Rome and just set up camp on the Danube and haven't moved in 800 years. In the end, why move? The Poles are always moving, whereas the Hungarians are consistently downsizing.

Belgrade was experiencing thundershowers and flash floods. A lady on the train pointed to the lightning and said, "Clinton.....bombs!" and cackled gleefully. How outdated is Serbia? While everyone else in Europe/the world is hating on Bush, Serbia is wallowing in the days of dial-up internet, and mushroom-cuts (no joke—in Bucharest, there was a hair salon with pictures of Western hair cuts circa 1982 that people could go and choose. And they did choose). On the radio inside the train station, (surprisingly) Rihanna's "Umbrella" was playing. I emerged from the station to



One of the many, many stops that the train made on its way to Subotica after leaving Belgrade.

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Continental Drift - cont. from page 6

find my hostel, and after declining to pay 16 euro for a taxi ride, walked in the torrential downpour, silently chiding Rihanna in my head as her Umbrella was doing me no good now. Obviously she was having an easier time in Serbia than I.

I have to go catch a train to Subotica right now and ideally get across the border to Hungary where I will then catch a train back to Romania and to Oradea, where I am meeting someone I met in one of the train stations I slept in earlier this month. It should be good, but who knows if I make it out of Serbia? The last train in Serbia had two Kiwi girls who would not stop complaining about how long the trip was and all I could think was, "Please. You're on a Serbian train. If it doesn't

Subotica, a very Hungarian city full of beautiful Hungarian architecture, relegated to the Serbian side of the fence after the Treaty of Trianon (which NO ONE in Eastern Europe would let me forget. It was "Trianon this" and "Trianon that"! It's like they were the only ones who lost out! St. Germain, Sevres, Neuilly, and (arguably) Versailles all took their toll too you know...



blow up and/or if none of us becomes a victim of genocide, I can count it an excellent trip."

Seriously though, Serbia is nice. But who ever thought someone would be thankful to get back onto a Romanian train?

All the best if I never see you again,

Rory

All photos - Rory Babin

Catch the Continental Drift!
Do you have a great story or photo from your travels that you'd like to share with the Geography Department? Email kate_liss@hotmail.com to submit to Continental Drift.

Questions? Comments? Got a great story that you want to see published in the next edition?

Contact Kate Liss (kate_liss@hotmail.com) or come out to a meeting, Mondays from 4-5 PM in GEOG room 215

STUDENT PROFILE: Atifa Kassan

BY KATE LISS

Fourth year geography student Atifa Kassam and her partner Fatou Wurie created the course GEOG 442: Geography of an 'African' Woman. This course is a student directed seminar examining the ways in which geography and culture relate to womens' individual perspectives, reactions and dealings with topics such as religion, rituals and practices, sexuality & the formation of identity.

What is your major and area of concentration

I am in my fourth year and my major is Human Geography with a concentration in urban geography.

Why did you decide to develop the student directed seminar, and what work was involved in getting started.

Working in the Africa Awareness executive this year both Fatou and I were wondering how to get more students interested in learning about Africa and to get UBC to acknowledge the need to further develop the African Studies Minor programme. During the summer, Margot Bell (head of Student Directed Seminar programme at the time) suggested we do an SDS course on Africa.

It has been long process (but an amazing one too) from the first application form where we outlined the idea for a course on African women to then putting together a syllabus, reading list and detailed lesson plans. A lot of the knowledge we have on certain issues were from our experiences as African women, so it has definitely been challenging to try and convey these to students in a more academic setting.

What have you learned this semester from running this seminar?

I never really realized how much work and energy Professors put into the courses we take; I have a new found respect for them.

Another thing was how fast the time seemed to go by. When Fatou and I were preparing for the first class we were both extremely worried as to how we would fill up the 3 hour time slot, but you will be surprised how fast 3 hours can go when you have a time plan for you need to go through.

What has been the most surprising part of this experience? The best part of this experience?

The most surprising had to be getting 4 guys (who are interested and committed to learning more about women) taking the course! Also, I am a really shy person and public speaking is definitely not my forte, and although I was nervous in the first class I was surprised to notice that it wasn't actually THAT scary facilitating an entire class.

The best part has been how committed and interested the students are in the class. There is always a debate when it comes to the major issues, and it's really interesting to hear the different perspectives.

What would you say to students thinking about getting involved in a Student Directed Seminar?

I'd definitely recommend taking/facilitating a course if you are interested in a specific topic or area in the world and you want to learn more about it, or if you just want to create discussion and awareness on certain issues.

For more information on Student Directed Seminars, visit the LEAP website:

http://leap.ubc.ca/get_ahead/student_directed_seminars/