Conference highlighting students’ off-campus learning experiences

November 8, 2010
Smith College Campus Center

Concurrent Student Panel Discussions

Pre-Conference Reception: 4:00 p.m.
Wilson Atrium

Session One: 4:30 to 5:10 p.m.
Session Two: 5:20 to 6:00 p.m.
The Smith Elects the World Conference was established to explore the relationship between the formal education that takes place in the classroom and the learning that happens off campus when students engage in Praxis internships, community service and study abroad.

Thirty students, nominated by faculty members, will describe how their studies shaped their off-campus pursuits and how, in turn, insights gained off campus have enriched their academic programs.

All of their stories provide compelling evidence that these off-campus learning experiences contribute significantly to a liberal arts education.

The Smith Elects the World Conference is sponsored by the Office of the Dean of the College, the Career Development Office and the Committee on Academic Priorities.
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SESSION I: 4:30 – 5:10

PANEL I: ARCHIVES/ORAL HISTORY

CC 103/104
Moderator: Danielle Ramdath, Associate Dean of the Faculty

Caroline Smith ‘11
Defending Human Rights through Storytelling: Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo
Praxis/Internships

I will discuss my experiences as a volunteer with the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires during the fall of 2009. For four months, I listened to the stories of mothers, siblings, and children of “Desaparecidos,” those young people who were kidnapped, tortured, and killed under the military dictatorship of 1976-1983. I also helped with archival work, attended a trial of some of the perpetrators, and attended various acts of remembrance and meetings with collaborating human rights organizations, listening and learning. This experience profoundly affected my understanding of the Argentine people and of the value of telling stories to preserve collective memory and shape the history and culture of a country. This has affected my study of comparative literature at Smith, informing my understanding of the importance of the literature and oral histories from countries and cities all over the world. It has motivated me to share these stories with as many people as I can and to continue to learn more about the stories of other people and places in an effort to understand them more deeply and thoughtfully, and contribute to global understanding and cooperation.

Maggie Kraus ‘12
Shelving Boxes, Sharing Stories: Archival Work as a Way to Preserve and Pass on the Rich Histories of Fairview Lake Summer Camp
Praxis/Internships

I will share my experiences as an archival intern during the summer of 2010 at Fairview Lake YMCA Camp in Stillwater, NJ. Approaching its 95th anniversary as a summer camp and a member of the Metro YMCAs of the Oranges, Fairview Lake YMCA Camp has been my home away from home for ten years. I returned this past summer with a vastly different agenda, as a Praxis-funded intern aiming to collect, organize, and preserve the wide array of archival material Fairview had accumulated since its inception. I spent eleven weeks working to piece together the hundreds of photographs, journals, letters, songbooks, maps, brochures and other items that outline the rich and plentiful stories of Fairview Lake. It was a privilege to be able to see camp from this perspective, learning volumes about the Fairview’s history and its tremendous impact on all those who passed through its gates. Through my presentation, I hope to shed light on the importance of archival work as a means of maintaining and preserving the histories of people and places, as well as a method for sharing knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible or, even worse, lost forever.

Anna C. Holley ‘12J
A Comfort Zone Ends: An Exploration of Racial and Reproductive Politics Begins
Praxis/Internships

I will explore my experiences as an intern for SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. Combined with archival work for the Sophia Smith Collection, this internship afforded me the privilege of observing and researching the complexities of Black abortion in Atlanta, Georgia. My research focused on an anti-abortion campaign that targets Black women around the country using billboards, framing abortion as a coercive tool that leads to genocide. I organized and attended a national Black activist conference, which focused on strategic planning to combat attempts at limiting Black women’s reproductive choices. With the guidance of Loretta Ross, noted Black activist and human rights expert, this internship allowed me to consider the role of white women within this movement while expanding my own views regarding racial and reproductive politics. I faced
numerous challenges identifying and organizing SisterSong’s founding documents in order to transfer them to the Sophia Smith Collection. At the same time, I gained valuable insight on the realities of grassroots organizations.
PANEL II: NON-PROFITS
CC 205
Moderator: Martine Gantrel-Ford, Professor, French Studies

Leonore Brodsky ‘11
Community Service Abroad: Serving and Connecting Communities Across the Americas
Community Service

After a semester studying in Buenos Aires, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to volunteer at Tzedaká, a non-profit organization that provides services for needy community members including the elderly and disadvantaged in the Jewish community. I volunteered at the Medicine Bank, which provides donated medication for chronically ill people. Another part of Tzedaká is the Center for Holocaust Survivors, which supports immigrant elders with adult education classes, social activities, transportation, and access to home care. My experience also included compiling a database of Jewish organizations in my hometown of Dallas, Texas, that could provide a connection for sponsorship, fundraising and public relations for Tzedaká. I learned about how a non-profit organization functions and the huge role it plays in the lives of needy people, something I knew little about. I had the opportunity to get to know a wider range of people than I had experienced with my abroad program. I realized how much I enjoy hearing other people’s life stories, especially those from different backgrounds than mine. My career choice in education and the service aspect of non-profit work share many qualities that I will continue to pursue.

Hanna Meghji ‘11
Finally Getting My Hands Dirty: Six Weeks in Tanzania
Praxis/Internships

I will highlight the most meaningful pieces of my experiences as an educator at the Wali Ul Asr Education Center in Kibaha, Tanzania during the Summer of 2010. I spent four weeks teaching English, biology, and mathematics, fashioning Montessori materials, starting a spinach garden to be maintained by the students, organizing a free clinic, constructing financial portfolios of each sponsored student, and creating brochures to distribute when fundraising. All the while, I lived with the students and other workers on campus. This experience changed me in ways that I cannot entirely capture. It has completely redefined who I am and my list of goals, and it has affected my lifestyle and the way I think about race relations, sustainability, and foreign aid. Returning to the United States was strange. Eleven weeks later, I now feel ready to talk about the poverty that I witnessed in Tanzania. I hope that it will spark the difficult conversations regarding the detriments of foreign aid, how we must empower individuals to live sustainably – not merely empower them to live – and how we as human beings must take responsibility for one another.

Liz Cook ‘11
The Way of the Horse: Ranching and Holistic Health in the Great American West
Praxis/Internships

During the summer of 2010 I lived and worked at Buffalo Woman Ranch in southwestern Colorado. This woman-run facility is home to nine horses and specializes in Equine Facilitated Integrative Healing. EFIH is a deeply holistic therapy that blends modern psychology with ancient healing methods and awareness practice. As calm and sensitive animals, horses serve as ideal helpers (and therapists) during sessions. During my stay at the ranch, I performed daily tasks of ranch maintenance and animal care, witnessed a great many therapeutic sessions with visiting clientele, helped to facilitate live-in weekend training programs and retreats, and worked regularly with groups of Navajo at-risk youth who came to the ranch as part of their summer school enrichment. I had an excellent and incredibly informative experience at the ranch, and I hope to impart some of my knowledge about this very nuanced and not-so-well-known therapeutic practice.
**PANEL III: CONFERENCES/EVENTS**

CC 003  
Moderator: Stacie Hagenbaugh, Director, Career Development Office

*Hanah Spencer Brower ‘13*  
**Insight Dubai 2010**  
**Conferences**

I represent a group of six Smith students who attended the four-day Insight Dubai Conference at Dubai Women's College last April, with women from around the world—from Afghanistan to Australia—learning about women’s leadership and global women’s issues such as human trafficking. This trip inspired me to sharpen my focus and apply for a Fulbright scholarship. I am grateful to have been able to represent Smith and the United States in such a diverse group, and I see the importance of Smith continuing to strive forward as a global college by sending students abroad and by increasing internationally-focused course offerings, particularly those relating to women and education.

*Leah Flake ‘11*  
**Beyond Translation: Cross-Cultural Communication in the Japan-America Student Conference**  
**Conferences**

I was one of 16 American and Japanese students in charge of planning and organizing the 62nd Japan-America Student Conference, a student-led cultural and academic exchange program between Japanese and American university students held in August 2010. For one year prior to the conference, my colleagues and I arranged lodging, transportation, events, and activities in four different U.S. cities, operating within a $100,000 budget, in preparation for the conference. As our extensive planning came to life in August, my peers and I witnessed the results of our hard work—communication between two cultures in its purest form. We facilitated and participated in discussions among students who, despite their different backgrounds and ways of thinking, were able to combine their perspectives, constructively debate and discuss global issues, and work towards a multilateral solution to these world problems. In my presentation, I will discuss the personal and global impact of the Japan-America Student Conference through its fostering of student leadership and cross-cultural communication.

*Quincy Knapp ‘11*  
**2010 Shanghai World Expo: Inner and Outer Politics**  
**Praxis/Internships**

I will talk about my internship at the USA Pavilion during the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, describing the contrast between the atmosphere among the general public and the inner politics at the Expo. In the three months I worked at the USA Pavilion, I saw how business, politics, and culture were manipulated to separate general visitors from VIPs, resulting in a sense of isolation from the daily life of Shanghai.
PANEL IV: SUSTAINABILITY/ENVIRONMENT
CC 102
Moderator: Maureen Mahoney, Dean of the College

Ella Hartenian ‘11
Sustainability and Urban Development
Blumberg Fellowship

Urban areas are one of the key tipping points for how the human population will rearticulate its relationship with the environment. During my time in Paris, I approached this challenge through a four-month internship with the United Nations Environment Programme, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics and then through a five week Blumberg Fellowship during which I studied eco-villages in London and Freiburg. My experience in Paris has led me to believe that it is possible to integrate sustainability initiatives into city living and that it takes careful planning, foresight and innovation to do so. For this presentation, I will briefly touch on my work at UNEP and focus on how low-carbon, limited-ecological footprint lifestyles can be fostered in an urban environment. I will also highlight how my interest in cities and sustainability during my year abroad has transformed into an honor’s thesis looking at broad relationships between health and urban environments.

Emily Hale Sills ‘11
Reclaiming the Land: Libera Terra and Ethical Agriculture in Italy
Blumberg Fellowship

Libera Terra is an Italian brand name given to products that are grown and processed by cooperatives on land the Italian government has confiscated from criminal organizations. These cooperatives produce organic pasta, wine and olive oil, and serve as working examples of an alternative to the mafia-dominated economy and politics in Southern Italy. I will discuss the month I spent researching and working with Libera Terra, which led me to a better understanding of how the program is structured and why. In particular, the experience illuminated for me some of the strategies, challenges and possibilities that lie in the intersection of social justice and sustainable agriculture: an intersection that is relevant to my interest in urban community gardens and the local food movement in the U.S.

Lily Maynard ‘11
Promoting Coral Reef Conservation through Environmental Education in Belize
International Study

My experience as an environmental educator in the Environmental Science and Policy Program’s Coral Reef Ed-Ventures program in Belize for the summers of 2009 and 2010 has greatly shaped my studies at Smith and focused my goals for my life after college. I am inspired by the collaborative aspects of the Coral Reef Ed-Ventures promoting the conservation of the nearby Mesoamerican barrier reef ecosystem. From the place-based environmental education camps for the local Belizean children to the partnership with the world-renowned marine protected area, Hol Chan Marine Reserve, collaboration is necessary to energize meaningful conservation efforts. As a student teacher using dynamic activities to inspire children and as a researcher studying the influence of marine protected areas on coral reef health, I cultivated a personal knowledge and appreciation for ecology and conservation in our modern world. My time in Belize has emphasized for me the importance of informal educational programs, personal experience, and community involvement for environmental education efforts as I look to my future after Smith.
Deborah Nadler ‘12
"After death, there is a symbol that there was life." Working in Palliative Care in Montevideo, Uruguay
Praxis/Internships

Palliative care is a form of medical care that focuses on reducing the symptoms and severity of terminal illness, rather than attempting to reverse the progression. I spent my summer in Montevideo, Uruguay, working and assisting in the Palliative Care Unit of the public Piñeyro del Campo Geriatric hospital. I never thought that working with terminally ill people could be so heartening, inspirational and important. It has changed my views of life, of death and defined for me what it means to die in a dignified and meaningful way. I will reflect on my experience confronting miscommunication, poverty and death, and returning to America feeling revitalized and hopeful, assured that there is hope in this discipline of medicine.

Katherine Kravitz ‘11
Frontiers Abroad: My Investigation of New Zealand Geology
International Study

I spent the 2010 spring semester in New Zealand participating in a geology-based study abroad program called Frontiers Abroad. The program begins with a five-week field camp where I learned fundamental field research skills. Three weeks were spent on the South Island where we focused on field mapping to interpret the tectonic history of the island. The last two weeks were spent on the North Island, where we studied volcanology and geothermal systems. I spent the rest of my semester studying at University of Canterbury where I enrolled in a research course focusing on our volcanology module at Mt. Ngauruhoe. I investigated how the volcano’s effusive eruptions changed over time by examining the geochemistry and petrography of each flow. This experience has given me many skills that I will carry with me in my future as a geoscientist, no matter what path I choose to pursue. I will reflect on the challenges I faced while working on such extensive mapping and research projects and elaborate on what I gained in the process.

Rawan Mustafa ‘11
Discovering Hemmeh, Jordan and Myself
Praxis/Internships

This past summer I had the opportunity to intern, as part of a 20-person team, on a pre-pottery Neolithic archaeological excavation site in Hemmeh, Jordan for seven weeks. While I had no prior archaeological knowledge or experience, my internship ended up being incredibly enriching. I will discuss the various difficulties and challenges that I encountered, how I overcame them and how they helped me redefine myself; the various skills I learned such as basic lithic, faunal and human osteology analytical skills working primarily on two specific projects; and how important teamwork is. After a rough beginning to my seven-week internship, I learned how to make the best of a situation that in the end led to my discovery of an intriguing field that I am now considering as future work.

Androniki Tsakiridou ‘12
Pharmaceutical Industry’s New Approach to Drug Development
Praxis/Internships

During the summer of 2010 I did an internship at Novartis in Basel, Switzerland, one of the largest pharmaceutical industries in the world. For nine weeks I worked in the Modeling and Simulation group, undertaking several small projects along with my primary one. The emergence of the M&S group is quite new, and the department engages with modeling in various stages of a drug development, from pre-clinical molecular formulation to advertising and
promotion strategies after its approval. I became familiar with this spectrum of activities through several small projects. I analyzed patient recruitment data, and uncovered some surprising trends that will be particularly helpful to future patient recruitment strategy choices. Also, my main project involved assessing and further developing an existing model to assist the biology team with siRNA-infused protein inhibition experiments, a new approach to drug production. That project was at the pre-clinical stage and involved a lot of cooperation with other experienced modelers and the biology team. Through this experience I became familiar with working in a multinational corporate environment, its challenges and advantages.
SESSION II: 5:20 – 6:00

PANEL I: CULTURAL IDENTITY

CC 102
Moderator: Maureen Mahoney, Dean of the College

Jade Bowden ‘11
Exploring 2G Integration in Prato’s China Town
Blumberg Fellowship

I will discuss the case study I completed on the large concentration of Chinese immigrants living in Prato, Italy, a city right outside of Florence. I conducted interviews, research, and observatory fieldwork, with a particular focus on second-generation integration and the effects that the media have on immigrant portrayals. One of the most important people I met was Doctor Anthony Tang, the first Chinese immigrant to arrive in Prato. Through my interactions with Tang, I was able to gain valuable input and insight that surprised, enlightened, and disappointed me. I will review my findings, pointing to strategies that I believe will help decrease intolerance, while emphasizing the lessons I learned throughout my month-long study.

Margaret Metzler ‘11
A Photographic Exploration into German Cultural Identity
Blumberg Fellowship

While studying abroad in Germany in 2009-10, I conducted a self-designed research project entitled “A Photographic Exploration into German Cultural Identity” as a recipient of a Blumberg Traveling Fellowship. Interested in the conflict between regional and national interpretations of cultural identity stemming from Germany’s turbulent history, I set off in February 2010 to explore my host country through the lens of my camera and the real-life experiences of its inhabitants. Four weeks, 11 host families, 23 cities, 50.5 hours on trains, and over 10,000 photos later, I have learned more about German culture and history than I ever could have from the outside and experienced the compassion that occurs naturally between human beings, even of dissimilar backgrounds. In this presentation I will speak about what I learned from these hosts through my photographs and their incredible stories.

Elizabeth Woodham ‘11
A Different Education: Coming of Age in Gion Kobu
International Study

I will speak about my experience conducting fieldwork in Kyoto on the maiko and geiko (geisha) of the Gion Kobu district. I focused on documenting the hierarchical structure of the community, as well as the formal and secular rituals that govern their yearly calendar. Despite the secretive nature of Gion Kobu, I was given unprecedented access as an observer and a participant in the artistic and private lives of these women. What I was not expecting was to form bonds with the college-aged apprentices; to my surprise, they are making some of the same life choices that I am. My presentation will thus focus on education and career decisions in Gion Kobu and the unique trappings that come with it.


**PANEL II: WASHINGTON, D.C.**

CC 205  
Moderator: Martine Gantrel-Ford, Professor, French Studies

*Tanya Hakim ‘12*
*Tackling Data Quality at the Energy Information Administration in the Nation’s Capital*
*Praxis/Internships*

During the summer of 2010, I interned in Washington, D.C. at the Energy Information Administration (EIA) in the Office of Coal, Nuclear, Electric and Alternate Fuels through the Joint Program in Survey Methodology Junior Fellows Program. The program, run by the University of Maryland, College Park, places undergraduate students at various federal statistical agencies in the DC area (i.e. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis) to tackle projects related to survey methodology. At the EIA, I analyzed 2007 and 2008 data from power plants on annual by-product disposition, financial information, emission control systems, renewable energy certificates and green energy pricing to assess the quality of data submitted to the EIA and recommended data edits to be programmed into the electronic surveys based on statistical analysis of historical data. I will reflect on my transition from using statistics in the classroom to using statistics in the workplace, my experience in working in the public sector and several extraordinary networking meetings I had, all in the heart of Washington D.C.

*Grace Burberry-Martin ‘11*
*Gibbs Who? A Summer with the Real NCIS*
*Praxis/Internships*

I spent the summer of 2010 interning in Washington, D.C. for the Inspector General of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), an experience which has profoundly shaped my aspirations for the future and changed my life. As the IG’s intern at NCIS Headquarters, my primary responsibilities were to analyze data from annual field office inspections and to conduct an audit of overtime authorization for special agents not currently deployed overseas. Outside of the IG shop, I attended national security briefings given by senior officials of NCIS, participated in death review boards, attended firearms training sessions, observed naval court martial proceedings, and was given tours of the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon. This internship not only solidified my desire to pursue a career working for the federal government in military intelligence and national security, it also exposed me to the fast-paced and intense lifestyle of our nation’s capital.

*Jewels Rhode ‘11*
*Research that Changes Lives: My Summer at the Urban Institute*
*Praxis/Internships*

Although minorities and people from vulnerable communities are often the subject of public policy, they are seldom a part of the field of public policy research. The Summer Research Academy at the Urban Institute (UI), a social and domestic policy firm in Washington, D.C., provides minority students with the opportunity to become immersed in the field of public policy research. I will discuss my experience at UI where I conducted my own research, gained policy knowledge, technical skills training, and exposure to various careers in Federal agencies.

*Mindy Chu ‘11*
*A Washington, D.C. Experience – Civil Rights Advocacy, Networking and Personal Growth*
*Praxis/Internships*

This summer I completed a Praxis-funded internship with the Asian American Justice Center (AAJC) in Washington, D.C., working with five staff attorneys on various projects in different areas including the census, immigration reform, advocacy, judicial nominations and voting rights. In addition to my work in the office, I had the opportunity to engage in educational activities around the city such as intern networking events, a protest at the White House, legislative briefings, and conferences. I will talk about the projects and assignments that I worked
on at the AAJC, my experience of living and working in Washington and how my summer confirmed my passion for Asian American issues, civil rights, social justice and public service.
PANEL III: LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CC 003
Moderator: Stacie Hagenbaugh, Director, Career Development Office

Dana Stuehling ‘11
Why the Little Things Matter: Volunteerism and its Impact on the Community
Community Service

For the last two years, I have been one of many volunteers working at Safe Passage, a local domestic violence shelter for women and their children. The mission of Safe Passage is to end violence and oppression in women’s lives. During my time there, I volunteered in the shelter and in the office. Much of my work at the shelter centered on childcare, and I also did clerical work. My presentation will focus on the importance of the little things, especially in volunteer work. The work of volunteers and interns is very important to organizations such as Safe Passage. I will discuss the impact that this work has had on my life and my studies. I will also incorporate in my presentation the work I did with Cultural Bridges to Justice, an anti-oppression organization that I worked for this past summer, and our work with Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

Marie Wallace ‘11
Taking Urban Education Outside of the Classroom: My Experience with Project Coach
Community Service

Project Coach has become a part of who I am and now, it seems, who I will become. An after-school program developed by two Smith College professors six years ago, PC is based in Springfield, MA, where the graduation rate in the public high schools is lower than 50 percent. The goal of the project is to improve the future success of their teenagers. High school teens receive training in coaching sports to elementary Springfield children who find role models among the coaches. Initially, my assignment for PC was to write a weekly blog of my observations of the program in action. I have since become thoroughly invested in the program, and I have been inspired to write a Senior Honors Thesis considering the transference of the students’ learning in PC to the classroom. Watching these teenagers take responsibility for their young charges and blossom into leaders has had a profound effect on me. My experience has led me in the direction of urban education with a newly-discovered passion to my academic life.

Molly Sauvain ‘11
Learning Lessons in the Dirt: Food Justice and Community Engagement in Springfield and Holyoke
Community Service

For the past two years, I have been involved in the efforts of community organizations in Western Massachusetts. During the summer of 2009, I worked at The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. As an intern for the “Target: Hunger” program, I worked to increase the community food security of the Mason Square area of Springfield. I was mainly involved in two projects: the Mason Square Farmers' Market and the "Intergenerational Meals" nutrition workshop series. The farmers' market was a relatively new installment, and was created to combat Mason Square's status as a "food desert" - an area with few or no sources of fresh fruits and vegetables. I helped to recruit new vendors for the market, organize events for the upcoming season, and write a monthly market newsletter. I served as an all-purpose helper for the nutrition workshop series, which offered participants information and tools to help them eat and live well. I will discuss this experience, as well as that of my work at Nuestras Raices, a community organization in Holyoke where I have been volunteering for the past year. Nuestras Raices is a multi-faceted organization that seeks to empower the large Puerto Rican immigrant population in Holyoke. I volunteer at the community farm, where I have been involved in planning and managing a youth garden. The garden is used over the summer in a program for Holyoke youth, as well as during the year for school tours and garden education related field trips. Most recently, I developed a curriculum of garden-based activities that engage kids in the pleasure of gardening while teaching them about their place in the food system.
Reyna Abigale Levine ‘11
The Cult of Childhood and the Evidence of Adulthood
International Study

During my study abroad in Tel Aviv, Israel, I had the opportunity to meet my extended family. When I arrived in Tel Aviv, I was scared and alone; I did not know anyone. I had a phone number for my aunt, and she invited me to dinner, and from that short phone call grew a series of relationships, which eventually led to a special studies/independent photography project with Israeli Artist, Michal Heiman. The photography project I developed focused on finding and creating a family. I learned a lot about what it means to be an artist, about living and cultivating meaningful relationships, and about how I want to continue to live my life after Smith. I am now in the process of applying to the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Tel Aviv for a Masters in Fine Arts.

Jessica Watson ‘11
Behind the Frame: Exploring Curatorial Work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art
Praxis/Internships

In summer 2010 I interned at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and helped organize an upcoming exhibition of Alfred Stieglitz’s work. During my internship, I began to grasp the complexity of the various aspects of curatorial work. I expected to bring my knowledge of art to work and also show my administrative skills as well as my creativity. As a museum visitor, I never realized the amount of work and organization that comes with planning an exhibition: before, during and after. Witnessing such an arduous and long process was a revelation and changed my preconceptions about working in a museum. The curators, conservators, and administrators I met helped me shape a new understanding of what day-to-day life in a museum entails. This experience not only broadened my views about the art world and the diversity of jobs it offers, but also confirmed my desire to become a curator.

Ramsay Leimenstoll ‘11
The French Publishing House and its Literary Scandals: Editions Gallimard and the Jan Karski Affair
Praxis/Internships

I will explore the academic and career benefits of a full-time internship in one of the most prestigious publishing houses in France, Editions Gallimard. I spent three months in the service presse of this establishment, in the heart of Paris, which comprised most of my second semester abroad, giving me new opportunities to explore French society and the world of publishing, and creating a multi-faceted experience abroad. My position within the company allowed me to interact with members of the press, authors, and literary critics and provided me with rich material for my mémoire du stage. This 30-page French thesis explored the role of the press in the conflict surrounding the book Jan Karski, published by Gallimard (winter 2009), which drew all echelons of society into a frenzied debate on the rights of the fiction writer, the ethics of the historian, and the idea of ownership of a genre—in this case, asking: Who has the right to write about the Holocaust and its aftermath?

Alexandra Lewis ‘11
Accepted or Rejected: In Search of the Next French Bestseller
International Study

In February of 2010, I began working for Pocket Jeunesse, a publishing house specializing in young adult literature in Paris. As the on-site lectrice charged with spearheading the acquisition of new titles, I read incoming manuscripts in both French and English and wrote fiches de lecture in French for the directors of the collection,
detailing my recommendations for each manuscript. My presentation will focus on the pressure of being entrusted with the job of accepting or rejecting incoming projects, including high-profile book proposals (sometimes six- or seven-figure deals from well-known authors such as John Grisham), and the challenges of ignoring what I’ve learned about literary analysis at Smith in order to evaluate manuscripts from a strictly commercial perspective, asking myself “Will this sell?” and not “Is this a great work of literature?” Additionally, I will discuss the difficulty of determining if a story would be well received by a French audience. My knowledge of French culture was valuable to me because I needed to assess whether or not the proposed works would be culturally relevant to the French and whether a French reader would take offense to the central themes (religious material is almost always problematic, for example). I continue to work for them on a freelance basis.