

CC Offers Independent Study Abroad Class

“Over half of the young Americans today born between 1979-1990 have passports and a worldview that is planetary. One in four “expect” to live and work in a foreign country.” (AARP Bulletin, Oct. 2008) In an effort to meet the needs of these internationalists, Casper College is organizing a curriculum that will enable students to earn college credit while they travel abroad.

To initiate this program, four faculty members traveled to Europe during the summer of 2008 on a Casper College innovative grant awarded by Dr. Nolte. The teachers, who were selected on a competitive basis, were charged with developing internet classes in their area of expertise that students can complete as they travel independently around Europe. Most of the cities that the faculty visited, and that students would need to visit to complete their coursework, can be reached by public transportation and/or are located on a Busabout route. Busabout is a British company that sells inexpensive bus passes to students so they can travel throughout Europe at their leisure over an extended period of time. Casper College’s program is advertised in the “Question and Answer” section of the Busabout web-site which is read by young people from around the world. Prospective students are directed to the CC International Education webpage which lists the courses offered and how to contact the teachers and register for the courses.

The four teachers who participated last summer and developed independent study courses included:

- Georgia Wheatley - “Gender and Context” which utilizes the journals of Victorian female writers in 19th century Europe
- Valerie Innella - “The Art and Architecture of the Renaissance and Baroque Era” with an emphasis on Italy.
- Kelly Polite - “European Health Care Delivery Systems” which is designed for nursing students.
- Terry Rasmussen - “The Literary Landscape of Southern Europe” which focuses primarily on writers from the modernist movement.

The impact of this experience on the participating teachers proved that Seneca was correct when he stated that “Travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind.” For example, Georgia Wheatley plans to take a group of students to Prague and Vienna this spring. (Contact her at wheatley@caspercollege.edu for travel information.) Valerie Innella took 800 digital photos that she is using in her Art History class and in her OLLI class “A Survey of Art in the Ancient World.” Upon returning from her trip from Italy, Terry Rasmussen wrote “I am now a huge fan of the poet Rainer Marie Rilke and hope to offer a special topics course

focused solely on his life and work.” Terry spent a lot of time exploring small, mountain villages described by D. H. Lawrence, Edith Wharton and others and she will share her observations during the 2009 Humanities Festival entitled “Mountains as a Metaphor.”

According to the International Program Director, Dr. Barbara Mueller, the ultimate purpose in developing these courses is to organize a CC Sophomore Semester Abroad. Students could travel to Europe independently and take well-established CC internet classes such as English, math, psychology, etc. as well as "Busabout" classes, which will immerse them more directly in the local culture. The advantages of taking CC classes abroad are that these accredited CC classes abroad are easily transferable, and the student will lose no time in completing their degree. In addition, students could pay the regular low CC tuition and apply for Pell grants and other aid through CC's Financial Aid office.

This independent study abroad program should prove particularly appealing to mature students, perhaps students who already have some international experience from military or industrial assignments. Students who have relatives or friends abroad could save money by sharing living quarters with them. Of course, for students who need more supervision and parents who are concerned about their children being on their own for an entire semester in Europe, there are other options such as traveling during the summer, or joining one of the CC faculty-lead trips.

The International Education Office maintains a web-site with information for students concerning international programs, scholarships, State Department Advisories, etc. The Director, Dr. Barbara Mueller, is available to counsel students and help them select the international program that is right for them. In addition, the International Education Office, with assistance from the Casper College Foundation, has established a scholarship fund to help support student and faculty studies abroad. Contributions can be made through the Casper College Foundation c/o Paul Hallock (268-2256) 125 College Dr., Casper, WY. 82601. For additional information about Busabout and other CC International Education Programs, go to:

http://www.caspercollege.edu/international_education/index.html.