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Students Gain Valuable Experience During Summer in Bolivia

Croft Institute, sociology and anthropology faculty start field school as study abroad opportunity

OCTOBER 14, 2016 BY TINSLEY HASTINGS



Founded in 2010, the Bolivia Field School is a partnership between UM and the Universidad Católica Boliviana Social Science Field School in La Paz.

OXFORD, Miss. – Eight **University of Mississippi** students immersed themselves in the culture and history of Bolivia this summer as they explored ethnography, the study of the customs of people groups and cultures, and social scientific methods, all against the backdrop of the Andes Mountains.

Victoria Burrow, a junior from Pascagoula; Allie Gersdorf, a senior from Grossenaspe, Germany; Andrew Hayes, a senior from Saltillo; Caroline Malatesta, of Lyon, who graduated in August; Sarah Meeks, a junior from Madison; Thomas

Mooman, a senior from Madison; Lizzy Pitts, a senior from Indianola; and Alexis Smith, a junior from Picayune, spent four weeks in the South American nation.

Their time there included intensive hands-on training in the social scientific and ethnographic fields under the supervision of **Kate M. Centellas**, Croft associate professor of anthropology and international studies, and **Miguel Centellas**, Croft instructional assistant professor of sociology.

“Bolivia is a fascinating place, very dynamic and diverse, so there are plenty of opportunities for a range of interests,” Kate Centellas said. “We also strongly value service learning and international experience, and we were particularly happy that a partner NGO, Fundación Suyana, took us to visit some of the families in the rural Altiplano that had benefited from their health promotion projects.

“This visit was powerful for our students and made the importance of social science research real for them in terms of how it can be applied to impact peoples’ lives for the better.”

The Bolivia Field School allows students to travel to La Paz, conduct individual research and study the politics, history and culture of the Andes through active and experimental learning.

The UM students used the Bolivia culture as a case study. Specifically, they studied the impact and implications Spanish colonization had on the culture and languages of South America.

The experience was particularly fulfilling for Pitts, who is majoring in Spanish and liberal studies with minors in society and population health, biology, and chemistry. Because Pitts is from the “flatlands of the Mississippi Delta,” she always found mountains appealing, and that is what initially drew her to the Bolivia program, she said.

The campus culture at Ole Miss prepared her well for studying abroad, Pitts said.

“It taught me to love strangers more than I thought was possible; to embrace others for who they are despite our differences in political views, race, gender identification, sexual orientation or religion,” she said. “It taught me how to find joy in the difficult times when we blew big football games; it taught me to listen when others are speaking; it taught me to deal with adversity and move forward confidently.

“All of my experiences helped prepare me because Ole Miss prepares you for life outside of school and our quaint bubble of Oxford.”

Kate and Miguel Centellas founded the Bolivia Field School, which they co-run, in 2010. The school is in partnership with UM and the Universidad Católica Boliviana Social Science Field School in La Paz, where Miguel Centellas serves as the co-director of the joint program.

“The field school in La Paz, Bolivia, is an excellent study abroad opportunity for students who wish to

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Thank You To Our Donors

Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith’s Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school’s first African-American student.

gain hands-on research training in a range of social scientific research methods,” said Kirsten Dellinger, UM chair and professor of **sociology and anthropology**. “This program reflects our dedication to in-depth methodological training, engaged learning and global citizenship.”

The program’s goal is to provide students with firsthand experiences with archives, nongovernmental organizations and research institutions while developing a research project, Kate Centellas said.

The work “is a shining example of the role faculty should be playing in university efforts to internationalize our curriculum,” Dellinger said.

The Croft Institute for International Studies, where both professors work, is a rigorous undergraduate program geared for students majoring in international studies and who are interested in developing an understanding extending beyond the borders of the United States.

Students choose a foreign language to specialize in, then a corresponding region and finally a focus, such as economics, politics or culture. Students in Croft are required to study abroad in their country of study for a semester.

Both Kate and Miguel Centellas are working to return to Bolivia in summer 2017 and include new opportunities for students, such as working in a rural health clinic.

Any undergraduates interested in the Bolivia Field School should contact Kate or Miguel Centellas at kmcentel@olemiss.edu or mcentell@olemiss.edu. Information can also be found at the **Study Abroad** office in Martindale Hall.

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“James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier,” a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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