CNN REPORTS:

- 82% of people polled in 5 European countries approved the ban on Muslim women wearing veils covering the face.
- 66% of Americans polled opposed the ban.
- $190 fine for wearing a face-covering veil in France.
- One year in prison or $19,000 fine for forcing someone to wear face and body-covering burka in France.
- Wearing hijab (covers hair) or chador (covers body) is not banned in public in France.
- Wearing hijab by Muslim girls in public-school settings is banned.

By Kelsey Keegan 2012

The first time I ever saw a woman wearing a chador, I was getting on “It’s a Small World” in Disneyland, California. A chador is a loose black robe that some Muslim women wear over their clothing. This woman seemed out of place among the bright colors and sparkling lights that blanketed “the happiest place on Earth,” and a lot of people, including myself, stared at her. Based on how I and the others around me reacted that day in California, it did not surprise me to hear that the French in 2004 banned the wearing of hijab (headscarves) in public schools by young Muslim girls.

Not until my recent travels to Egypt and Turkey did I really begin to appreciate the complexity of this mysterious tradition. The beauty and richness of Islamic traditions resonated deep within me as I began to question my reactions to hijab.

Prejudices I had assumed as a result of watching American television were immediately challenged. Before I thought veils were oppressive and ugly, but once in a Muslim country, I saw them as beautiful and practical. I began to ask myself, why do Westerners such as the French and Americans view hijab negatively? To shed light on this question, I decided to do scholarly research about the 2004 law that prohibits “covering” in France for my Anthropology senior thesis. One of the first books I read was by John Bowen, anthropologist and author of Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves (2007). He linked the passage of the 2004 law with concerns some French have about being members of the EU and of a shrinking global village. They fear being forced to give up important French values. One of these is laicite (secularism, the separation of Church and state). He believes that the ban on headscarves is a result of this growing anxiety in France and the conviction that the doctrine of laicite is inconsistent with “covering,” which is practiced by many in the EU and in the global village. Tricia Danielle Keaton applies a feminist approach to issues surrounding the headscarves in Muslim Girls and the Other France (2006). Keaton is careful to qualify that not all Muslim girls must cope with abusive patriarchal family systems. However, in her book she documents horrific cases where Muslim girls are killed, burned, forced into marriage, and used as slave labor. The 2004 law could be seen as liberating for such girls because it allows them to evade what Westerners see as “oppressive” cultural traditions such as “covering.” But the law could represent a challenge to these girls. It calls into question their commitment to Islam. And as such it could be seen as a double-bind. If they remain committed to traditional patriarchal family life, they lose; yet if they buy into modern, secular French social norms, they also lose. Men and their laws are always telling them what to do.

Joan Wallach Scott takes a totally different tack in her book The Politics of the Veil (2007). She sees the 2004 law as the legacy of French colonialism. The French used to occupy North Africa and fought a bloody war there, which they lost, in the mid-20th century. As with the US and Vietnam, the social and political scars have not yet healed. Scott thinks that the French relegate the North Africans to impoverished suburbs outside major cities such as Paris to avoid dealing with their conflicted past. The 2004 law is also a consequence of this conflict.

As I worked through my thesis material, one thing was clear. Bowen was right when he wrote, “It was never just about headscarves.”
Volunteering to Work with Orphans in Central America

By Audrey Witkowski 2013

As soon as our plane landed on the small, dangerous runway, and we stepped out into the streets of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, I knew I had left my comfort zone behind and was entering a strange and unknown world.

It was unlike anything I had ever experienced before, so different from the quiet neighborhoods of my hometown in the US. The streets were crowded with people, cars, animals, and vendors, all offering different sounds and smells. I knew this would be a trip that I would remember for the rest of my life.

I was in Honduras to do volunteer work in Nuestros Pequenos Hermanos (Our Little Brothers), a home for orphaned children, founded in Mexico by the American priest William Wasson in 1954.

That year, 32 boys lived in the home together. Today over 17,500 young girls and boys, in 8 different countries, have found shelter and a family in the NPH homes.

The mission of the organization is to provide permanent, stable homes for orphaned, abandoned, and at risk children living in conditions of extreme poverty.

Children are provided with an education, health care, and the foundation for becoming productive members of society, with the skills needed to succeed. Since its start, NPH has opened homes all over Central and South America.

The second oldest NPH home is called Rancho Santa Fe and is located just one hour’s drive outside Tegucigalpa. Five hundred children live there, attending schools that range from kindergarten to on-site trade schools where they learn such skills as carpentry.

Rancho Santa Fe is also a farm where they raise animals such as chickens and crops such as corn. The harvested corn is used to make the 45,000 tortillas consumed each year by the children and staff at the ranch.

Nuestros Pequenos Hermanos is always open to accommodating volunteer groups or individuals, offering many different kinds of opportunities. From childcare and teaching, to social work and occupational or physical therapy, NPH seeks international volunteers to provide the children with additional attention.

The program offers the life-changing chance to volunteer abroad and to make a real difference in the lives of young people. For more information, visit:

www.NPH.org.

Business Students Abroad in Vienna, Austria

By Kunj Shah 2012

When I traveled to Vienna, Austria on the Pierce Study Abroad program, I was curious to see how local businesses operated. However, going over with a math professor made it a bit difficult to get the formal information I wanted since his interest was mathematics.

But through informal interactions, I was able to do what anthropologists call “participant-observation” (making systematic observations as one functions in a foreign culture).

For example, I noticed that, unlike in the US, consumers go grocery shopping every day. They like to have all their products fresh. Markets and grocery stores (much smaller than Market Basket or Shaws) can be found in each neighborhood so that people drop by on their way home from school or work.

When we went to The Naschmarkt, a large outdoor market near where we students resided, I observed that it was like an American flea market. The vendors there were willing to barter on prices, whether you were buying a pound of cheese or a tapestry.

In the fall of 2011 another group of students went over with a business program. In contrast with my trip, they had the opportunity to visit many large and small businesses. I interviewed Amanda Fortier, a student who went on this trip, and she stated “[the Austrian businesses] are ahead of America in “going green.” They are serious about reducing the emissions they release, and they aim to reduce their companies’ carbon footprint.”

The European companies also make the conscious effort not to waste materials or time.

It will be interesting to see how the world evolves over the next ten years. Hopefully we Americans can learn from businesses abroad, especially with regard to making a greater effort to “go green.”
The Oreo Cookie: 100 Years Old & Still Getting “A Round”

By Samantha (Sam) Bizon 2012

We all know the iconic sandwich cookie that regularly takes the plunge into a cold, refreshing glass of milk.

The Oreo, made by Kraft, has become a staple in American cuisine. But now it has traveled overseas to win the hearts of another powerful (and surprising) nation, China.

Robert Smith, author of Re-thinking the Oreo for Chinese Consumers, describes the reactions of the Chinese to the Oreo when it was first introduced in China.

The chocolate cookie was too bitter; the cream filling was too sweet; and the round shape of the Oreo did not seem to work when the Chinese tried to dunk it.

It seemed everything about America’s favorite cookie was a source of displeasure for the Chinese.

However, instead of taking the product out of China, Kraft researched the problem and came out with a new “Chinese Oreo cookie” that quickly grew to become the best-selling cookie in China.

Anyone who loves the original cookie could be blown away by the Chinese version’s tubular shape and less-sweet vanilla filling.

Could this be the newer, slimmer Oreo of the future for Americans? And where will it be enjoyed next?

An Internship with Primates Gives a Glimpse of a Cancer Cure

By Kelsey Champagne

As a child, my father always brought my sisters and me to zoos. Reminded of my love for primates as a child during this past summer I applied for my first internship as a primate-zookeeper intern for Southwick’s Zoo.

Through subsequent research, I became interested in Foamy Viruses. First discovered in 1954 and found in non-human primates among other animals, these viruses establish lifelong, persistent infections in their host. However, they do not demonstrate the pathogenesis of other viruses that are a part of the same family, like AIDS.

Foamy Viruses are today being utilized in cancer gene therapy through the use of suicide genes, which retard the growth of malignant tumors. Obviously, some of the biggest concerns of such a project include the future application of such a method in humans. This could provide a niche for the viruses in which they become pathogenic and/or are able to be transmitted from human to human.

This is an area in which much research may be done. The Foamy Virus might be a part of a cure for cancer. Today, though, for this student, it is a thing of curiosity.

Traveling into the Past: The Louvre and Egyptian Museums

By Kyle Brooks 2012

I couldn’t believe how small the “Mona Lisa” was. I mean, it always look bigger in photographs and on TV. Pharaoh Ramses III, however, was larger than life.

Traveling around the world has allowed me to visit some of the world’s greatest museums, seeing some of the world’s finest material culture. It has also afforded me the opportunity to evaluate how different cultures preserve and display their museum collections.

When I entered the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, I felt like I had stumbled into an old Indiana Jones film. The museum was set up like an early 20th-century museum, dark and gloomy, dusty and outdated.

In spite of this, the museum collection could not help but stun me. Seeing real mummies in their native land was a life-changing moment. Here, the museum displayed some of Egypt’s most famous rulers, including Ramses III.

The Louvre Museum in Paris, on the other hand, showcases high-tech displays and state-of-the-art security. The museum provides a clean and safe home for its collections.

Yet, I have to say that it was an overwhelming place. It was a little too crowded, and I found myself having to fight my way through large crowds to see the displays.

No matter what the country, it is important to remember that a museum is in fact displaying its history and culture to the world. No matter if there are disputes about collection and display methods. When tourists, like myself, see the world’s greatest achievements right in front of them, it makes history real.
Mission of the Global Citizenship Certificate Program

Global citizenship involves understanding the forces that affect cross-cultural connections and being committed to a global community based on human interdependence, equality, and justice. The Global Citizenship program at Franklin Pierce provides students with real information about the people of the world in which they live. It also provides opportunities for students to practice citizenship and leadership skills in a variety of settings. Vital to practicing being a Global Citizen is either studying abroad for a semester or completing an internship with a international dimension in one’s major.

Lost in Translation: Pierce Students Left Speechless in Athens

By Scott Spolidoro

It’s no fun trying to get from the airport to an apartment in the middle of a city via the subway or a taxi without speaking the language of the country. And, oh yes, did I forget to mention that this country uses an entirely different alphabet than the English one? This was the exact experience my friends and I had the moment we touched down in Athens, Greece last fall. Unfortunately, most all of us only knew “yes” (Nai) or “no” (Ohi) for the first month. As the semester went on, we started to comprehend other helpful phrases, such as, “Where is the…,” or “How much is this?” But it was “slow-going.”

Before leaving for Greece on our study-abroad semester, we were provided with a Greek language tape that we were supposed to study on our own. Those of us who tried to work through the tape had a head start, but even those students struggled when a Greek person actually spoke to us.

My friends and I agree that we would have preferred to sacrifice a few weeks in the summer before we left and had Greek language classes, or as another option, had a Greek language class while in Athens. Being able to speak the language would help anyone in a foreign country, especially students who are studying abroad and trying to really become immersed in a foreign culture.

Something for Franklin Pierce to think about?