Sarah McRae

mcraesc@mail.uc.edu

College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services (CECH)

Secondary Education and Mathematics

Ecuador: Immersed in Culture and Education

Global Studies

Spring Semester Class with Travel Beginning on May 03, 2015

Travel Ends May 11, 2015

**Abstract:**

Living in the United States, we often take advantage of the education system and fight for seemingly useless things to the many underprivileged regions of the world. I will be traveling abroad on a faculty-led service learning trip to one of these regions: the indigenous village of Otavalo, Ecuador. What makes the education systems of Ecuador and America different? How does the culture affect the student’s desire to attend school and do well in class? I will be able to answer these questions after attending this service learning trip to Ecuador.

The main purpose of this trip to Ecuador is to teach English as a second language. We will travel to South America in collaboration with the Tandana Foundation, UC McNair Abroad, and CECH where we work in elementary schools in the village of Otavalo, Ecuador. Activities will include language class, arts and crafts, sewing classes, computer classes, and special projects of interests. Each day we will travel on cultural trips to help expose us to the culture, traditions, and heritage of indigenous Ecuador.

There is a course at the University of Cincinnati that corresponds with this trip entitled Ecuador: Immersed in Culture and Education. In this course we will study the geography, history, and culture of Ecuador as well as basic Spanish. This course will meet every week of the Spring Semester and at three credits per week that is 42 hours of class time. This is not including the time spent during the trip abroad in Ecuador. My class is traveling from May 3 to May 11 which will total well over the 75 hour limit. The travel abroad time and the class time will fulfill my hour requirement for the honors proposal.

**Connection to Learning Outcomes within an Honors Thematic Area:**

1*. Possesses global literacy, including knowledge of geography, history, current world issues and similarities and differences among cultures.*

By taking the class LSLS 3050, I will be able to grasp the Ecuadorian geography, history, current world issues, and the overall culture of the South American country.

The class involves basic Spanish lessons (even though I have been learning the Spanish language for seven years) and focuses on the culture and education of the nation before we travel to Ecuador. When we arrive in Ecuador we will be fully immersed in the indigenous region and traditions of the Andes Mountains. We are taking daily trips to different areas in the country, one being Quito, the capital. After traveling from the United States to Quito to the indigenous mountain villages, I will able to compare the cultures and the traditions of the three very different regions.

I am extremely excited to visit the local instrument shop. I took an honors seminar during fall semester entitled The Social Life of Music. This class studied the cultural differences of music from all around the world. One of the areas we studied was the Peruvian Andes. Peru is right next door to Ecuador so I am anticipating many similar, if not the same instruments.

2. *Interact with Individuals from different cultures and express a sensitivity, appreciation and respect for the complex range of experiences of diverse peoples.*

One of the main objectives of this class is to study the education systems of Ecuador and to teach English as a second language. I am looking forward to working with elementary school children to help them advance their understanding of the English language. I have studied the Spanish language for seven years and am comfortable with the idea of speaking with the school children. I cannot wait for the opportunity of improving my Spanish while I am completing the goal of the trip: teaching English as a second language.

The region we are traveling to, Otavalo, is known for its market of handmade (especially woven) goods from all around Ecuador. I am also seeking the opportunity to speak with native merchants while doing a little shopping for souvenirs! The trip mainly focuses on Otavalo; however, we have a day trip to Quito, the capital. I am anticipating a drastic difference between the hustle and bustle of downtown Quito and the indigenous region and markets of Otavalo. After comparing these two areas, I will gain a better understanding of the complex culture Ecuador has to offer.

**Connection to Goals and Academic Theories:**

 A. Even though I am majoring in secondary education and mathematics, I am still excited to learn about the differences in the education systems of two very differing places: the US and Ecuador. I was on the lookout for a study abroad program that focused on education, Spanish, and service learning, so all of my hopefuls turned into a perfect study abroad experience! With my major in education, I need to be familiar with as many student backgrounds as possible before I have my own classroom. Gaining as many experiences as possible prior to entering a classroom as the teacher is quite possible one of the most important things to do. This is the sole purpose of student teaching; therefore, I will look at this trip as my introduction to student teaching.

I have repeatedly thought of the idea of teaching abroad after graduation and this trip would only enhance my desire to do so. My main goal on this trip is to gain a better understanding and knowledge of who I am as a teacher, and would I be ok with teaching abroad? I remain uncertain of the age group I would like to teach, so another goal for this trip is to help guide me in the direction of who I want to teach.

B. I have taken a few education courses during first semester of freshman year and have learned quite a bit about educational psychology and the importance of documenting student success or failure. Next semester I will be taking Intro to Education, Human Development, and Individuals with Exceptionalities. These courses will better prepare me from an education standpoint of the classroom and will help me be successful when teaching indigenous children the English language.

The course affiliated with the study abroad trip includes a book and other short readings. I am unaware of the titles at this moment due to the class beginning in January.

**Initiative, Independence and/or Creativity:**

My past experiences have driven me to seek out the opportunity where I can combine all of my desires of a study abroad experience into one. I have spoken Spanish for seven years and am always excited by the chance to improve my language. I am also minoring in Spanish to be better accommodating for all of my future students. As a high school student, I worked with elementary school children from my neighborhood. This experience guided me towards the education field and especially towards discovering the cultures and backgrounds of other students. As I mentioned above, my main goal of this trip is to gain as much experience as possible from the study abroad and the classroom portion once we are in Ecuador. I am currently volunteering with the Reds Urban Youth Academy for mentoring inner city youth of the greater-Cincinnati area. Volunteering with these children has opened my eyes to the struggles occurring in our own community and I am anticipating the chance to help aid the struggles of communities in a different nation.

I have taken initiative for this study abroad experience by setting up a meeting with one of my mom’s coworkers who traveled to Ecuador with his family. He will share the experiences he had and hopefully only great things about the country. I have bought travel books and am anxiously awaiting the thrills Ecuador has in store for me.

**Reflection:**

During high school I traveled abroad to Costa Rica with my Spanish class. Afterwards I chose to write a personal reflection essay and submit it to my local newspaper for publishing. I felt the importance of reflection because of the personal growth I saw in myself and in my future goals. The reflection piece for the trip to Ecuador will be equally important as I will participate in a daily journal of my experiences with the culture, education system, the children, and struggling with the language barrier of the indigenous people (they speak Quechua—similar but not the same as Spanish). Completing my reflection will show a personal growth in understanding a culture other than my own, and will hopefully demonstrate a more mature global citizen interested in the well-being and cultures of the rest of the world. After I get back from my trip, or if I find a location at the hostel or hotel that has wi-fi, I will share my reflection on my honors portfolio.

**Dissemination:**

My outreach to fellow UC students will consist of mainly two items: my daily reflection journal (including a final reflection upon completion of the course and trip) and a scrapbook I will make following the trip. I will post a link to my blog on social media aiding friends and family to follow along as I journey across Ecuador. My blog will include many pictures from my trip because some audience members only wish to see pictures with captions. Appealing to a broader range of audience members is important in the dissemination in order to encourage as many fellow students as possible to share my experience. Scrapbooking is one of my favorite activities to do following a large trip, and hopefully other students will be able to gain an understanding of global education and the importance of studying other cultures outside of our own. I will create two scrapbooks (one to keep for myself and one for the Honors office in 700 Swift).

**Project Advisor:**

Dr. Cheri Westmoreland

Director of University Student Affairs

Faculty Member Leading the Trip to Ecuador

westmocl@mail.uc.edu

(513) 556-2880

**Budget:**

Students were given the total cost of $2,300 for the trip to Ecuador. This budget includes flights, ground transportation, food, lodging, and cultural outings.