

Winter 2009

Editor's Note

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl>

Recommended Citation

(2009) "Editor's Note," *Macalester International*: Vol. 22, Article 6.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol22/iss1/6>

This Front Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for Global Citizenship at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Macalester International by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

EDITOR'S NOTE¹

At its inception, Macalester College had a dual dream: on the one hand, to encourage students to cultivate their growth through rigorous study and critical self-reflection; on the other, to educate students for a condition of freedom, civic action, and a vocation of leadership. This dream was captured by the pioneering works and lives of Edward Duffield Neill and James Wallace, two of the College's most significant founders and builders. Thus, in its new Institute for Global Citizenship, Macalester keeps faith with the dream by creating *with* and *for* students, contexts conducive to a distinctive synthesis of intellectual intensity, self-monitoring, and preparation for public usefulness in a multi-civilizational global milieu.

In recent years, study abroad programming at colleges and universities has come to occupy an increasingly important position within the central mission of higher education. This certainly seems to be the case among the most globally committed and superior liberal arts colleges in the United States and the distinguished centers of scholarship and teaching at universities abroad. Yet, many educators remain less than satisfied with study abroad offerings in new and rapidly evolving interdisciplinary fields, including those related to universalist belonging. At Macalester, the study of transnational phenomena includes an exploration of the *complex and contradictory globalization*² of life in some of its paramount spheres—environmental, cultural, scientific, artistic, economic, and political—and within a vibrant liberal learning.

In January of 2007, the Institute for Global Citizenship inaugurated one of its newest, and already coveted, initiatives: a yearlong **Globalization in Comparative Perspective** program. This design included each student participant's autumn semester on a study program at different sites throughout the world (or possibly at Macalester if an international student); an intensive January seminar in Maastricht; educational excursions organized around seminar sub-themes to Brussels, The Hague, and Amsterdam; and a spring semester of study at Maastricht University. We regard this project as a distinctive instantiation of the opportunities that the Institute affords qualified students.

With the above in mind, we have chosen the Netherlands and Maastricht as the main sites for the January seminar and the spring semester study abroad program. The country is known for a fierce struggle for its own national liberty, an expansion of civic tolerance and individual freedoms, a pioneering role in world trade and cultural interactions,

an intense colonial appetite and brutal conquest of others, exceptional and lasting artistic achievements, and as an appealing destination for many immigrants and refugees going back to, among others, the family of Bento Despinosa (Spinoza). He was born in Amsterdam in 1632, but his people, like many other Sephardic Jews of Spanish and Portuguese background, had fled the persecution of the Inquisition. The latest groups to have gotten succor include thousands of Somalis thrown there by the violent chaos of their society. Among the allure of the city is its location as an ideal educational center. In addition to its own deep history, one dating back to 50 BCE, and rising contemporary profile, Maastricht hosted the European Summit in which the Treaty that bears its name was adopted as the formal foundation of the European Union. The city is also close to important centers of global thinking and multicultural life, such as Amsterdam, Brussels, The Hague, Cologne, Frankfurt, Strasbourg, and Paris. Maastricht University, though much younger than those at Leiden, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Groningen, or Nijmegen, has lately been ranked as one of the highly regarded academic institutions in the Netherlands. This recognition is based on a number of factors that include a distinguished faculty, a rich and demanding curriculum, the presence of a highly diverse student body, and superb facilities. All in all, the combination of Macalester's globalist ambition, the Netherlands' rich history, contemporary changes, the city's location and its pleasing environment, and the strong academic ambience makes for a learning experiment worthy of institutionalization.³

These essays represent some of the written work whose inputs come from the whole year's academic experience. We are of the opinion that the essays give clear glimpses of the promise of the intellectual talents of our students, despite the fact that they are only in their third year at Macalester. We hope our readers will come to the same conclusion. This, then, is the second iteration of what is now known as the Macalester/Maastricht Essays. We are grateful to the administrative staff (particularly Mr. Jorg de Vette) of Maastricht's Centre for European Studies, and the splendid guest lecturers and community leaders in Brussels, The Hague, and Amsterdam. Perhaps a special acknowledgment ought to be registered for the fascinating presentation delivered by Mr. Mark Harmon, a leading prosecutor. His encounter with the seminar participants in the tightly secured premises of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, where an important case relating to genocide was in session, is most memorable.

Finally, we salute our faculty colleagues at Maastricht University for taking our students into their courses. Here, one name stands out: Professor Wiebe Nauta of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Dr. Nauta has become our designated onsite academic coordinator and adviser for the Independent Study projects (the basis of these essays), as well as the instructor for the specially designed course, *Globalization and Inequality*.

Notes

1. Once again, I want to express my profound gratitude to my colleague, Michael Monahan, the Director of our International Center, for his immense contributions to the original conception of the project, the design and management of the complex infrastructure with his characteristic competence, and the effective co-leadership of every aspect of the intellectual dimensions of the January 2008 seminar.

2. The concept of globalization is unavoidable, rich, with implications for human existence, and yet unyielding to interrogation from one specific angle. Consequently, for the purpose of this program, and particularly the January seminar, we held together and kept them close to our daily explorations relevant thoughts from two major thinkers—one a philosopher and statesman from over six centuries ago; the other a most distinguished scholar still extraordinarily productive in our midst. Abd-al-Rahman Ibn Khaldoun told us in 1377:

When there is general change of conditions, it is as if the entire creation has changed and the whole world altered, as if it were a new and repeated creation, a world brought into existence anew.

This is Frederic Jameson in *The Cultures of Globalization* in 1998:

Globalization falls outside the established academic disciplines, as a sign of the emergence of a new kind of social phenomenon, fully as much as an index of the origins of those disciplines in nineteenth-century realities that are no longer ours. There is thus something daring and speculative, unprotected, in the approach of scholars and theorists to this unclassifiable topic, which is the intellectual property of no specific field, yet which seems to concern politics and economics in immediate ways, but just as immediately culture and sociology, not to speak of information and the media, or ecology, or consumerism and daily life. Globalization...is thus the modern or postmodern version of the proverbial elephant, described by its blind observers in so many diverse ways. Yet one can still posit the existence of the elephant in the absence of a single persuasive and dominant theory; nor are blinded questions the most unsatisfactory way to explore this kind of relational and multilevel phenomenon.

3. Both the early propositions towards and the continuing materialization of the complete initiative were largely contingent upon President Brian Rosenberg's quick understanding of the potential added value to the College's drive to new heights of educational excellence. We are appreciative of his enthusiastic intellectual encouragement and budgetary support, and we are confident that his ongoing efforts to make this initiative a permanent feature of Macalester College will bear fruit.