

Study abroad, and soon

Travel with college is sometimes its own reward.

College is about many things. It's about academic enlightenment. It's about increasing social awareness. It's about developing

Andy Rigsby

GUEST COLUMNIST

a stronger sense of self. And for many of us, all of these collegiate motifs boil down to one simple thing: *fun*.

I graduated from Wake this May. After four very memorable years here, replete with challenging courses, new ideas, and unprecedented personal growth, there's not a semester I wouldn't do over again – the exact same way, *just to experience it again*.

But there's one semester I would re-experience, if given the chance, above all others: the semester I spent in Dijon, France.

Study abroad, especially these days, can present an intimidating front. This is unfortunate, because the very first thing that a study abroad experience has to teach us is how *not* to be intimidated by new experiences.

But there are more concrete, less educational-philosophical reasons to study abroad. In Dijon, you will live with a host family. For me, this component of cultural immersion is exactly what made the experience so irreplaceable. Sharing phenomenal meals around a traditionally set dinner table, talking until the late hours of the evening, taking a café in the afternoon – these are the defining moment of my four months in France, not to mention the laundry that my

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host family insisted on doing for me. Yes indeed – choosing to live with a host family can define an experience abroad.

Before embarking upon my semester abroad, there was one nagging worry that delayed my investigation into the program – speaking a foreign language. Having always struggled in language classes, I always thought an English-speaking program might be best designed for me.

So you can imagine my surprise when the most satisfying piece of this academic experience was ultimately language apprehension. For the first time in my life, French made sense. Simply being surrounded by it, actually having the chance to love it for the first time, finally made French accessible to me. And I've never been more satisfied with the learning process than the day I realized I hadn't spoken a word of English ... and I was, in fact, proficient in French.

The Dijon program emphasizes travel throughout France during the entire semester. On multiple occasions, your regular tuition,

room and board will contribute to the hiring of a coach bus that ventures into the regions of Burgundy, all the way south to Provence, out west to the chateaus, and northeast into Strasbourg – to name a few.

A week-long trip is also coordinated in Paris with hotel and meal costs always provided. There's simply no replacing this extended period of time to explore another culture in an educational format; for the rest of our lives, if we are lucky enough to make it abroad again, these rare opportunities will be jam-packed European adventures that leave no room for a simple, leisurely appreciation of another culture.

And there's no replacing the opportunity to travel elsewhere in Europe. One weekend we were off to Interlochen for some canyon jumping, the next weekend to Barcelona for some authentic Paella ... or perhaps Florence to see the Duomo or Amsterdam to see the Anne Frank house.

By merely choosing to study abroad you're connecting yourself to a network of experiences unlike any others.

Above all else, college is about expanding. Everything. It's about expanding our knowledge of the world, our sense of adventure, our appreciation for things different and marvelous. The group with which I traveled to Dijon is proof: of the 18 students who traveled to France that semester, six took teaching assistance-ship positions throughout France after graduating in May, and two have returned for another semester in Paris.

I've never met a person who regretted studying abroad. Take advantage of the Dijon program or any abroad program you may be considering.

I'll wager the bank you don't regret it.

Andy Rigsby, '03, is an admissions counselor.

Television reaches for new levels of mediocrity

Watching television no longer a pleasurable experience for many.

Saying this is very hard for me, but here it goes: TV sucks. There's hardly a damn thing worth watching on television anymore. I am an avid television viewer. I consider it a duty. Lately, though, it has been increasingly hard on my duty. It's all trash. Here at Wake Forest we get over 80 channels.

Ben Baldwin

GUEST COLUMNIST

It is amazing that there could be nothing worthy of watching, and yet it's true.

The other day I was flipping through the myriad of dismal sitcoms, looking for something tolerable, when I stumbled upon an award show (the *Emmy's*, perhaps) giving awards to these wretched programs. I couldn't believe it. I saw James Gandolfini and his friends laughing in the audience and I started praying that he and the rest of the *Sopranos* cast would get up and lay waste to the place.

Your broadcast stations, FOX, CBS, ABC and NBC, are the worst of the worst. The "reality" television idea that was once so fresh has long since ceased to entertain. I had the misfortune of watching an episode of "Temptation Island" the other day. The basic idea of this show is to take happy couples and ruin their lives by tempting them with attractive members of the opposite sex. There's pornography that's more wholesome than that. At least the people in a porno are getting along with each other. If they wanted to ruin a relationship, they should go to a maternity ward and switch babies of different races. At least that would be a fresh idea.

Here's another thing: what kind of reality is it where you get an all-expenses paid trip to a tropical island with 20 hot women who want to hook up with you, even though you have a girlfriend and you're stupid enough to bring her along? Here's reality: you pay \$2,000 to go to an island with your girlfriend. They lose your luggage and overbook the hotel so you're sleeping in a maintenance closet for the week. The first night you're there your girlfriend leaves you for someone staying in the

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presidential suite. Finally, you get drunk one night and meet a local woman who will sleep with you, only to discover the next morning that she was actually twelve, she robbed you during the night, you're under arrest for pedophilia, and the only thing you have left to your name is the worst case of herpes ever recorded. That's reality TV. Make that a show.

Then there's the *Joe Millionaire* idea. Now I will admit, I sort of liked it ... *the first time*. Now they're doing one with foreign women who didn't hear about it when FOX was advertising it 24/7 a year ago. Why make another one when the last one didn't work? The idea was that he would pick the girl and tell her that he was poor. She would then cry and break up with him, telling him that she never liked him and she thought his hair might have something living in it. Then the other girls were supposed to be destroyed because not only were they bad whores, they couldn't even entice a poor guy. None of that happened. The winner got something like a half a million dollars and even pretended to still like the guy. Meanwhile the runner-up collected her paycheck by posing in *Playboy*. Is there no justice for these morons? If I wanted to see real disappointment, I would feed a homeless guy a five-course meal and then tell him it was poisoned.

So I was fed up, and I decided to turn to the local news and catch something real. Here's the advertisement I see for the news: "You could be in serious danger in your own home. Find out why at 11:00." I laughed at first, only to realize it wasn't a joke. I felt like I should raise a militia to get ready for the attack by the enemy and await instructions at 11:00. I was blown away. Maybe they should say, "A missile is heading towards a house in your town. We'll tell you which house at 11:00."

The whole thing is so frustrating it's hard to talk about, so I'm going to go back to TV and hoping it redeems itself. In the meantime, if anyone wants to join a militia, contact me before 11:00 tonight. It's urgent.

Ben Baldwin is a sophomore.

Going to the logical end

Abortion rights extend beyond *Roe v. Wade*.

Ever since the historic *Roe v. Wade* decision was handed down thirty years ago, Republicans have been vigorously trying to take back a woman's

Paul Sheaffer

GUEST COLUMNIST

right to choose. Currently the right is trying to pass a bill, which, as Rep. Louis Slaughter describes, "is attempt(ing) to whittle away at a woman's constitutional right to her privacy and control of her body." This is a time in America in which women cannot take for granted their right to choose; instead, women must push for reproductive rights which extend past the third trimester. *Roe v. Wade* was only the beginning!

Under current law, women are can only terminate pregnancies until the end of the third trimester. However, a woman's right to choose should extend much further than this time period. Women will not be truly free until they are free to terminate a pregnancy through the end of the fourth trimester.

Now, I know what you are thinking. Aren't babies born at the end of the third term? Well, yes. But really what is the difference? Is there a major difference between a third-term "fetus" and a

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newborn baby? Not really. Let's look at the facts.

A fetus in the third-term has a head, legs, eyes, brain and heart. A newborn baby also has a head, legs, brain and heart. A fetus has a different blood type, DNA, and pulmonary system than the mother to which it is attached. A new born baby also has a different blood type, DNA, and pulmonary system than the mother who just gave birth to it. The only real difference between the two is that one is attached to the mother through an umbilical cord while the other is not. But is that even really a major difference? An umbilical cord gives the baby nutrients from the mother. But doesn't a new born baby also receive nutrients directly from the mother? Almost certainly. Neither can exist on its own; both a fetus and baby are dependent on the mother. Therefore, because they are both dependent on the mother (not to mention unable to speak, work, or hire a lawyer) they both aren't really people. I mean if a born fetus and an unborn fetus are so similar, why not treat them the same?

The current laws force mothers to live with their newborn fetuses. Once a baby is born, a woman is left with no choice at all. Republicans claim that this newborn baby is a person, but the facts speak to the contrary. Although any newborn baby is not attached

to the mother, it did come from the mother's body. Therefore, it should be at the discretion of the woman, not the government, to do with her former body attachment as she pleases. If your leg is severed off, it is still your leg! The same goes for fetuses.

Some might be concerned with the slippery slope such a proposed law change would create. Clearly allowing a post-birth fetus to be terminated in the fourth term is totally logical, but determining how much longer the period should be extended is not as simple. When does a newborn fetus become a real person?

A two year old can speak, but does that really make it a person? They can speak, but do not make much sense and are entirely dependent on their parents. Therefore, allowing mothers to terminate a pregnancy in the 11th trimester must be considered. However, a line definitely must be drawn at age seven, as a seven-year-old fetus is able to read and write as well as work. No one can argue a 7-year-old is not a person. Therefore, it should be protected by law and allowed to live, even if it is a major burden to the mother.

Congress is trying to take America back down a path of backdoor abortions and unwanted children. Instead Americans should be asking Congress to further extend the rights of every woman. Only when a woman is legally allowed to have a fourth-term abortion will she be truly free.

Paul Sheaffer is a senior analytical finance major.

Communication's purest form neglected

Mediated communication triumphs over face-to-face interaction at Wake Forest.

So, here we are, making our way through the "Year of Fostering Dialogue," and I'm noticing more and more that no one's talking to each other. That is, honestly talking face-to-face.

Not that that's a surprise, mind you, but it's something I've noticed ever since this year began, after I was alerted to the specifics of the theme year.



Matt Wilson

OLD GOLD AND BLACK COLUMNIST

Oh sure, there have been plenty of speakers to come around and give their opinions on various issues, usually the war or how we're losing our civil rights in our own country (and I say that in passing because no one seems to care), but that's not dialogue. Being *spoken to* isn't the same thing at all as *speaking with*, as I'm sure you can tell by the proposition.

And there's been loads of outright accusation among people on campus, with one ignorant comment leading to a knee-jerk reaction that leads someone else to fly off the handle and so on and so forth until nobody's happy. Like it or not, the "someone calls someone else a racist, then the person denies it" argument's not going to go anywhere. The only solution is to make apologies, for those apologies to be accepted, and then for it to start all over again, because there are always people who are going to make ignorant comments with not-together-bad intentions. Unfortunately, emotions get the better of us, and dialogue turns into posturing and defensiveness.

But it boils down to something simpler than that. Namely that personal, face-to-face conversation is all but dead.

I may sound like someone out of antiquity here,

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but in this age of the instant message and the cell phone/pager/game console/mp3 player/video camera/waffle iron all-in-one machine, people don't even have time for talking anymore.

For instance, how many times have you, when you wanted to talk to someone across the hall or even in *the same room*, just IMed them instead? We've probably all done it at least once, when with just a bit of added effort, we could actually talk to somebody rather than looking at the screen we all probably look at for a third of our day. For some of us, it's more.

And I'm just as guilty of this as anyone else. I actually *actively* avoid people sometimes. In all honesty, if I meet someone within the next few days who comes up to me and says, "Hey Matt, nice column this week; you haven't written for the paper in a while," (and it doesn't happen very often, so I don't have much to worry about) I'll more than likely quickly tell them "thanks" and keep walking to wherever I was going, ending the conversation right there.

The thing is, though, it's not really that I don't want to talk to the person (and it could be they're just patronizing me anyway), it's more like I'm almost trying to go by the standard. You don't know 'em, you don't talk.

Fact of the matter is, we're all factionalized here. We divide into our little Greek groups, we separate into different years and different classes and majors, we segregate ourselves (intentionally or not), we make ourselves into these little exclusive groups that don't let anyone else in for whatever reason. And we're so divided that we're not a community. How can we have dialogue if we're all so worried about fitting into groups that we're assimilated out of an opinion?

But, I guess that's all moot anyway. The world isn't a place where dialogue is fostered. It's a place where bombs do all the talking and words of criticism are shot down like barbed arrows.

Maybe *that* should be next year's theme. God knows it would be more pertinent.

Matt Wilson is a junior sociology major.