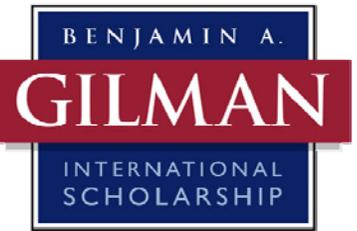


TERESE GAGNON, PERU, 2011

University of Georgia
Georgia



As a Gilman Scholarship recipient, I spent the spring of my sophomore year studying at the Pontifical Catholic University in Lima, Peru. I had the incredible experience of living with a host family and taking upper level anthropology courses taught entirely in Spanish. Among the courses I took was an urban anthropology course in which I worked with Peruvian classmates conducting research on 'bourgeois bohemian' youth culture in Lima. In another course, fieldwork in cultural anthropology, I lived for a week in a remote Andean village studying rural cell phone use; cell service having arrived to the community only a year before and representing the first means of direct communication with

the rest of the country. Additionally, I had the enriching opportunity of volunteering for an indigenous rights organization CHIRAPAQ, where I translated grant applications for UNESCO funding and served as interpreter and aid at the 25th anniversary celebration and international indigenous summit. Other memorable experiences during my time in Peru included visiting Manchu Picchu, the central Andes and the Amazon; being present for the celebration of Easter Sunday in Cusco; witnessing the highly politicized national elections; and taking part in a syncretic religious street festival. As a result of my time abroad, I returned home with a proficiency in Spanish far beyond my expectation, an immensely furthered knowledge of anthropology and a greatly altered worldview.

My experiences in Peru lead me to think critically about the relationship between landscapes and cultural and the ways in which notions of 'place' are constructed and perceived. Upon my return to the University of Georgia I took numerous courses related to these themes and eventually began conducting research with refugees from Burma of the Karen ethnic minority, living in Georgia. My ongoing research with

them seeks to examine their transnational 'senses of place' and to document their rapidly disappearing ethno-botanical knowledge and biodiversity. I have been accepted to present my research at the National Anthropology Conference in San

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Francisco.

As I look past graduation and towards the future, I hope to eventually attend graduate school for anthropology, focusing on relationships between nature and cultural memory, perhaps exploring how this extends into areas such as myth, art, and religion. I would also like to incorporate in my graduate studies, an emphasis on the value of narrative and creative writing as a form of ethnography. However, immediately after graduation I plan to spend one to two years doing fieldwork/ service work in the U.S. or abroad, perhaps working with Karen refugees in camps on the Burma/Thai border.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

I Skyped with third, fourth and fifth grade classes of an elementary school in my home town, of which a large percentage of the students come from low income and Latino families. I shared with them my experiences and knowledge about Peru's nature,

culture, government, and geography that corresponded with their grade level curriculum requirements. I also shared information about opportunities for higher education and study abroad. Additionally, I presented to the service and

advocacy organization, The ONE Campaign at UGA, where I spoke about agriculture, market integration and poverty in Peru and encouraged other members to apply for the Gilman Scholarship.