Being a Woman in Morocco

by Lalla Kenza Idrissi (Class of 2008)

After earning a B.A. and an M.A. in international relations and diplomacy, after writing a one-hundred-page thesis on the reasons women in Morocco reject rights that are beneficial to them—a thesis written with the hope of changing the status of Moroccan women and increasing their participation in politics and all other spheres of the country’s activities—I am continually met with the question: “Are you married yet?” My usual answer is: “Not yet. I am thinking of enrolling in a doctor program.” “Doctoral program?” comes the retort. “Aren’t you twenty-five? When will you get married? When will you have babies?” Because God forbid pursuing a higher education may stand in the way of achieving a woman’s real goal in life: populating the earth with babies.

I should consider myself lucky. I come from an intellectual family, one that has always encouraged me to pursue my academic and professional goals, one that is well-rounded and understands the importance of school and work. Some of my family members even argue women are superior to men! But they, too, in momentary lapses of judgment, in that second when tradition suddenly becomes all-important, will ask me the same question: “Are you married yet?” Of course, they will then add: “No pressure. It’s just that you will make a beautiful bride and we can’t wait to see your children.”

What I have realized is that no matter how many years the majority of Moroccans study abroad, no matter what degrees they acquire, no matter how open-minded they may be when they live outside their country, somehow when they return home their views narrow once more. All of a sudden, what is traditional is what is good and whatever is modern becomes evil. Moroccans develop what numerous writers have dubbed: “Moroccan schizophrenia.” This condition seems to spring from the array of questions Moroccans today must continually ask themselves: “Are we devout
Muslims? Are we westernized? Are we traditional? Are we Arab or African? Are we conservative? Can we pray and go clubbing? Where do we belong?” Moroccans are stuck between modernity and tradition and that is exactly what the term “blad schizo” or “schizophrenic country” pinpoints. We show to the world a façade—that of a developed, open, and westernized nation—in order to attract as many tourists as possible, while at the same time we cling to religion and tradition in the hope of thereby finding our true identity. Being a woman in Morocco is therefore a challenge. It is a difficult situation to describe to those in Morocco who have never ventured abroad, who have never sucked in like a sponge all the positive things that define the western world—freedom, equality, development, advancement—and then returned hopeful. Hopeful, that is, to make a change, hopeful to bring about equality, to increase awareness, to make women something more than just wives or mothers. Many Moroccan women who travel find they no longer want to be the eternal minors. When they come back home, however, their newfound hope begins to fade, met instead with continuous slaps to the face. Men in the workplace, for example, rarely take them seriously. A woman gives male workers orders and they look at her and answer: “You’re just a woman. What do you know?” They then wait for her father, brother, spouse, or male relative to give them the same directions.

I work as the marketing director in my family’s company. The main activities of the company are running a fitness center and a nightclub. While quite different from the field of international relations, I have nonetheless found working in the company a valuable experience, precisely because of how much I have to deal directly with the Moroccan mind-set as a result. I mainly take care of organizing events and dealing with marketing strategies; in the fitness center, we employ twenty people, twelve of whom are women; in the nightclub, we employ thirty people, of whom I am the only woman. You see, a day job is expected of women in Morocco—until, that is, they begin on their God-given path, to be submissive wives and good mothers. Moreover, nightclubs are not places suitable for women per Moroccan tradition: the combination of alcohol, late hours, lots of men, and permissive attitudes is frowned upon. While a man may work in a club to support his family, a woman like me must avoid such places lest they taint her reputation—which would make the all-important task of marrying more of a challenge. I have found myself faced therefore with skepticism and lack of respect among my fellow employees at the club.

Frustrated with the situation, I decided recently to dive into a more educated milieu while keeping the marketing director job, and began teaching international business at an undergraduate school. I believed that in an intellectual environment the gender dynamic would be more equal. However, when I was teaching recently, one of my students gave a presentation in which he referred to Saudi Arabia as offering the best Muslim example of women’s rights. When I challenged him on this point—Saudi Arabia, after all, is a country in which women cannot even drive or interact with men—his answer was: “Well, technically, I am not even supposed to be talking to you because you are a woman.” I was so shocked that my jaw literally dropped to the floor. I needed a few minutes to calm myself down and not let the feminist in me throw the student out of the class. I challenged him and gave him a chance to explain himself. His answer was: “Religiously speaking, men and women are not supposed to interact, unless they are related.” Still in complete disbelief that a sophomore in college would have such an opinion, I asked the rest of the class to contribute, adding that I wanted to hear specifically from women in the class. Many were too shy to express their opinions. Others tried to be neutral. I realized that the majority of the class did think men were better than women and that gender inequality was something so normal, so mundane, and so common, that no one really needed to challenge it—and that those feminists who marched for women’s equality in Morocco were importing Western values and destroying God-given precepts and traditions.

It was then that I realized that, through teaching in a way that is progressive, that is unbiased, that encourages students to participate, debate, and form opinions, I could try to change this mentality. Knowledge is the gateway to progressive thinking. Up until that point, however, I had taken my education for granted. I now truly realized the metamorphosis I had undergone because my parents were able to send me abroad for my studies. From that day on, I decided that my classes were going to be unconventional: a lot less lecturing, a lot more debating. I spent time discussing issues with my students—from religion to politics to women’s rights. The goal was to get them out of their comfort zones and to let them see issues from different perspectives. I was later deeply touched by a few e-mails from students who said that my class was one of their favorites because they felt so free and liberated when participating in it. These students said they felt the class had challenged their traditional ways of thinking and opened their eyes to different viewpoints. That I was perhaps able to help them break through old ways of thinking confirmed to me that it was indeed possible to apply the knowledge I had acquired abroad to Morocco.

After all, turning one’s back on a society because one disagrees with it does not necessarily help bring about change. If every educated Moroccan gives up on Morocco, how are we expected to ever develop our country? Even if I do not always feel like a member of my community, I refuse to abandon that community. Instead, without wavering in my commitment to equal rights, I want to educate my countrymen. In the near future I hope to become even more
active through local and international women’s rights organizations.

A woman’s life in Morocco is a battlefield. Doors keep closing in my face, but I remain stubbornly hopeful that mentalities will change, that we will educate our youth to know what it means to be free and equal, to give women the rights they deserve and to ensure that men respect those rights. I am hopeful that for generations to come Morocco will not see its citizens as male or female but as Moroccans. I am hopeful that, in the future, being a woman in Morocco will not be a challenge, that a woman’s success will be measured by her degrees or education or the changes she brings about, not by the number of babies she produces and the age at which she marries. I am hopeful, and, in the words of Barack Obama: “Yes we can!” That is, at least, I hope so…

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**AGSIRD News**

**AGS in Paris is Born**

On October 1st, AGSIRD (American Graduate School of International Relations and Diplomacy) partnered with the business school component of ECAIS (the European Center of Advanced International Studies), each to become schools of a new overall structure the American Graduate School in Paris.

**Dr. Alexis Delabre**, Chairman of the Board of Administrators of the American Graduate School in Paris, states: “Our endeavour is to provide a global education, by giving future actors of international business a good understanding of the cultural, social and political context of the countries with which they will interact, as well as giving future diplomats and practitioners of international relations a good knowledge of the business component of the international arena.”

AGSIRD, under the presidency of **Dr. Eileen Servidio**, continues to offer Masters and Ph.D. degree programs in International Relations and Diplomacy, double-degree options with Arcadia University and with French universities, certificates for professionals, and undergraduate study abroad sessions in partnership with the College of Global Studies of Arcadia University.

AGSBE (American Graduate School of Business and Economics) under the presidency of **Dr. Ali Fatemi**, offers an Executive Master of Science in Finance, an Executive Master of Science in Marketing and an MBA.

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**Dual Degrees—and a prize**

Six AGSIRD students opted for the two-year double-degree program with Université Paris Sud XI last year. They were awarded an M.A. in International Relations and Diplomacy by AGSIRD during the graduation ceremony that took place in the French Senate in June, and they received a *Master en Diplomatie et Négociations Stratégiques* in September at a ceremony at the Quai d’Orsay (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs). **Alan Seelinger** was singled out for a particular honor when he received the prize for “Best Negotiator.”

**Ministerial Appointment**

**Dr. Selim El Sayegh**, member of the AGS board of Administrators and director of the *Master en Diplomatie et Négociations Stratégiques* at the Université de Paris XI, has been appointed Minister of Social Affairs in the government of Lebanon formed in November under Prime Minister Saadedine Al-Hariri.

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**Student News**

**Student Life: Picnics in Paris**

Adriana Barillas-Batarse (Class of 2011) tells us about a new tradition that her class has created: “Paris is a city full of amazing things to see and do! Coming to live here is completely overwhelming—actually, going to graduate school is already a big deal, and doing it in a foreign country, while learning a different language, presents us with several challenges.

Students this year at AGS have created a new fun tradition to make this transition a little less scary. How do we do it? We share our frustrations, anticipations, and fears with each other.

It all started with a couple of people wanting to get together to watch the Eiffel Tower sparkle one Saturday evening: it does this every hour on the hour. Someone suggested we all bring wine and cheese and a blanket, and make a picnic out of it. The picnic was a success, every time the Eiffel Tower sparkled it took our breath away and reminded us of how lucky we are to be in this great city.

Before the second picnic we gave it a name “Picnics in Paris” and created a Facebook group with an informal governing body in charge of organizing each event. The purpose of
“Picnics in Paris” is to come together often to socialize with our classmates outside of the day-to-day school schedule.

The different students that attend each picnic make it unique; not only do we socialize, each time we get to know and understand each other better. We also get to use Paris as the backdrop for such events. Now music has been added, and political debates usually arise. Picnics take place on the banks of the River Seine, the Champs de Mars, and the Pont des Arts. If the weather doesn’t allow us to meet outside, then the picnic is taken indoors to a student’s small apartment.

But the location is secondary. The most amazing thing is the different topics of conversation and activities that take place spontaneously. With a bit of luck what we have started will create a trend, and incoming students will support each other through this transitional period and share their experiences, good or bad, in Paris”

Internships

Paula Prince, a second-year student at AGS, recently completed an internship with UNESCO’s Executive Board. Her duties included drafting resolutions and report writing. In between Board Sessions she read documents to keep abreast of current issues under discussion. While she was there her team organized a celebration commemorating 64 years of friendly relations between India and UNESCO. Paula helped arrange visits with guests from India and prepared a photomontage to be displayed during the celebration. In reflecting on her experience with UNESCO, Paula refers to the internship as a good learning experience and would recommend it to other students.

Justine Freeman, on semester abroad at AGS from San Francisco State University, interned for HRW (Human Rights Watch) in their Paris office. As a liaison for a senior researcher based in Dakar, Senegal, her duties included assisting with research and closely following current events in West Africa; thus she had the task of monitoring a crisis situation in the Republic of Guinea which experienced a series of violent attacks just after she began her work at HRW. Her work contributed to developing reports that were, in Justine’s words, “used to pressure repressive governments to uphold the rights of their citizens and to encourage the international community to take appropriate measures such as sanctions.” She added, “the programmatic side of the organization, research and advocacy, was along the lines of my career dream,” and so was an especially opportune experience. She recommends this type of internship to any student interested in human rights.

Theses: What AGSers Write About

Writing a thesis is the culmination of two years hard work; here are some of the topics chosen by the class of 2009.

- Is Revolution Possible in the Post-modern Era?
- Overcoming Hegemony: Is the Restoration of Haitian Sovereignty Possible?
- Reinforcing the European Common Foreign and Security Policy: Myth or Reality?
- Political Mobilization of the Feminized Middle Class within a Globalized Market: A Case Study of Morocco.
- How Did an Exclusive Americo-Liberian Nationalism Lead to and Sustain the Liberian Civil War of 1985-2003?
- UNFIL and the Failure of Collective Security: A Case Study of Mearsheimer’s “False Promise of International Institutions.”
- Carbon Tax or Cap-and-Trade: Lessons for Canadian Policymakers in Emissions Reduction from Europe and the U.S.
- Will the Peacekeeping Efforts of the International Community Create Long-term Stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo?
- Does the International Community Have a Legal Responsibility to Protect? An Analysis of Norms Regarding Humanitarian Intervention in Africa since 1990.
- Nuclear Deterrent Economic Sanctions: Role of Direct Diplomacy in the U.S.-Iran Case Study.
- States Have No Friends, They Only Have Interests: “A Comparative Analysis on Taiwan’s Diplomacy and How China’s Peaceful Development Will Affect Taiwan’s Struggle for International Recognition.”
- The Common European Health Policy for Tobacco Control.
- Can a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) be Established in the Middle East? Israel, Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia’s Security Dilemma.

All theses are available in the AGS library for review.
Iran: High Stakes Modest Outcomes

By David Perez (Class of 2011)

The image of Casino Royale as a metaphor for international relations—one-eyed Russians dressed in all black playing a high-stakes game of chicken with improbably debonair British spies and chain-smoking Americans in tuxedos—is glamorous but generally misleading. Yet I find it impossible to rid myself of the image of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in full regalia, sweating profusely at a poker table as Ayatollah Khamenei looks on sternly in the background. Ahmadinejad and Khamenei have been entrusted with improving Iran’s chip stack at this particular game of IR poker, and while the last few hands haven’t broken their way, they remain in a position to come out of a tense situation relatively unscathed. Hopefully, both they and those sitting across the figurative table recognize that, considering the alternatives, this might not be such a bad thing.

Obviously, the worst-case scenarios of regional conflict between Iran and Israel must be avoided at all costs. Quite simply, the prospect of utter obliteration on both sides would render the entire exchange moot—who wins when everyone is dead? While neither Iranian officials nor the current Israeli government would acknowledge so out of the need to project strength, no one wins if one attacks the other; and it is highly likely that leaders in both nations wish to avoid just such a situation. With this in mind, if Iran only had peaceful nuclear energy in mind when they set out upon their quest, then their leaders would be vilified not for their intentions but for their sheer idiocy—such an end could have been accomplished with Chinese and Russian support within international legal constraints. As it is far more likely that they’re after nuclear weapons as a means of significantly improving their future bargaining position, the dual-track approach they’ve pursued of public defiance and private assurances makes sense. From the Iranian perspective, such a stance keeps other nations on their toes in public as to both military capabilities and intentions; and reassures important brokers such as Russia, China, and (increasingly) the U.S. privately that rational actors who understand the stakes at hand are in fact at the helm.

Recently, however, Iran’s bargaining position has been weakened. The controversial June elections and the subsequent scenes of domestic tension and violence making international headlines both clarified the fundamentally authoritarian nature of the Iranian regime and provided heretofore unseen evidence that this regime may in fact rest on fragile foundations. Additionally, the recent disclosure of the depth to which Western intelligence agencies have penetrated Iranian nuclear secrets has also (at least publicly) undermined the Iranian ability to disguise its intentions and capabilities from outside view.

So what can be done to ensure a peaceable outcome? Any wider conflict resulting from this will have devastating consequences throughout the region, and may in fact strengthen a less-than-desirable regime’s grip on power by rallying Iran’s citizens around the flag. Similarly, Iranian leaders must also know that they are bargaining from a weaker position than they first assumed; Russian support is no longer guaranteed, and Chinese support of the regime is tepid at best. There’s a great chance for both Iran and the West to come out with a positive gain from these tensions: Iran can have domestic nuclear power, and Israel and the West can be assured that the Iranian regime will need time to convert such capability into nuclear weaponry. But if such a compromise cannot be reached, then the tension will go on, and the temptation to act preemptively—disastrously—will rise as time marches on.

Professor in the Spotlight

Dr. Clinton Robinson

Dr. Clinton Robinson joined AGS this fall semester to teach the “International Organizations” course. He has a Ph.D. in Language Use in Rural Development from Reading University in England, and his main topics of interest are education, models of development in developing countries and minority and indigenous languages. He arrived at AGS with extensive experience working with various NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and IGOs (inter-governmental organizations).

Most recently, Dr. Robinson worked at UNESCO in the Education For All program where he was involved in producing several strategy documents, including the EFA Global Plan of Action, midterm reviews of the U.N. literacy decade, and strategies for the coming years.

Before joining UNESCO, he worked for SIL International (Summer Institute of Linguistics), an NGO that studies, documents, and assists in developing the world’s lesser-known languages. With this organization, Dr. Robinson spent ten years in Cameroon—four in South Cameroon researching and working to develop the local language and enhance literacy, and six years directing the NGO from Yaounde, the capital.

Dr. Robinson’s projects in Cameroon had a positive impact there, and one of his major contributions was bringing the activities of the NGO more in line with the relevant goals of the country through relationship-building. This was a learning process, adapting to new cultural patterns. It was these relationships and the acceptance of the Cameroonians that showed him firsthand the significance in truly “valuing people just for who they are and not what they do.”

His experience working for both NGOs and IGOs has given Dr. Robinson insight into the workings of important bodies of international relations. While NGOs are in a position to be more sensitive to the local context of a project, IGOs bring countries together at a high level to exchange experiences and set new policies. He says, “Working at UNESCO is really being at the center of busy international crossroads.”
**Faculty News**

**Dr. Ruchi Anand** taught a summer course at Princeton University, New Jersey on “U.S. Foreign Policy” for the JSA (Junior Statesmen Association) She first taught for JSA in 2002 at Georgetown University, Washington D.C. campus.


**Dr. Douglas Yates** has been working on his new book, *Africa Oil: Oppression, Corruption and War for Control of Africa’s Natural Resources*, to be published by Pluto Press (London).

This semester he gave numerous television interviews: on France 24 concerning the crises in Gabon (Sept. 3) and in Guinea-Conakry (Oct. 1, 5, 6, 14); on CNBC-Europe concerning the Clearstream Affairs (Oct. 23); and on Al Jazeera about the Angolagate affair (Oct. 27). He also gave radio interviews on RFI concerning the crisis in Gabon (Sept. 27, Oct. 18) and the RFI Crossroads debate on Guinea (Nov. 3) with the renowned historian of Africa Catherine Cocquery Vidrovitch and a former Guinean prime minister.

On November 5th, Dr. Yates spoke on Gabon’s rentier economy at the conference, “Quelles évolutions pour le système gabonais?” at IFRI (Institut Français de Relations Internationales) with a panel of eminent Gabon experts, including: Guy Rossatanga-Rignaud (University of Libreville), Roland Pourtier (University of Paris-Sorbonne) and François Gaulme (La Documentation Française). On the invitation of the influential East-West Council, he gave an address on Chinese relations with Sudan (Nov. 10) in Brussels.

**Dr. Alan Kahan** had two books come out this December, *Alexis de Tocqueville* with Continuum Press; *Mind vs Money: The War Between Intellectuals and Capitalism* appearing with Transaction. If not available at your local bookstore, you can find these books on the publishers’ websites or on Amazon.

Prof. Kahan spoke about some of the themes of *Mind vs. Money* in England at York University’s Politics Department in October, and at the University of Leuven political philosophy program that same month. He will be taking the show on the road to the Frankfurt Business School in January, and possibly to other points east as well. In December he participated in a conference on “Islam and Democracy” in London.

**Dr. Stephen McGiffen** addressed a workshop organized by the Swedish Labour Education Association in Stockholm, Sweden, on November 28th. The theme was “European politics and the current condition of the left in government and opposition.”

Dr. McGiffen’s contribution was entitled “Swimming Against the Tide: the Success of the Dutch Socialist Party in the First Decade of the 21st Century.” The paper was published at the same time in translation by the Swedish journal *Socialistisk Debatt*.

**Dr. David Pike** gave the Inaugural Plenary address at Trinity College Dublin in July to open a four-day international conference marking the 70th anniversary of the collapse of the Spanish Republic. The collective work *Crimes against Women* that he edited is at press with Nova Science Publishing in Hauppauge, NY. With 26 essays by contributors from around the world, with a foreword by Taslima Nasrin, winner of the 2004 UNESCO Prize this book is the first publication of the AGSIRD Research Center on international crime. Also at press, with Editorial Alianza-Anaya in Madrid, and also due out in 2010, is Dr. Pike’s book on the Hitler-Mussolini-Franco collaboration.

**Professor Joav Toker** was a participant in a television debate on France 24 (English) following the French Court judgment condemning the Church of Scientolgy. He also participated in a panel-debate program on International Affairs, “Kiosque,” on the international francophone channel TV5 in November. He gave a guest-lecture in October at a convention of UEJF (Union des Etudiants Juifs de France), in Paris, on President Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize and how it impacts the Middle-East peace process.

**Dr. Arun Kapil** spent a week in the Republic of Djibouti, under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State’s Africa Regional Services giving lectures on electoral systems to audiences of parliamentary deputies, opposition party leaders, local elected officials, judges, magistrates and academics.
**Alumni Article**

**Returning to Riga**

*By Maria Gogosova Lafont*

**Maria (Class of 2000)** is Russian; as a child she spent many summer vacations in Riga, Latvia. She returned this summer to attend a friend’s wedding, her first visit back in over twenty years.

The trip was very emotional; I felt I was returning to my childhood—taking with me my memories of Latvia as it had been under the Soviets. But much has changed since it became independent.

Riga is a charming little city—and now very European. There are a lot of things to see. For interested amateurs, it has one the biggest galleries of Art Nouveau architecture in the world, built in 1905 by Mikhail Eisenstein, father of the film director Sergei Eisenstein. Every building in the city center is a work of art. You can visit the Guild hall, see the Old City Walls and the 15th century Powder Tower; the House of Blackheads—one of Riga’s treasures built in 1344, destroyed during WWII and rebuilt after the war; and many other amazing cathedrals, buildings, architectural ensembles and parks.

Riga proved to be an exciting culinary experience too. There are now all sorts of restaurants serving Russian, Latvian and European food. Visiting Riga’s central market—one of the largest in Europe—was an unforgettable experience. It consists of four pavilions, which were used as Zeppelin hangars during WWII, each specializing in meat, fish, fruit and vegetables or dairy products.

I found the people of Riga to be friendly although there is a lot of tension between the Latvians and the considerable Russian population that remain in Latvia. It is evident that the collapse of the Soviet Union left bitter memories and the Russians have a hard time obtaining Latvian passports and finding jobs.

As a Russian it felt very strange to stand in front of the Museum of Occupation of Latvia by Russia, which is situated on one of the central squares of Riga. Next to the museum was an outdoor photo exhibition showing the hard life Latvians had during Soviet times with photos that depicted unfair labour conditions and empty food stalls.

Latvia sees Russia as a political aggressor and is proud of what it has achieved as an independent state. It has to be said that the Baltic nations Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania have achieved considerable international standing over the last twenty years compared to the rest of the Soviet Union successor states; Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Central Asia still depend heavily on Russia as an economic partner; and for these countries Russia remains a vital actor in all questions of foreign relations and an important producer of natural resources.

Russia is a neighbour that cannot simply be ignored. I understand the tensions from both sides, but one cannot really revise history. It seems to me that both countries would be able to agree on important issues and co-operate if they each applied a more democratic policy.

**Spotlight on an Alumna**

**Natalie Burke (Class of 2000)**

To be able to represent a country multilaterally is a challenging task. This is what alum Natalie Burke is accomplishing as the First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Barbados to the U.N. and other international organizations in Geneva. The Permanent Mission was established as part of the efforts to enhance relations between them.

Natalie was posted to Geneva in 2003, and doesn’t think she “could have started off with a better posting at the multilateral level. The range of issues is immense and filled with challenges in terms of getting to know the key players, and how to navigate the process and get your interests covered all at the same time.” Some of the matters she and the government of Barbados are faced with every day are international trade for a single-market economy, telecommunications, human rights, environmental agreements, and migration.

Migration is very important for her country, which is why she attends events such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Athens. She says that the “movement of people is very strong on the agenda for a country like Barbados” with a population of 284,000. She feels that these places where the interaction and debates happen are where most of the learning takes place. “There is no substitute for being there to get firsthand understanding of what issues are at stake and where the country fits in.”

Having representation on a multilateral level is critical, particularly for a small country, to ensure that the voices of the people are heard and their concerns addressed in key decision-making. “It is exciting and sobering to see an outcome document reflect specific language or specific ideas that you have worked hard to have included. But at the end of the day, it is how countries live up to their respective commitments that reflects the effectiveness of any outcome.”

Natalie doesn’t know how long she will be stationed in Geneva, but hopes that when the time comes she will get another similar opportunity, as she has become quite addicted to the action. She thinks these experiences are where the real learning can be found, and that a textbook will not teach you what being involved in the actual process will.
Alumni News

Janicke Stramer (Class of 2004) “I am now teaching full-time at a private school in Truckee. I currently teach World History, U.S. History, and Government, as well as French, Spanish, and German. It’s a lot of fun and I really enjoy going to work everyday. Erik and I have now been living in Lake Tahoe, California, for a year and are loving mountain living! It’s been a really positive move for me career-wise.

“Getting back into academia has also allowed me more time for researching and writing. I’ve presented at three academic conferences this year. I attended the annual ISA (International Studies Association) convention in New York in February; in July I presented at the IPSA (International Political Science Association) conference in Santiago, Chile, where I bumped into Dr. Yates. IPSA was really a great experience. I got to attend a live round table discussion between former prime ministers and presidents, Lionel Jospin of France, Fernando Cardoso of Brazil, and Ricardo Lagos of Chile. I also had the honor of being invited to celebrate the French National Day the 14th of July at the French embassy, where Lionel Jospin also attended. It was quite a treat to participate in a formal event like that. I met many interesting people from all level of politics and diplomacy. From there, I went on to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where I presented at the joint ABRI-ISA conference.

“I have also joined Soroptimist International, a volunteer organization for improving the lives of women, which has provided me with a great network in this area.”

Laura-Lee Smith (Class of 2009) spent a week at the ICD (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy) forum in Berlin, Germany, in June. She tells us, “It was an exceptional experience! In one week, I met a handful of ambassadors, diplomats and political scientists who shared their opinions on transatlantic relations.

“The Director of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, Mark Donfried, asked each speaker to engage us in dialogue so it became a personalized experience. I was able to ask ambassadors tough questions—such a unique experience—and gained a broader insight about how Europe views its relationship with the US going forward. The other participants of the program were mostly Germans and Americans with two exceptions—one was from South Africa and another from Cyprus.

“The program had some interesting cultural components. We visited a dance studio and watched performances which told the story of East and West Berlin, and later went to the Berlin Wall with a famous artist and photographer who explained the meanings behind many of the wall paintings and invited us into his private studio afterwards. We were lucky enough to see other artists painting their Berlin Wall pieces, a complete coincidence.

“I learned a lot from this experience. I got a unique introduction to the city and became a part of the ICD network. I really enjoyed the experience and would recommend ICD forums, conferences and events to AGS students.”

Abigail Pratt (Class of 2006) writes; “I have been working at my dream job since the month of May. I am a consultant for a social marketing organization called Population Services International, a public health organization that works around the world. I am working on their Child Survival Program in South Sudan! It’s fascinating, I absolutely love the job and the organization and I think it will keep me bouncing around the world for years to come, which is just how I like it. My program ends in December, at which point they will either keep me here in Sudan or send me to DC for a few months for further programmatic training.”

Jennifer Wright (Class of 2009) was commissioned in August, by the Acronym Institute, a London-based non-profit organization that advocates for nuclear non-proliferation to carry out research and write an article on France’s Nuclear Diplomacy and how this could possibly hinder future nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

Patrick Clairzier and Joey Beaudreau (Class of 2009) had the paper they wrote for the AGS conference critiquing neoliberal institutionalization published in the online journal Spectrezeine Politics Review (www.spectrezeine.org/global/neoliberal.htm).

New Arrivals

Robert Bopp (Class of 2000) senior manager with Ernst and Young in Germany, writes with the good news that his wife gave birth to their third child, Bria Katharina Bopp on July 13, 2009: sister to Sebastian Emanuel, six years old, and Janina Katharina, four years old.

Elizabeth Milosovic-Hunter (Class of 2006) Ph.D. candidate at AGSIRD and professor of law, gave birth to Aleksander Serugévitch Kash on November 3rd. Mom, dad and brother Maximilian are all ecstatic!

Jopi Schlupe (Class of 2004) and his wife Farnaz are delighted to announce the birth of their son Kian Schlupe, on November 4th. Their daughter, Ella is now 2 years old. Jopi was formerly Program Coordinator at AGS, and is now teaching with Touro College, Paris.