March, 2013

Dear colleagues,

We are very excited to propose a semester-long study-abroad program to Northern Europe. As some of you know we’ve been fortunate to lead several programs to Northern Europe (and beyond), England Semester twice and Europe Semester three times. Though they are a lot of work, these programs have been some of the most enriching work of our careers.

As fulfilling as our experience has been, it has also given us first-hand knowledge of the challenges of the traditional Europe Semester program, and some insight into how we might meet these challenges. Over the years we’ve been asking ourselves several questions, the answers to which are driving this proposal:

Can we help students engage more deeply with our host culture/s?

Can we do more learning with less complexity?

Can we give students the best we have to offer by teaching in our fields rather than stretching ourselves into something we’re not at the expense of their learning?

Can we create a curricular structure that other faculty could step into more easily?

Can we move students’ discovery of a love for learning to an earlier point in their college experience?

Can we create a more personal learning community by taking fewer students?

Can we be more cost effective, lessening the financial burden that off-campus programs can be for the college and making the experience available to more students?

Can we involve Westmont faculty in the program without requiring the massive commitment and upheaval that leading an off-campus program can involve?

We’ve created a program that we think does these things. We are prepared to take the program three consecutive fall semesters to insure that it works and to get it established. During those first years we will also explore locations and resources that might be better fits for other faculty leaders. After that initial period we would be prepared to lead every other year.

Thanks for your consideration.

Cheri and Chris
Westmont in Northern Europe

Timing: Starting in fall 2014 and led for three consecutive fall semesters by Cheri Larsen Hoeckley and Chris Hoeckley; thereafter we would be eager for others to lead, though would welcome leading ourselves every other year.

Academic level: Principally sophomore program, though we recognize that scheduling in some majors might require taking part in the junior year.

Curriculum:

Overarching theme will be conflict and peacemaking (other faculty leaders might choose other themes).

Fulfills five GE requirements: Foreign Language, Communicating Cross-Culturally and (under Hoeckley/Larsen Hoeckley leadership) Reading Imaginatively, Thinking Globally and Philosophical Perspectives on Truth and Value.

1-unit preparatory seminar in spring semester prior to the program; 1-unit post-program seminar in subsequent spring semester

4 units English 044  GE Reading Imaginatively and Thinking Globally

Novels and poetry of Germany, England, Ireland and former commonwealth countries will provide a variety of imaginary landscapes for exploring war, violence, and peacemaking in Northern Europe and from a Northern European context through colonialism, postcolonialism and multi-ethnic communities. Reading will include novels such as Small Island (Andrea Levy), The Reader (Der Vorleser) and Things Fall Apart (Chinua Achebe) or Reef (Romesh Gunesekera), along with poets of World Wars I & II, 20th-century Irish poets, contemporary Anglophone poetry.

4 units Philosophy 006  GE Philosophical Perspectives on Truth and Value

Social and political philosophy: theories of governance, the ethics of war and the ethics and epistemology of toleration; relationship of toleration to secularization

Ethics: underlying ethical and meta-ethical theories informing views on the ethics of war and toleration

Epistemology: epistemological assumptions underlying secularization in Europe, especially the emergence of empiricism and its ascendancy since the 19th C; relationship of epistemology to toleration and to encountering religious diversity

Metaphysics: metaphysical assumptions underlying secularization in Europe; relationship of metaphysics to encountering religious diversity

2 units IS 194 Encountering European Cultures  GE Communicating Cross-Culturally (modeled on England Semester course)

Opportunities to engage with local cultures through home-stays, worship, site visits and guest lectures, and to process those encounters in discussion and writing.

4 units Elementary German  GE Foreign Language

Intensive German language study at the Goethe Institute (or similar institution) in Berlin

1 unit PE—urban and rural walking
Westmont in Northern Europe

Itinerary

The heart of the program is an eight- to nine-week stay in Berlin. In the midst of that time we will have a ten-day stay in another major location, as well as a number of day trips and 1 – 3 night stays. Day trips would be to locations such as Dresden or Sachsenhausen, and short stays to locations such as Prague, Krakow or Amsterdam. The time in Berlin will include homestays in German households.

During the ten-day stay away from Berlin (scheduled around the campus four-day break) another Westmont faculty member will join the program to teach material from their field related to the program’s overarching themes. The location of the long stay will be chosen to suit the teaching interests of the visiting faculty member.

The time in Berlin will be preceded by a two- to three-week orientation period in Birmingham, England, dedicated to the formation of our learning community.

The time in Berlin will be followed by a four- to five-week processing and debrief time in Rostrevor, N. Ireland.

We have chosen our locations based on our repeated experience of their effectiveness. We have seen the accommodations in these locations work very well and most importantly know the resources we can draw on to enrich students’ learning.

Resources

Faculty of the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (Birmingham):

Helen Rolands, head of education--wide contacts in peace studies and peacemaking work in universities and faith communities, as well as contacts in German instruction.

Timothy Peat Ashworth, tutor and coordinator of interfaith activities--teaching at the theoretical and programmatic levels on addressing conflict between faith traditions; wide contacts with Birmingham’s diverse religious community

Cross of Nails Community associated with Coventry Cathedral

University of Coventry Peace Studies program

Brother Thierry & the monks of Holy Cross Benedictine Monastery in Rostrevor, a monastery established by the Benedictine motherhouse in France to work toward Protestant/Catholic reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Duncan Morrow, former director of the Community Relations Council, a Catholic-Protestant reconciliation organization in N. Ireland, now a faculty member at the University of Ulster, Belfast.

Cross of Nails Communities in Berlin and Dresden

Martin Niemoeller Haus in Berlin--named for the leader of the Confessing Church during the Nazi era; now a resource for peacemaking organizations

Gabriel Fauwcett--frequent guide for Europe Semester. We would enlist him to arrange homestays with members of his church in Berlin and to facilitate guest speakers, in particular from the Turkish migrant community.