

BATTEN BULLETIN

BATTEN HONORS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020

BHC Winter Highlights

In January, Batten Honors College students spent two weeks in our nation's capital for a leadership course. Read all about their experience in Washington D.C. [here](#).



A group of BHC students traveled abroad this winter to learn about religious and political conflict in the Middle East. Hear about Israel [here](#).



Mexico Adventure

Hear about Will's experience in a BHC study away course in Mexico last winter.



Research Project

Read about Asha's research on racial self-identification and voting preferences.



Internship Experience



Hear all about Hayden's internship with the Richmond law firm CowanGates

Study Abroad



Audrey Bally tells about her experience living in Japan for a semester and adjusting from France to America and to Japan.

PARLEZ VOUS JAPANESE?

BY: AUDREY BALLY

Through the Batten Honors College, I had the chance to spend a semester abroad in Japan during Fall 2019. Not only was it an amazing academic and social experience, I was able to learn more than I would have ever been able to about another culture so different than our western one.

It was not my first experience going abroad by myself. I participated in an exchange program to Germany for two months during 8th grade, where I learned how to live by myself in a country where I do not know the language or culture. Having this first experience really helped me during my semester abroad because the Japanese do not speak English. I was not scared to



come up to people and start talking with them. I still wonder how we were able to have such good conversations, with my very poor Japanese skills and their limited knowledge of English. I do believe it is a great part of the experience, being able to get over those huge obstacles of culture and language.

Coming to America from France for college has already impacted me a lot. I changed my behavior. I have become more Americanized and I had to learn about American culture. Therefore, I was prepared to see changes in my mind set and behavior during my time abroad. I have become more extroverted and loud during my time in America, while I have learned to think before talking and listen to others before giving my opinion in Japan. The most frustrating behavior for me when I arrived in Japan was seeing people not expressing themselves. I learned later that it is a virtue. Japanese prefer to listen and process information before speaking, which is the complete opposite of America, where we prefer to say what we think before

even getting educated about it.

Both my experience in Japan and America made me change my opinion on marriage. Coming from France where marriage is not part of young people's life plan,



and from a family where my parents did not get married, I never dreamed of having a wedding or getting engaged. I always thought it was old fashioned and had no value anymore, but I discovered that it still has an important place in society in America and Japan. Americans being

so religious still see marriage as the achievement of a perfect relationship, while in Japan it is what you have to do. Society pressure in Asia is huge and young people know they will have to get married and women will most likely be housewives, maybe with a part time job, while men will be salarymen. The biggest culture shock I have ever had in my life was hearing young women, like me, express their desire to become housewives. In our western culture, women emancipation encourages us to believe that if we want to be a housewife, we will have no power and no will to empower ourselves. Over there, I learned that being a housewife was their choice, because they have the power in this position. Men will earn the money, which they will give to their wives, who will give them back a weekly allowance. Every economical and marital issue is handled by women. Society is oriented on the needs of the women, because they are the ones who make decisions. It was very interesting for me to learn more about a society so different from ours and see how much my opinion has changed over the years and especially over this past semester on marriage and women empowerment.

Another culture shock during my time abroad was living in a country where being white is being part of the minority. The biggest thing that happened to me is that by the end I wanted the Japanese to see me as one

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of them. Because of my curly hair, the color and shape of my eyes, people could instantly see me as non-Japanese. I tried as hard as I could to fit in. Although, I did not dye my hair or anything like this, I started to act more like a Japanese person, bowing in almost all circumstances, being more quiet, listening. I believe that would have happened in any other country, whatever race is in majority, because as humans our brains pick up very fast on what we are surrounded with and copies it. I just believe I did it faster, because I did not look like anybody else. It was very interesting to



see myself thinking I was something else, Japanese instead of French, because I was the outlier and I did not want to stay one. I wanted to avoid offending them or being in their way. I really felt like I did not want to be the foreigner, but instead really immerse myself in the Japanese culture.

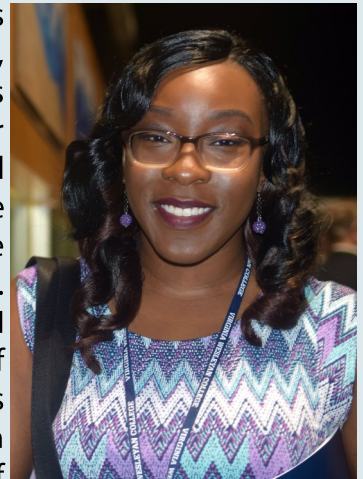
Japan has been an amazing experience and one I will never forget. It made me grow in so many ways that it is still hard to count them all. People are right about traveling, that it educates the youth (*le voyage forme la jeunesse*). Through all these experiences I have been lucky enough to have, I have grown to be a different person than I was two years ago and even six months ago. I really recommend anyone to go anywhere far, far away, where they do not speak the language of the people and do not know much about their culture, and see how much they learn about themselves, humanity, and different societal values.

EXAMINING VOTING TRENDS

BY: ASHA RICHARDS

During the spring 2019 semester with the help of Dr. Leslie Caughell, I conducted research about the impact of racial self-identification on partisanship among Hispanic voters. In this study, I was looking to see if Hispanics that identified as another race, specifically Black or White, in addition to Hispanic had partisan leanings that matched that of their race of choice. This project actually began during the Fall semester of 2018 in my Political Science Research Methods class with Dr. Antje Schwennicke. In that class, I was to find any topic related to political science and plan a study for my chosen research question, which entailed writing up the data and analysis section of a research paper and planning how to collect and analyze data. The question I chose for the class was "To what extent can racial identification of Hispanic voters be used to predict their voting patterns in the United States?" I always pondered why Hispanics were often grouped together for political polling and voting, despite the

great diversity within this particular group. Additionally, knowing that some Hispanics will identify as black, white, or Native American, I wondered what would happen if these people were included in the data of their identified race. Through this question, I hoped to find out not only if Hispanics that identified as another race had partisan leanings that matched that of their race of choice, but how strongly their racial identification might affect their partisanship and whether race could be used as an indicator of partisanship. While completing this assignment, Dr. Schwennicke encouraged me to follow through with the research by saying it was a conference-worthy



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topic, as it was a topic nobody has really researched before. After a bit of convincing, I decided to persist and the following semester, I continued in my research with Dr. Caughell as my mentor. Originally, I had a survey and a plan on how to distribute it. However, due to the time constraints and population size, we found it best to use secondary data and narrow my research. Therefore, instead of finding out all that I set out to do with my survey, I ended up only looking at whether the partisan leanings of Hispanic voters aligned with those of the races they self-identified with. After editing the other sections of my paper and substantially increasing the depth of my literature review, Dr. Caughell assisted me in running regression analysis on data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) database. My findings supported my hypothesis that Hispanics that self-identified as another race would align with their race of choice in terms of partisanship. However, the data was not representative of the population or the Black Hispanic demographic.

Additionally, one of the findings was only approaching statistically significant and thus may not be relevant. Despite this, the findings are still interesting and might be the basis for more research in the area. Due to complications out of my control, I was not able to complete my research paper at the semester end. However, I am currently fine tuning it and it should be ready for presentation in Fall 2020.

HON 270 in Washington, D.C.



LAYING DOWN THE LAW

BY: HAYDEN THORNBRUGH

Last summer I started an internship with the Richmond-based law firm, CowanGates. I chose CowanGates because while I was interested in applying to law school, I wanted to develop a better understanding of what it was actually like before committing to three more years of schooling after undergrad. CowanGates was a perfect fit because they handle many types of cases, from criminal proceedings to real estate contracts. This helped open my eyes to the numerous types of law one can pursue with a law degree (after passing the bar exam, of course).

Going into my internship, I was nervous about getting boxed into one field and that I would eventually get burned out. However, I learned that every day is a completely different ballgame thanks to CowanGates. One day I would be sitting in on client meetings all day

and filing paperwork, and the next I would be tagging along to court to watch the proceedings. And, by the way, it is not at all like what you see on television. The changing schedule seemed chaotic at first, but I grew to love it as there was never an opportunity for monotony to set in.

Once it was time to come back to school in August, I was excited about the new semester, but sad that my time at CowanGates was coming to an end. All in all, I am so glad that CowanGates gave me such a fantastic opportunity, as it helped assuage my anxieties about my plans to apply to law school immensely.



POLITICS AND POSITIVITY

BY: CONNOR MERK

During my time in Washington D.C., I learned the significance of maintaining a positive relationship with those I encounter, to develop my passion and build my career from that, and to listen and take advice from others who have more knowledge and experience on specific matters. Additionally, I came to understand the importance of having mentors that provide guidance regarding the matters of my life and career decisions. Many of the speakers highlighted the significance of finding your passion and then building your career off of that passion. My passion is political campaigns and government, so I will continue to study political science and be involved in elections and the political process.

On the first day, we explored the Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam War Memorial, and Korean War Memorial, which are beautiful pieces of architecture that pay respect to those who completely deserve it. I was touched by all the names written on the Vietnam War Memorial because those young men served their country to the best of their ability, and I am glad that they are being honored for their service. The Korean War Memorial does not receive as much attention as the others, but it is a wonderful structure. It felt amazing to be at the Lincoln Memorial and the Reflecting Pool where so many moments of history occurred, such as MLK Jr.'s speech and Vietnam War protests. As I look back in time, I am incredibly thankful for the American generations that came before us that fought for our country, protested for the common good, and paved the way for the present day where the United States remains the best country in the world. |

Even though we saw some snow in D.C, all of our scheduled plans continued. We had the opportunity to sit in the House Gallery and heard from two former

congressmen. Viewing the congressman in the House Gallery was an extremely enlightening experience. I was able to see many members of Congress and surprisingly, I recognize the majority of them. I was not expecting so many members to be talking with each other or on their phones when other members were speaking to the chamber. It does not seem like the American people are sending the best and brightest to Washington D.C. to represent their interests. This has inspired me to continue to be involved with politics on all levels of government and maybe even be a staffer, chief-of-staff, or representative. I understand why so many Americans view Washington D.C. as corrupt and ineffective, and I would like to be able to help the country by providing a good example of someone counter to those thoughts. In regard to my goals for civic engagement, I hope to continue my involvement in elections on the local, state, and national level.

Both former Congressmen reflected on their times in Congress and how difficult, but rewarding the experience was. Maffei stated several pieces of advice, such as it is a lot easier to criticize than to create meaningful policy solutions. That is important to take into account when analyzing the successes and failures of the majority and minority parties in both houses of Congress. Additionally, he stated that people do not realize the unintended consequences to "simple" solutions that people sometimes propose. One thing that Maffei mentioned that I disagreed with was in regard to direct democracy and how people do not have the capability to make governmental decisions on their own, and that they must rely upon an elected representative. However, in my opinion, that disregards the views of citizens who deserve to have a say in decisions that will directly



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affect them. A growing trend that I have discovered between the speakers, and Maffei touched on, is that the American people have lost trust in institutions and no longer want to rely on expertise. An example is Donald Trump becoming president of the United States.

At Mount Vernon, it felt amazing to walk in the same footsteps as George Washington and other notable people who have toured those grounds. I enjoyed viewing the architecture and paintings in the house. I was extremely interested in the story that the tour guide told about how during the Civil War, the north and south agreed to make Mount Vernon neutral ground. I am proud of our older generations that understood the importance of preserving that land, so that future generations could view it.

We visited the Embassy of Pakistan and heard the ambassador, H.E. Dr. Asad Majeed Khan speak about his foreign service career and the importance of maintaining peace in the world, specifically in the Middle East. I did not know what to expect from that experience, but it was extremely valuable. I appreciated having the opportunity to see what other people do in the embassy. It was interesting to hear directly from the ambassador who has a tremendous amount of experience working in the foreign service of Pakistan. He stated that the relationship between the United



States and Pakistan is a positive one under President Trump, and he hopes that continues. I learned that the Embassy of Pakistan looks after the interests of Iran in the United States.

This experience has deeply affected me because it has reaffirmed that I want my future career to be related to politics and government. My participation in this experience has changed my outlook on life and I hope to have a positive impact on my community and world. I learned to always try my best in all that I do and the rest will work out. Sometimes I may fail, but those failures will provide me with valuable lessons and experiences. I think about my future often regarding my future family and career, but hearing the life stories of the speakers provided me with the comfort of not having everything figured out at a young age.

RECEPTION FOR FALL 2019 PRESIDENT'S LIST



SWIMMING WITH CULTURE

BY: WILL FARKAS

In January 2019, I travelled to the Yucatan region of Mexico with Dr. Risk, Dr. Margolies, and a group of fellow honors students. The trip lasted two weeks, during which we visited cities such as Xcaret, Izamal, and Tulum, and historic sites like the forts in Campeche and Chichen Itza.



We spent the first week in Valladolid at the hotel Casa Quetzal. Each day we took a trip to a different site that was meant to show us a different aspect of how the ancient culture of the Mayans interacts with post-colonial cultures in a modern context. Our first trip was to the ruins of Ek Balam and the cenote (water hole) of X'canche. From there, most of our trips involved ancient temples or families that upheld century-old traditions, such as that of producing chicle (Mayan chewing gum).

The second week we were in Merida, a city that was much closer to the coast. There we saw places like the ruins of Uxmal and Campeche. The first week of the trip centered around ancient Mayan civilizations, but the second week we saw sites that had been more heavily influenced by colonization. One city we visited, Izamal, is often called "The City of Three Cultures" because you can point out which buildings were built by Mayans, which were built for the Spanish, and which ones are more modern.

The part of the trip that most people said they enjoyed was Xcaret, a large eco-park where you can swim with dolphins, walk through jaguar enclosures, and swim in an underground river. The group spent the entire day walking around, looking at the various animal enclosures, and lounging on the beach. That evening,

the park put on a show with dances to represent some of the more prominent regions of Mayan Mexico.

Each place we visited showed us a different part of the Mayan and Mexican cultures, and it's an experience none of us will ever forget.



2020 Ethics Bowl Champions



**Congratulations to
Alex, Anitra, Criofan and
Dr. Merlock Jackson
on earning the prestigious Batten
Trophy at the VFIC statewide
collegiate Ethics Bowl.**



SEEING THE WORLD WITH NEW EYES

BY: LINDSAY WHITE

This summer, the Batten Honors College took a group to Israel and Palestine to study the religious, political, and social issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition to coming away with countless memories and jokes, the entire group left with a whole new perspective of the world, faith, and humanity. This twelve day adventure took us to important Biblical cities such as Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Galilee; religious significant spots such as the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Mount of Olives; outdoorsy experiences such as the Dead Sea, Masada, and Ein Gedi; and unique locations such as a Palestinian family-owned Farm/peace organization, an Israeli Settlement, and countless homes of generous people. The wide range of places we visited gave us a little bit of everything. We had moments of tears hearing about the tragedies of the conflict, moments of laughter when connecting with random locals, and moments of awe as we explored everything Israel and Palestine had to offer us.



After speaking to my classmates who came along on this journey, we were all agreed that our tour guide, Elad Vazana, made this trip incredible and memorable. A former Israeli Commander turned dancer turned peace activist turned tour guide, he knew everything there is to possibly know about the land and the conflict. From making up games and running around in a field, to having us talk to random locals, to dancing with us on the streets of Jaffa, he made the experience one unlike anything else in the world. When asked about her experience with Elad, sophomore Isabel

Laxton said "He had a selfless desire to build the trip around what we wanted, always had patience, and constantly shared the excitement we had visiting places I'm sure he's seen hundreds of times. Words truly can't begin to describe how Elad aided my ability to learn, have fun, and experience Israel and Palestine to its fullest."



One defining moment of the trip for me was the boat ride we took on the Sea of Galilee at night. We had originally planned on taking the boat ride by ourselves, but keeping with the theme of the trip of accepting everyone and having new experiences, we were given a group of Romanians to take the trip with us. While out on the sea, we read the Bible story of Jesus walking on water. With the waves rolling and the wind blowing on the very waters of where this took place, it made it all the more real and meaningful for me. While out there, the captain played music and we all danced to foreign music with the dance taught to us earlier in the trip by our Palestinian tour guide. The captain allowed me to have the aux cord and we all got to listen to "Oceans" by Hillsong, a song recorded on the Sea of Galilee about taking those steps of faith out onto the water. The people, the fun, and the emotion of the boat ride for me was reflective of the trip as a whole.

This is the kind of experience that is once in a lifetime. Pictures can't capture the beauty and words can't describe the experiences adequately. Every single one of us came away a new person with new perspectives, lifelong friends, and changed hearts. I think I can speak for all of us when I say we will never forget our time in Israel and Palestine.