COS 50

MULTIPLE SITES AND SOURCES OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING

- Seminar Discussion
- Social and Political Commentary
- ScientificInvestigation
- Imaginative Inquiry
- Field Explora-

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the Idea of the Human

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Core Seminar News

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The Human Imagination

By Rochell Isaac

The human ability to shape and transform one's self, the environment, and the world distinguishes us from other species. History is, in fact, a testimony of the human experience and achievement in this regard. Furthermore, our access to language, thought, and imagination allow us to continually broaden and expand our understanding of ourselves, the world at large, and our place in the universe. These ideas are often deliberated by COS students during the course of the semester. Remarkably, a re-occurring theme in this issue's

submissions is the power of the human imagination.

Much of this issue focuses on our field explorations, a unique part of Core Seminar that facilitates integrative learning. Field explorations vary from class to class and from semester to semester, but all are directly connected to a specific sub-theme of the course. During the semester, our students are often asked to reflect and ponder the significance of their field experiences. The submissions

featured here illustrate students' learning and their desire to share their thoughts with the larger Long Island University community.

Elaine Tia, Norman Wang, and Bilal Alsubai report on imagination and creativity in *Rescued by Design*, an exhibit displayed at the United Nations while Shantise Dabney details her experience with live poetry at a café. Professor Nash's class illustrate significant portions of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as they ponder Gregor's transformation.

By Elaine Tia, (COS 50, sec 19)

This past fall, one of our field explorations was a trip to the United Nations, which was a remarkable experience. The main objectives of the UN are to promote human rights and encourage and maintain peaceful relations worldwide. The international organization gathers over a hundred nations from around the world to discuss current global and social issues affecting all of us. The UN especially provides aid to underdeveloped countries that face humanitarian crises and are the most vulnerable of all. One of the exhibits on display at the UN, "Design with the Other 90% Cities," provides insight on how human beings can combine innovation, technology, and aesthetics to improve the living conditions and daily lives of many of the less fortunate all around the world. There

RESCUED BY DESIGN

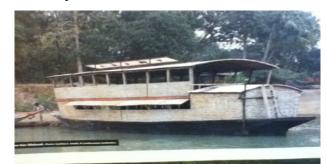
were pictures and information about urban slums throughout the world which illustrated the ways innovative designs and modern technology have improved the living conditions of the poor. These designs combine the beauty of architecture and modern technology to provide safer environments and communities. These designs also help communities adapt to their everchanging living environments.

Things that all of us do every single day

— like texting — can help educate the
poor about the dangers of HIV and AIDS
and how contracting these diseases can

be prevented. The clever designs of new structures provided better hygienic conditions and are space-saving as well. For instance, the concept of floating schools and "schools on wheels" is a unique idea.

This exhibition also shows us that design is not merely about aesthetics. Design can be applied to so many different aspects of life and in this case, it can help better communities and societies for all of humanity. The first step in bettering ourselves and our societies is learning to share and be more resourceful.



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Rescued By Design Con't

By Norman Wang (COS 50, sec 21)

There are inventions that seem ingenious when thought of and are praised for their creativity. The inventions we saw in the U.N. exhibit were the kind that made you go "Why didn't I think of that?" and then promptly smack your forehead. They were inventions and little quirks that were long overdue; some were just trivial things that greatly improved the aesthetics of the area. There was a stairwell that was ruined and crumbled, but with a little bit of paint it became a beautiful staircase. There were also other inventions and quirks



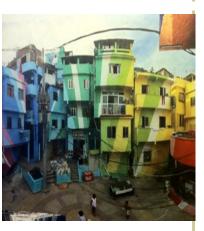
that were designed with multiple uses in mind, in order to maximize the usage and space as well as promote community between people.

The neighborhoods that were shown in the exhibit were each missing something that we take for granted because we grew up knowing it would always be there. An excellent example is bathrooms: there are bathrooms in practically every single building in the city, including our homes. There were neighborhoods that had to share few bathrooms, and they were not accessible to children, the disabled, or the elderly. Moreover, they tended to pollute nearby water sources which became nesting sites for disease. In order to promote community, they are included in the reformation processes, planning and creating the structures they will use. In order to prevent pollution, they built something similar to an outhouse that converts the waste into soil and methane for cooking. Not only did they solve the problem of bathrooms polluting nearby water, they also gained fuel for cooking and soil for growing crops.

The aesthetics of the neighborhoods in the slums can be a powerful influence on the community. Living in ruins that look the same whether the picture is taken in black and

white or color is a depressing view. So with a little bit of paint, some local adolescent help, and a bit of training, they painted the community into something that you could smile at every day. Something like this would greatly improve the

day to day mood of the community that lives here, and it only took a few buckets of paint to accomplish. The most intriguing part of the exhibit for me was on the floor of the exhibit: the floor plans of a regular house in the slums of India. Our classrooms are larger than their houses. It doesn't appear to even have enough room for a family to lie down and sleep.



Painting the sizes of the rooms on the floor was more effective than a picture, because it gave us an actual perspective to relate to. However, I also feel that the layout of the exhibit would have been better if it was a circle, allowing some sense of flow between what was on display.

I believe that the adaptability of humanity is evident through these small designs. This is another dose of proteanism, where people are congregating together and picking up those who fall behind. As a whole, not only does this show the resilience of humans by the people surviving in the slums, but also the capability for compassion and the ability to answer a call for help in humanity. The adaptation to living in such conditions for an extended period of time is a feat in itself. The core idea behind this survival is the will to live. Not merely to survive with bare necessities, but to live and enjoy life's virtues as they pass by, no matter how insignificant.



The Other 90 Percent

By Bilal Alsubai (COS 50, sec 22)

I have to admit, I was expecting that we were visiting the big conference room of the UN where all the presidents meet, but it turns out that we were in the Visitors Centre where the exhibit was on display. I was shocked to find out that a significant portion of the human population lives in unsanitary conditions. Despite the small size of the exhibit, it was still packed with all sorts of arts and items that demonstrate living conditions around the world. For instance, a painting on the concrete wall demonstrated Yoff's wastewater system. The people of Dakar, Senegal used to dump their dirty water onto their shores until the coast became unsanitary. So a branch of the Environment and Development Action (ENDA) worked with Yoff to come up with a system where the people can dump their used water into a small tank. Then the water goes downstream into large basins or lagoons to get purified and recycled so they can be used in toilet systems or for agriculture. Thus Yoff's concept also explored how to go green and make the most of simple utilities. Another example is, "School on Wheels" in Pune, India, which allows underprivileged children who live transient lives get a chance to get an education. A bus accommodating about 25 students picks up children around the settlements and takes them to a safe, quiet place where they can learn reading, writing and math inside the bus.

Overall, the exhibit shows how human imagination can create community out of groups in many ways.

Life, Poetry & Art

By Shantise Dabney (COS 50, sec 007)

Last fall, our class visited the Nuyorican Poetry Café. The MC or Master of Ceremony was Jive Poetic. At the poetry slam, several poets took the stage to recite their original poems. Each poet had three minutes. People from the audience volunteered to become judges for the evening, but only people who weren't related to the performers could judge. The first performer was Nigel. He talked of childhood memories of curfews and trips to the store with a pocket of nickels and pennies. The other poem that I really liked was "Life Lesson Number 26" by Poetically Gifted. In her poem, she described a great courtship with a wonderful man she met. She called him a "tainted Romeo" because he was dating someone else.

I really enjoyed listening to people describe their life experiences at the café. The subjects discussed were ones that I could easily identify with. Nigel told his poem with humor that made me want to laugh out loud. Poetically Gifted made me want to cry inside. Both pieces of poetry made me appreciate the spoken word and the power of language as a brand new art form.

The Metamorphosis (illustrated by COS 50, sec 23)



It struck Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, almost at the same moment, as they looked at their daughter, who was getting more animated all the time, how she had blossomed recently, in spite of all the troubles which had made her cheeks pale, into a beautiful and voluptuous young woman.



And yet his sister was playing so beautifully... Gregor crept forward still a little further...in order to be able to catch her gaze if possible. Was he an animal that music so captivated him?



'O God,' he thought, 'what a demanding job I've chosen! Day in, day out on the road. The stresses of trade are much greater than the work going on at the head office, and, in addition to that, I have to deal with the problems of traveling, the worries about train connections, irregular bad food, temporary and constantly changing human relationships which never come from the heart. To hell with it all!'



"Often he lay there all night long, not sleeping at all, just scratching on the leather for hours at a time... Then he crept up on the window sill and, braced on the chair. leaned against the window to look out, obviously with some memory or other of the liberating sense which looking out the window used to bring him in earlier times. For, in fact, from day to day he perceived things with less and less clarity, even those only a short distance away."

Call for Student Submissions

The Core Seminar Newsletter invites submissions from students to report on their experiences in Core Seminar.

Did you have a unique experience or make a surprising discovery in the course of your inquiries in Core Seminar? If so, please share it with the rest of the Brooklyn Campus community! Submissions might focus on your experience in any aspect of COS 50. This could include your field activities, joint sessions, research related to your seminar papers or even creative work you did in exploring the Idea of the Human or the sub-themes investigated by your class. How did that experience shape your education here on the Brooklyn Campus?

Your submission might be anywhere from 100 to 250 words. Including images related to your experiences is highly encouraged!

Please submit them either to your Instructor or directly to the Core Seminar office in the Pratt Building,, Room 510.



Try your hand at writing for The Idea of the Human!

COS 50 The Idea of the Human

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Core Seminar is a three-credit interdisciplinary course providing a common intellectual experience for undergraduate students of all disciplines. The Seminar explores what it means to be human through shared readings, discussion in the Seminar and in Joint Sessions with other sections, field explorations, and multiple forms of writing.

The Idea of the Human: Core Seminar News is edited by Rochell Isaac, Administrative Coordinator for the COS Program. We welcome submissions of ideas or notes on unique COS experiences from both faculty and students from the program.

COS CULTURAL ALLIANCE INITIATIVE

CORE SEMINAR CULTURAL ALLIANCES

Invites you to visit three of Brooklyn's greatest cultural institutions: The Brooklyn Museum, The Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, and The New York Transit Museum For Free

New York Transit Museum





Funded by the Office of the Provost, the Core Seminar Cultural Alliances expands the space of learning and intellectual pursuit beyond the walls of the traditional classroom.

All members of our campus community are invited to explore the riches of our cultural alliance partners.

For free admission, present a current LIU ID at the Visitor Entrance.