The Doyle Engaging Difference Initiative is designed to deepen Georgetown University’s commitment to exploring the challenges and benefits of diversity and to enhance global awareness of the challenges and opportunities of an era of increasing interconnectedness.

The Doyle Initiative is a campus-wide collaboration between the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), and Georgetown College. The Initiative is composed of several distinct components. These include Doyle undergraduate programs, which promote student engagement with cultural and religious diversity, and the Doyle Faculty Fellows program, which supports faculty seeking to integrate themes of diversity and inclusion in their courses. The Doyle Undergraduate Programs, including the Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) and the Undergraduate Fellows Seminars, are mainly housed within the Berkley Center. CNDLS supports the faculty fellows programs as well as maintaining the main Doyle website. Together, the two centers plan and produce the annual Doyle Symposium, which brings alumni, faculty, and students together around the issue of engaging difference.

Since the Initiative’s launch in Fall 2009, 1,222 students have taken one of 24 courses taught by Doyle Faculty Fellows from 14 different departments. 115 students have participated in the Junior Year Abroad Network and 46 Doyle Undergraduate Fellows have engaged in faculty-supported research projects.

The Doyle Engaging Difference Initiative is made possible by a generous gift from Georgetown alumnus and Board of Directors member William J. Doyle (C ’72). Mr. Doyle is President and Chief Executive Officer of PotashCorp, the largest fertilizer enterprise in the world, with locations in Northbrook, Illinois and Saskatoon, Canada.
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Dear Friends,

As we look back on the second year of the Doyle Engaging Difference Initiative, we are inspired by the many ways that Georgetown faculty, students, staff, and alumni have challenged one another to engage with issues of difference. These differences can arise in many contexts, including culture, religion, class, ethnicity, race, and many others; the variation in how Doyle participants have engaged with difference is a hallmark of the project’s wide-ranging impact on the Georgetown community.

The theme that emerges from all of the Doyle Initiative projects is community. In any community, when space is created for respectful dialogue among the individual voices of its members, commonalities are discovered, perspectives are deepened, and the community itself is strengthened. We found this to be true across the many different Doyle projects at Georgetown:

• in individual Doyle courses, where the students learned to respect opposing viewpoints when discussing difficult topics, forming a genuine community in the classroom;
• in Faculty Fellow cohort meetings, where faculty shared ideas across differences in disciplinary perspective and teaching style, forming a community of practice around pedagogy;
• in the Doyle Undergraduate Fellows Seminars, where students and faculty collaborated on research that drew on different viewpoints represented in the Washington, D.C. community;
• in the Junior Year Abroad Network, where students studying in other countries shared their experiences with others abroad and back at Georgetown, forming a community across time zones and cultures;
• in the Undergraduate Learning and Interreligious Understanding program, where awareness was raised about the diversity of beliefs and attitudes among the Georgetown student community; and
• in the Doyle Student-Alumni Symposium, where dialogue among students, faculty, and alumni broadened the developing Doyle community.

As the Doyle Initiative enters its third year, we will continue to extend these communities and deepen Georgetown’s engagement with issues of difference, both inside and outside the classroom. We are grateful to Bill Doyle (C ‘72) for his continued generous support of our work.

We hope you will see this report both as an introduction to our work and as an invitation to get involved.

Sincerely,

Tom Banchoff, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs
Randy Bass, Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship
In 2010-2011, 16 Doyle Faculty Fellows representing 12 different departments worked to integrate themes of diversity and inclusion into their courses. The fellows experimented with new course readings, new types of assignments, and new approaches to class discussions. The work they did in their individual courses — some of which is profiled later in this report — is impressive. The community spirit that developed in the cohort is perhaps even more impressive. Discussions at monthly cohort meetings focused on case studies developed out of the fellows’ experience teaching their Doyle courses; this group focus on individual teaching practice both built the community of fellows and helped to move the project forward in the individual classrooms.

One factor that contributed to the strong community of this group is that they share a deep commitment not only to teaching but also to reflecting on how they might teach more effectively. This commitment emerged in many forms; one was in a discussion of how best to bring into class discussions those students who are reluctant to speak. The discussion began when one fellow expressed her discomfort with calling on students in class discussions when they had not volunteered to participate, and then asked how she might get more students into the discussion. Another fellow responded that she “cold-calls” on students frequently and expects them to be ready to talk when called upon. This initial exchange led to a rather spirited discussion about facilitating discussions involving both students who talk too much and students who are reluctant to participate. In the midst of this discussion one of the more experienced fellows laid out something of a middle ground: she calls on students by name, even when they have not volunteered to speak, but gives them the option to pass. She reported that it is not at all unusual for a student who declines to speak initially to volunteer a comment later in that class session or the next.
A second characteristic shared by this year’s fellows is their interest in how the presence of diverse perspectives shapes the classroom. One good example of this builds on the example just discussed. One fellow noted that a student’s comfort in participating in classroom discussions is shaped in part by his or her cultural background. While she was speaking primarily of students from cultures where students are seen as passive recipients of the wisdom of active (and unapproachable) professors, the discussion quickly turned to consider how cultural diversity (or the relative lack of such diversity) in a classroom can shape students’ discussion of issues of diversity. The pedagogical challenge in this instance is to foster a sense of trust in the classroom so that students are not only willing to speak honestly from the perspectives that they bring but also to be open to challenges to those perspectives — challenges that could come either from other students or from the classroom material itself.

Finally, the fact that fellows came to the group from different disciplines and from different departments and programs was crucial to the success of this teaching community. To mention just one example, a discussion of the interplay between race and culture in a country like South Africa is enriched by the contributions of an historian of southern Africa, a cultural psychologist, a sociologist, a demographer, and those representing other disciplines. Each brought an important contribution, but the collection of the whole was much more than a simple sum of its parts.

There are many other things that could be said about the cohort meetings. However, the most significant point to be made is that the fellows managed to create among themselves the sort of trusting and open environment that each of them hoped to create in his or her own way in the classroom. They did not always agree on the proper pedagogical approach. Nor did they always agree on the proper understanding of different sorts of diversity. But they formed a community — a community of people representing a diversity of disciplines, cultural backgrounds, and approaches to teaching — in which they listened to and learned from each other.
As Doyle Faculty Fellows, Georgetown professors commit to redesigning a course in order to foster active student engagement with difference and the diversity of human experience. As the profiles below demonstrate, the 2010-2011 Faculty Fellows approached the challenge of creating a Doyle Initiative course in different and creative ways.

Yulia Chentsova Dutton, Psychology
Cultural Psychology
In teaching her Cultural Psychology course, Yulia Chentsova Dutton has found that students often fail to recognize the impact of culture on themselves. In her Doyle revision of this course, Chentsova Dutton focused on helping students recognize the interactions between individuals and culture and how these interactions shape their own attitudes and beliefs. For example, in a unit on stereotypes, guest speaker Sapna Cheryan presented her research on computer science classrooms and gender stereotypes, helping students realize that stereotypes exist both implicitly and explicitly, and wield power not only in the minds of individuals but also in cultural and even physical environments.

“[After Osama bin Laden was killed,] some students in the class spent the night outside the White House celebrating. Other students were deeply disturbed by such celebrations and were called unpatriotic by their friends for refusing to join in. We had a very productive discussion of this, with students listening to each other and applying models from the course to make sense of their behavior and attitudes. I look back on that final discussion as an indication that students were able to discuss difficult topics in an open and thoughtful way.”

- Yulia Chentsova Dutton, Doyle Faculty Fellow

Nadine Ehlers, Women’s and Gender Studies
Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies
Nadine Ehlers has long understood that students in her course come expecting to talk about difference, but she has found that they often assume the class will focus on topics such as race, gender, and sexuality. Students are often less comfortable with examining the complexity of identity and how ideas of “normal” or “abnormal” identities are created. To push her students into this more challenging territory, Ehlers found two pedagogical strategies particularly useful — humor and shock. For example, Ehlers used photos of stereotypically masculine-looking figures to provoke discussion and then later revealed that all the figures were biologically female. The ensuing discussion successfully destabilized students’ sense of self and allowed reflection on their own assumptions, biases, and identity expectations. Through the use of such assignments, Ehlers’s students were more easily able to critically and personally invest in difficult discussions.
Leslie Hinkson, Sociology
Race & Ethnic Relations
In her Doyle course, Leslie Hinkson created a new assignment that asked students to write an “Identity Autobiography.” Hinkson introduced the idea of difference by having students take careful note of their childhoods to theorize how race and ethnicity may have altered or influenced their fate differently. Through this exercise and others she designed for the class, Hinkson challenged students to engage with theoretical literature about race and ethnicity as well as to examine the tension between individual diversity and collective group membership.

“None of my other classes has created a community of students so passionate about an issue and eager to share their newly-found perspectives.”
– Student, Doyle Faculty Fellow course, Fall 2010

Sylvia Önder, Anthropology
Introduction to Medical Anthropology
In her Medical Anthropology course, Sylvia Önder wanted to push students to think about difference in new ways. Specifically, she focused on the experiences of those with “diverse abilities” and of students who are veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Önder organized the course around two new pedagogical strategies: “embodied experiences” and anonymous posts to the class website. The embodied experiences presented students with tasks that forced them to move outside their comfort zones through a series of “dramatic enactments.” Activities ranged from transgressing social norms like eye contact, to taking on a “disability” and observing how it impacts one’s interactions on campus, to participating in a mini boot camp to simulate the physical and mental conditioning of student veterans. The anonymous assignments were designed to give students the opportunity to share their honest reactions to their experiences without worrying about how their thoughts would be perceived by the professor or their classmates. These posts as well as student reflection essays revealed the impact the Doyle approach had on student experiences in the course. Önder believes that communicating the Doyle-inspired goals of the course with her students was essential to deepening their engagement with the theme of diversity. In her words, “This made it possible to go much farther in one semester than the normal approach, and made students feel alert to differences and similarities between themselves and others in the class.”

“The class has profoundly impacted the way I understand the opinions and interpretations of others.”
– Student, Doyle Faculty Fellow course, Spring 2011

A Closer Look
Christine Schiwietz, Sociology
Visual Sociology and Consumer Technology
Christine Schiwietz embraced her work in the Doyle Initiative as an opportunity to focus a large part of her course on the impact of new consumer technologies on society in two core areas — first, the impact of online identity construction and its larger privacy implications and second, the multi-faceted local, national, and global examination of the “Digital Divide.” Class discussions and written reflections were a significant part of the course and led students to critically examine how the development and use of new technologies can be both more inclusive and more divisive—that is, new technologies can bring more people into social and civic conversations but they can also divide society by race, ethnicity, class, and gender.

Elizabeth Hervey Stephen, School of Foreign Service
Borders
Elizabeth Hervey Stephen designed her proseminar to introduce new students in the School of Foreign Service to key issues related to immigration in the 21st century. From the start, Stephen believed the seminar’s focus on immigration made it well suited to address themes central to the Doyle Initiative, such as diversity, tolerance, inclusion, and exclusion. Through a variety of assignments, she introduced students to how these themes are addressed by scholars and challenged them to re-think popularly held conceptions of race and ethnicity in light of what they studied in class.

“I wanted the classroom to become a place in which students not only saw, but appreciated, the richness of the “diversity” that is present here at Georgetown.”

– Clare Wilde, Doyle Faculty Fellow

Clare Wilde, Theology
Problem of God
When Clare Wilde explained to her students the Doyle-inspired focus of her Problem of God course, she did not know how they would take to the themes of diversity, empathy, and tolerance. The course took a felicitous and unexpected turn when a South Korean student asked to engage these themes by doing a presentation for the class on the religious traditions of his homeland in order to complement the Mediterranean- and Euro-influenced focus of the other course content. Following their classmate’s lead, other students subsequently jumped at the opportunity to undertake similar projects, further incorporating diversity into the heart of the class. In Wilde’s estimation, these presentations transformed the course in ways that enriched the learning experiences of the students as well as the professor.

“It was overwhelmingly clear to all of us that the students engaged in a high level of informed discourse which they found exciting, stimulating, and inspiring.”

– Sarah Stiles, Doyle Faculty Fellow
Maria Donoghue, Biology
An Issues Approach to Biology

Maria Donoghue integrated the Doyle approach into her course through a unit analyzing the issue of sexual orientation from a neurobiological perspective. Considering the biological bases of sexual orientation invited students to think about the ways that neurobiology affects behavior and raised broader questions about the relationship between nature and nurture in human life. From a social perspective, it inspired reflection on the stereotypes and biases associated with sexual orientation.

Drawing on neurobiology majors as peer-educators, Donoghue invited students to consider the interplay of biological and environmental factors impacting sexual orientation. The neurobiology majors had spent the semester studying sexual orientation in detail in their senior capstone seminar, and through a series of articles, lectures, and small-group discussions, these student-experts assisted course participants as they explored the issue for themselves. In the end, by analyzing the current scholarly understanding of sexual orientation, course participants came to see the “inherent uncertainty” underlying this and other scientific discussions.

Bringing these two student groups together created a diverse learning community made up of individuals with varying levels of expertise and engagement in scientific subjects. Donoghue reported that this had the effect of exposing the non-science majors to diverse ways of thinking while also giving the neurobiology majors a sense of authority as budding scientific specialists. She also found not only that focusing on such a controversial topic helped make the course more relevant to student interests, but also that the depth of student engagement with the specific issue of sexual orientation enriched their growing scientific intelligence overall.

Alisa Carse, Philosophy
Introduction to Ethics

Alisa Carse focused on redesigning elements of her Introduction to Ethics course to build on already-central themes of respect, responsibility, and social justice. As a general education philosophy course with an average enrollment of around 200 students, this course offered the opportunity to engage a large swath of students in thinking about difference and diversity in the context of ethics early in their Georgetown careers. Carse’s redesign included readings on moral relativism and moral isolationism, guided discussions around Doyle Learning Goals, showing a documentary about the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison, and a special presentation by Staff Sgt. Colby Howard, president of the Georgetown University chapter of Student Veterans of America.

“The experience reoriented me somewhat in my teaching. I’m more eager than ever to find ways of engaging my students affectively in the learning process — and more brazen in embracing this objective.”

— Alisa Carse, Doyle Faculty Fellow
Matthew C. J. Rudolph, Government
South Asian Politics

Through the lens of political and economic development, Matthew Rudolph’s course explored how difference has been addressed in the context of South Asia, a region renowned for its distinct ethnic, religious, and cultural communities. In shaping his course in light of the Doyle Initiative, Rudolph drew on the diversity of South Asia and of class participants to engage questions of identity, cross-cultural interaction, and tolerance.

“Perhaps the most valuable lesson this seminar taught me is that it is possible to have opposing views and still come together.”

– Student, Doyle Faculty Fellow course, Fall 2011

Meredith McKittrick, History
Comparative History of the U.S. and South Africa

In her course, Meredith McKittrick introduced her students to the complexities of historical analysis and, in particular, to the ways in which historical narratives shape our understanding of current realities.

Two related assignments formed the core of the Doyle element in the class. In the first, students were given a collection of images from the civil rights movements in the United States and South Africa and asked to identify which country was depicted. Students generally were unable to identify them accurately, and their responses opened up the diversity of understandings of the two countries and also gradually revealed the way in which historical narratives shape contemporary understanding.

In the second assignment, McKittrick asked each student to bring to class two or three images that challenged the predominant narrative about the civil rights movement in each of the two countries. Most students in the class brought images that demonstrated the complexities of the current situation, complexities that are masked by the fairly common triumphalist view that racial difference no longer matters. Students admitted their discomfort with this realization, and the lively classroom discussion that followed was evidence of how deeply they engaged in this assignment.

McKittrick says that these assignments focusing on images are rather different from her usual text-based assignments. While she was concerned that course revisions that made room for and supported these two assignments might compromise students’ understanding of the broader historical context, she found that students generally were able to do the historical work she expected them to do, in part because the directness of their work with the images made the history more real.
Ricardo Ortíz, English
Survey of Latino Literature

The themes of diversity and difference are not new to Ricardo Ortíz’s Latino Literature course. However, one change that he introduced specifically as a Doyle component influenced his experience of the course in a way that he did not expect.

One challenge he has faced in teaching the course is that students often want to find themselves in the material they are reading. That in itself would not be a problem; however, he has found that student inclinations to see course material as “all about them” have made it difficult for him to maintain the appropriate level of intellectual rigor. In the spring of 2011, he found a structured way for students to bring the diversity of their lives into their coursework. Specifically, he asked each student to supplement one of the three assigned papers with an ungraded reflection on how the Latino experiences depicted in the course readings related to his or her personal experiences in Latino (and other) communities outside the classroom.

Ortíz reported that he really did not expect the impact these student reflections had on him as an instructor. To use his own words, “The window that the Doyle reflection element opened for me into the lives of the very diverse group of students in my class really reset my own sense of how much more there remained for me to learn about them in ways that very directly and positively influenced my teaching.” Ortíz’s experience is an important reminder that much of the diversity of any classroom comes from the variety of perspectives brought by students to the course. He is now exploring ways of bringing these personal encounters with material into the course so that students learn more about the rich diversity in the classroom around them.

Marilyn McMorrow, School of Foreign Service
Religion, Ethics, and International Affairs

Marilyn McMorrow’s course concentrated on religious and ethical contributions that can have a positive impact on world politics. Conscious of the range of diversity of her students and of the ways in which normative points of view can be reinforced in the classroom, McMorrow decided to utilize clicker technology to allow real-time, anonymous classroom polling. Feedback slides presenting a range of possible responses to the reading and theories were then used to prompt classroom discussions.

“The insights I gained from the Doyle Initiative’s encouragement of engagement with diversity, tolerance, and empathy, as well as the collegiality of the monthly meetings with my fellow Doyle Fellows, enriched and enhanced my own teaching.”

– Clare Wilde, Doyle Faculty Fellow
Sarah Stiles, Sociology

Law and Society

In revising her Law and Society course, Sarah Stiles undertook a dramatic curriculum infusion experiment aimed at integrating Doyle Initiative values into all aspects of the course. In the first part of the course, students analyzed landmark Supreme Court decisions from the 20th century with issues of tolerance and diversity at their core. Later in the semester, Stiles asked students to research and teach their classmates about current “hot topics” that continue to test the limits of inclusion in the U.S. today. This activity allowed students to explore issues in detail that they found interesting and relevant to their lives and to their communities.

Stiles found that infusing Doyle values into her course so thoroughly led to a richer experience of diversity for students than if she had dedicated only a specific unit of the class to addressing the theme. Over the course of the semester, students participated in high-level discussions about some of the most sensitive issues in American society today. They reported that these discussions spilled out of the classroom and into their daily lives as they engaged in conversations with peers and family members.

In Stiles’s estimation, students came to her course “hungry” for opportunities to address these important issues. They left as competent and confident dialogue partners able to take part in difficult discussions without sacrificing a sense of mutual respect for their interlocutors.

Natsu Onoda Power, Performing Arts

Adaptation and Performance of Literature

For the Doyle redesign of Natsu Onoda Power’s course, she worked to bring in issues of diversity and difference in both “overt” ways (class exercises and assignments) and more “covert” ways (guiding discussion or critiques to invite student reflection on such issues). One assignment pushed students to see their own invisible biases by developing performances around Georgetown-specific vocabulary. The post-performance discussions provoked reflection on student perceptions of themselves and others as well as on what forces of inclusion and exclusion exist in a campus community such as Georgetown.

“This course opened my eyes… to truly reflect deeply on my own identity, on my own role in injustice and inequality.”

– Student, Doyle Faculty Fellow course, Fall 2010

Robin Kelley, School of Foreign Service

Women’s Health and Human Rights

For her Women’s Health and Human Rights course, Robin Kelley pushed students to engage with difference by designing opportunities for them to examine critical class topics from a variety of media and to experience external critics and collaborators through the integration of Wikipedia assignments. Students used the Wikipedia platform to interact with the larger world and share their scholarship with like-minded authors. For the sensitive topic of female genital mutilation, students attended a play and participated in intensive role-play exercises related to the topic. These interactive exercises challenged students not only to work together, but also to work through different perspectives on difficult topics in thoughtful and meaningful ways.

A Closer Look

Doyle Faculty Fellows
2011-2012 Doyle Faculty Fellows

In 2011-2012, 17 Doyle Faculty Fellows from 12 departments will build on the work of previous cohorts, challenging their students and themselves to make new connections between questions about diversity and the academic content of their courses. The 2011-2012 Faculty Fellows are listed below.

Benjamin Bogin, Theology
The Problem of God

Francisca Cho, Theology
Introduction to Buddhism

David Crystal, Psychology
Culture and Psychopathology

Elzbieta Gozdziak, Institute for the Study of International Migration
The Other: Immigrant Integration in North America and Europe

Benjamin Harbert, Performing Arts
Jazz History

Natalie Khazaal, Arabic & Islamic Studies
Arab History on Film

Gwen Kirkpatrick, Spanish and Portuguese
Survey of Latin American Literature II

Shiloh Krupar, School of Foreign Service
Introduction to Critical Geography: Theory and Practice

Jennifer Lubkin, Center for Language Education and Development
High-Intermediate Reading-Writing ESL

Susan Lynskey, Performing Arts
Deaf Performance Culture

Nadia Mahdi, Performing Arts
Play Analysis

Barbara Mujica, Spanish and Portuguese
Early Modern Spanish Theater

You-Me Park, Women’s & Gender Studies
Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies

Libbie Rifkin, English
Poetry and the Culture of Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Swift, Chemistry
Molecular Gastronomy

Astrid Weigert, German
Witches in History, Literature, and Film

Diane Yeager, Theology
Christian Ethics and Ecology
DOYLE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Engagement with cultural and religious diversity is a centerpiece of the Georgetown educational experience. The Berkley Center has developed three Doyle Undergraduate Programs that promote this engagement, both inside and outside the classroom.

The Undergraduate Fellows Seminars bring faculty and students together for joint D.C.-based research projects that explore the broader political and policy implications of cultural and religious diversity. The Junior Year Abroad Network links students studying abroad and their encounters with cultures around the world back to the Georgetown community. The Undergraduate Learning and Interreligious Understanding program tracks the knowledge and attitudes of students around interfaith and intercultural issues over the course of their Georgetown careers. Since 2009, these three programs have been part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Initiative.

Undergraduate Fellows Seminars

The Undergraduate Fellows Program combines a four-credit seminar with a collaborative research project that addresses issues at the intersection of religion, culture, society, and politics. Along with the in-depth reading, writing, and dialogue typical of an upper-level seminar, student fellows conduct original research and formulate policy recommendations culminating in a written report. In Spring 2011, the Berkley Center hosted two Undergraduate Fellows Seminars:
Michael Kessler, Government

This seminar investigated the duties of businesses and their leaders toward the social good, the moral framework of economic activity, and the role of government and law in regulating business and financial transactions. The course explored a variety of questions about the intersection of values, business practice, and legal regulation. Students collaborated on an in-depth series of interviews with business, legal, and policy professionals to help them understand the practical links among business, ethics, and law. On this basis, they produced a report that makes recommendations on how to further the role of values in business and society in the U.S. and around the world.

“New concepts such as shared value have grown more popular as a viable method to guide corporate behavior, and companies have found creative ways to incorporate these ideas into their operations. While socially conscious efforts can cut into a company’s profit margin, it is also possible to find mutually beneficial solutions which companies are developing and employing at an increased rate. Protecting the environment and investing in employees’ well being, for example, can be both the right ethical and economic decision to make.”

– From the Executive Summary

The Future of Track-Two Diplomacy
Eric Patterson, Government

In a world where traditional interstate diplomacy often misses critical dynamics of global affairs, such as the influences of religion and culture, there are increasing calls to buttress, or bypass altogether, traditional diplomacy in favor of society-centered “Track-Two diplomacy.” The course explored whether and how the U.S. can more effectively engage civil society abroad to advance foreign policy goals, with a particular focus on how the U.S. government engages religious themes and actors, as well as the role of religiously-inspired peace building. Students examined critical case studies and conducted original research organized around student interviews with government and NGO experts, producing a comprehensive policy report about their findings.
“In general, we call for enhanced preparation of government foreign and national security policy practitioners on the relationship of religious factors to world affairs and U.S. foreign policy. We recommend that the U.S. engage with religious leaders and organizations abroad just as it would with other civil society actors, and we suggest that faith-based and other NGOs take care in how they present themselves, their work (proselytism vs. peacebuilding), and their relationship to the U.S. government.”

— From the Executive Summary

Connecting Communities: Junior Year Abroad Network

About half of Georgetown undergraduates spend their junior year studying abroad in universities around the world and immersing themselves in local cultures. But too often their international experiences are disconnected from the rest of their education. Their new knowledge and insights are not shared widely with students and faculty while they are away or on their return.

In 2006, the Berkley Center created the Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) to help address this problem. Through the network, students post letters online with their observations about the intersection of religion, culture, society, and politics in their host countries. On their return, they get together to share their experiences and publish a report on their findings. So far, more than 240 students in more than 50 countries have participated in JYAN. In 2010-11, the Center introduced a new web-based feature facilitating student and faculty comments on student letters which helps to advance student–faculty dialogue on critical issues in today’s world.

“The experience in the Pakistani refugee settlement (in Jodhpur, India) overwhelmed me with questions and concerns about democracy, identity, justice, and religious tolerance. By engaging with the refugees, I will be able to use my voice to share their story and use the knowledge gained from this interaction to inform my understanding of social justice.”

— Lauren Reese, C ‘12
“While the men sit and talk outside about the hard economic times in their small farming village, my friend and I are invited inside the house to meet our host’s wife and daughter. I love being a foreign woman in a Muslim country. It affords me with the unique position to talk with men, but also to be invited into the concealed world of women.”

– Samantha Sisskind, SFS ’12

Connecting Across Differences: Undergraduate Learning and Interreligious Understanding Survey

The Berkley Center and Georgetown’s Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS) are analyzing the results of a five-year longitudinal study to track student attitudes towards religious diversity and their evolution in response to experiences at Georgetown both in and outside of the classroom. The project aims to help educators at Georgetown, throughout the United States, and around the world identify best practices in building tolerance. In 2010-11, final interviews and a comprehensive senior survey were administered to the students who were graduating. Insights from their four years at Georgetown will be analyzed and then outlined in a project report to be prepared for publication in 2011-12.
“I am especially reminded of how international and diverse a community Georgetown fosters whenever I go home and hear accounts from my friends in southern universities or the small liberal arts colleges in the northeast. The international students are a small minority in these schools and they tend to keep to themselves. In my experience, Georgetown fosters a community where different backgrounds are accepted and celebrated and students are genuinely interested in getting to know one another.”

– From a student interview

Pluralism in Practice Video Series Explores Religion on Georgetown’s Campus

Coming to college can change many aspects of students’ lives, and religion is no exception. A new environment may challenge or strengthen religious beliefs. Interreligious interactions can teach a student about other faiths, while also deepening understanding of one’s own.

To take a closer look at religion on campus, the Berkley Center produced an online video series, Pluralism in Practice, in which students speak about their religious experiences at Georgetown University. The interviewees discuss the ways in which Georgetown’s Catholic, Jesuit identity and interreligious dialogue have shaped their own faiths, as well as their understandings of others.

The videos address the following themes:

Students’ Faith and Religious Practices
Religion in the Campus Setting
Interreligious Dialogue
DOYLE SYMPOSIUM: Engaging the Broader Community

The Doyle Initiative aims to strengthen the Georgetown community not just by engaging current students and faculty, but also by fostering opportunities for dialogue with alumni. The second annual Doyle Student-Alumni Symposium on Engaging Difference featured a panel discussion among Caleb Pitters (SFS ’97), an alumnus who has had a range of professional experiences in investment and trading on Wall Street, and two Doyle faculty fellows, Yulia Chentsova Dutton (Psychology) and Ricardo Ortíz (English).

Pitters, a Cuban-American, reflected on his experiences at Georgetown and throughout his career in the financial sector. Acknowledging the difficulty of finding mentors and peers who looked like him, both at Georgetown and on Wall Street, Pitters explained how he came to see differences as opportunities to reach out to others regardless of background. Pitters emphasized that learning to engage with people of all backgrounds will serve students well in today’s increasingly diverse workplaces and suggested that students must acknowledge differences of race, class, and religion while at the same time establishing commonalities with others.

Chentsova Dutton shared some thoughts on her Cultural Psychology course, raising the question of how to help students navigate uncertainty and engage in uncomfortable discussions without pushing them too far. Ortíz, in turn, emphasized the challenge and importance of ensuring that all students have a voice in the classroom. Students and faculty in the audience asked questions about a variety of related topics, such as how faculty can foster mentoring relationships with students and the role of older undergraduate students in the Georgetown community.
Following the panel discussion, several Doyle Undergraduate Fellows presented their work on projects with the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. They shared their experiences of interviewing leaders in the fields of business, politics, and religion to produce reports about two-track diplomacy and about corporate social responsibility.

“One of the greatest strengths of Georgetown is the tremendous diversity of its student body. It would be a shame for any student to graduate from this wonderful institution without being exposed to that diversity.”

– Caleb Pitters, SFS ‘97

DOYLE ONLINE PRESENCE: Digital Community

The Doyle website was conceived of as a venue to communicate about the work of the initiative, serve as a publication space, and allow conversations to continue beyond one-time events. In the last year the original site design has been modified and streamlined, making information about Doyle programs more easily accessible and expanding the interactive portions of the site. Additionally, the Doyle team is now using blogs as a way of communicating with Faculty Fellows, JYAN participants, and others interested in Doyle programs.

The Doyle team continues to find new ways to develop online material to complement the face-to-face work of the initiative. This takes different forms within each of the project’s specific initiatives.

On the main website, the Doyle team has been working on consolidating and annotating digital resources for educators and students interested in topics important to the Doyle project. A static page and sidebar links have been created to point people to these resources. In addition,
weekly blog posts highlight specific resources. Readers are able to comment on these posts, creating community discussion around formerly static links.

The best practices and pedagogical successes of the Doyle Faculty Fellows will be recorded and housed permanently in the Georgetown Teaching Commons so that they can be broadly accessed and utilized by other educators.

The Junior Year Abroad Network (JYAN) blog, hosted on the Berkley Center website, serves as a space for the community of students studying abroad to post letters and discuss their experiences. Faculty members and other students respond to these posts, making this a robust online community.

The Doyle Faculty Fellows blog allows the fellows, who meet in person monthly, to continue their conversations, reflection, and collaboration between meetings and throughout the year. Questions are asked and answered in real-time, resources are posted, and meeting notes shared for all to access.

The Doyle team is excited about the possibilities inherent in the use of online resources. Development in the coming year will focus on expanding the interactive nature of the website as well as creating a robust resource hub useful to the Georgetown community and beyond.
About the Berkley Center

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the Center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the Center’s work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.

About CNDLS

Since 2000, The Center for New Designs in Learning & Scholarship (CNDLS) at Georgetown University has supported faculty and graduate students with tools, resources, and opportunities for new learning environments. The Center began with a mission to bridge a historic gulf between pedagogy and technological advances, and today CNDLS integrates a teaching and learning center with the latest educational technology. Our team of experienced educators facilitates a broad-based program that promotes discovery, engagement, and diversity in an ever-expanding conception of learning.

Doyle Initiative Team

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“I have thought about this class outside the classroom more than any other class that I have taken this semester.”

– Student, Doyle Faculty Fellow course, Spring 2011