For the third consecutive year, Timothy Brothers, a professor of geography at IUPUI, led a study abroad program to Cuba this summer. This is no small feat, considering how both the Cuban and U.S. governments tightly restrict Cuban-American interaction. In fact, 11 students had originally signed up for the program, but 3 had to pull out due to delays in getting government permission. Nevertheless, Brothers managed to take 8 students, all from IUPUI.

Yet, the politics of this exchange is only one of the multiple landscapes he and his students explored in Cuba.

The 2004 program was offered as a 3-credit second summer session course (G345 Geography of Cuba). The course began at IUPUI with three weeks of intensive introductory lectures and preparation. Then Brothers and his students flew to Miami where they took a licensed charter flight to Havana. Staying at midrange hotels for 15 days, they immersed themselves in the human, cultural, historical, and physical landscapes of Cuba.

The group was assisted by a Cuban geography professor at the University of Havana, Angel Claro, who provided lectures, guidance, and cultural insights.

The group stayed five days in Havana where they explored all parts of the city. Brothers instructed his students to learn about how the average Cuban lives, so the group ventured far beyond the typical tourist trail.

They took walking tours, entered apartments, visited the subsidized bodega (market), and met with individuals trained in Santería. This in-depth look into Cuban life is vital to Brothers’ goals for his students.

John Cook, an IUPUI student in new media who participated in the program and took professional-grade photos throughout the trip, agrees that the immersion and intense cultural interaction was unique. He says that he and his fellow students “had the opportunity to meet and talk to people, so we could have a broader view of Havana and Cuba.” Kyle Dugan, a student of German and Spanish, adds that “I had some of the most intelligent conversations with random people on the street.”

The students also took a three-day trip to Pinar del Río, the tobacco region of western Cuba, and they flew to Santiago on the Guantánamo Coast of southeast Cuba. The topography continued on page 19
Global Center Publishes Guides to International and Global Resources

Over the past five years, The Center for the Study of Global Change at Indiana University Bloomington has been publishing a series of resource guides for students and faculty interested in international and global studies. All guides were developed under the general direction of Robert Goehlert, IU librarian for economics, political science, and criminal justice and library liaison for the global center.


These publications may be ordered from the Center for the Study of Global Change, 201 North Indiana Avenue, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47408-4001; telephone: (812) 855-0756; fax: (812) 855-6271; e-mail: global@indiana.edu.

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changes dramatically throughout the rural and urban regions of Cuba—from cactus scrub to limestone topography to rainforest—so the students experienced firsthand the physical and cultural diversity of Cuba.

But Brothers wanted his students to learn more than the specifics of Cuba; he wanted them to comprehend Cuba in context and envision Cuba as part of wider spheres. He and Claro demonstrated the intimate relationship between environment, economics, and ethnic politics. They related the specifics of Cuba to universal models of globalization, colonization, and the movement of plate tectonics. The course was thus not only about Cuba but more broadly about how people all over the world interact with each other, with history, and with the physical geography in which they happen to live.

The future of this course is, unfortunately, unknown. The U.S. government has further restricted travel to Cuba, so Brothers will have to reapply to the U.S. Treasury Department for an academic license to run his Cuba study abroad program. Though there is uncertainty, he is optimistic. So are his students. As Dugan points out, “Cuba won’t be Cuba for long. Once the embargo is lifted or when Castro dies, its uniqueness will be changed. So, it is imperative that you go now, before Cuba as we know it is gone.”