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Highlights from the Spain trip from Bev Bowler, Susan Praseuth, and Jenny Lee.

A synopsis of the Stanford Symposium

July 20th—Summer Social to welcome the 2018 Cohort

This is a special edition of the newsletter! Our students and alumni have been on the move this summer semester, and we wanted to bring you some highlights of their adventures.

Spain Trip

GLS Travel courses are such a unique learning experience – and a favourite of many students and alumni. Requests for ‘more please’ prompted a recent partnership with the SFU 55+ program. Registered GLS alumni now have student status to attend GLS travel courses – allowing Stephen Duguid to lead 20 of us to Spain this May, in tandem with 20 GLS students led by Gary McCarron.

Photo Credit: Bev Bowler
Al-Andulusa Travel Course

The highlights were experiencing firsthand the unique and amazing blend of Muslim/Christian/Jewish art, literature and architecture while participating in seminars which explored the culture of toleration in Al-Andulus from 711-1492. We owe so much debt to this rich era of mathematics, arts and literature in the middle ages.

Our group explored the historic hearts of Cordova and Granada in shared accommodations, usually apartments—which created that lovely feeling of living as locals, rather than tourists. The highlights were the enormous expanse of cool dim arches in the Cordova Mezquita mosque and a guided tour of the magnificent rooms of El Hambra in Granada and a day trip to Seville both awed (the cathedral) and calmed (the Alcazar).

The foodies amongst us were in raptures. We fell in love with Spanish breakfasts of toasted bread, olive oil and fresh grated tomatoes. Three group dinners were a highlight and a chance to meet and chat with fellow students—usually outside under umbrellas, after eight—which was an adjustment, but we all agreed—very civilized.

I was asked why I chose this trip by someone who found travelling with a group somewhat of a challenge. It is for the same reasons I love to stay connected to GLS over the last 17 years. We bring our differences to the group, but find solace in our similarities; our love of learning, of exploring ideas, great civilizations and literature. It is the pleasure of this unique GLS experience that is its greatest appeal.
Susan Praseuth—2014 Cohort

Led by Dr. Gary McCarron and Dr. Stephen Duguid, the LS 819 group set out on a quest to learn about the history of Andalusia, a region of Spain that was once conquered by the Muslim Berbers via North Africa and remained under Islamic rule for nearly 800 years.

We started our adventures in Cordoba, a city that was once the capital of the Islamic Emirate, and ended in Granada, the last city to surrender to the Catholic Monarchs and complete the Reconquista, with side trips to the ruins of an Arab Muslim palace-city, Madinat Al-Zahra, and to today’s capital city of Andalusia, Seville. In between seminars, siestas, and sangria, we spent our days touring different neighbourhoods, learning about the cities’ historical significance, and visiting Andalusia’s most prized sights: Cordoba’s grand mosque cathedral, the Mezquita; Seville’s Catedral and Alcazar; and Granada’s greatest Moorish palace, the Alhambra.

While learning the history and its impact on modern Spain and the rest of the world, we also took in Andalusian culture by going to flamenco shows, cheering on the local “football” team, and nibbling on tapas at the local bodegas. Several classmates also arranged weekend getaways and explored the neighbouring cities of Almeria, Guadix, Malaga, and Ronda.

Three weeks in Andalusia was much too short to explore this unique region of Spain. However, it did give us a chance to gain a better understanding of its history, an appreciation of a new culture, and memories that will last a lifetime.

Jenny Lee—2013 Cohort

Susan Praseuth and I spent many evenings – bare legs draped over our second-floor apartment balcony – happily dissecting our views on Andalusian convivencia, the best way to cook fresh prawns, and yelling a cheery “Hola!” to any and all who passed unsuspectingly on the cobblestone street below.

We yearned to taste the lemons that dangled just out of reach in the churchyard across the street. But when two local lemon thieves caught mid-act tossed us a parting gift, we were too embarrassed to sully the fruit’s beauty with a knife.
What a tumble of sun-drenched and delicious memories!

Reading Ibn Hazm’s *Ring of the Dove* turned into three nights of personal reminiscences. Janina Safran’s deadly tedious 247-page parsing of ancient legal decisions nevertheless transformed the Alhambra and the Cordoban mosque into living spaces filled with the echoes of squabbling medieval merchants and righteous neighbours. “How should a Muslim respond to the friendly overtures of a Jewish neighbor? May a Muslim exchange gifts with a Christian neighbor?” Safran wrote. How, indeed. Diving deep into our readings lent depth to our questions for locals.

Seminars meant walking past the cheese shop, coffee shop, butcher and bakery. Class dinners meant camaraderie, calamares and oh-so-special Spanish cheesecake. GLS Spain 2018? Quite simple, really. We read, we ate, we walked, we talked. Then we did it all over again.
The sunny Friday evening wine and cheese in a grove of trees opened the June Symposium. It was our first opportunity to meet other presenters and symposium attendees. For those who have participated in symposium in years past, it was an opportunity to connect with some familiar faces. For those who were first time attendees, it was an opportunity to be welcomed into a group of excited, and curious thinkers.

We started the Saturday with Veronica McGhee’s emotionally charged paper on “her mother’s and grandmother’s Jehovah’s Witness faith are lenses for understanding how church doctrine and its anticipation of Armageddon created a tenuous family life.” In the second panel, Reema Faris’ paper “Nevertheless, They Persist: Women, Anger, and Gender Roles,” looked at “how and why noisemakers—such as Elizabeth Warren, Hillary Clinton, or any of the millions of women have marched on the streets—are labelled as uppity, nasty, unruly, and worse.” Lunch gave us an opportunity to explore the Stanford campus and check out the bookstore.

After lunch, Abilio Olmedo challenged us to think further about Utilitarianism and “whether it is morally correct to participate in the global social media network.” The Saturday sessions closed with Marja Karelia presenting her paper titled “Music of Spheres: From Pythagoras to Kepler and Beyond.” Cathy Collis followed her and tackled the idea of whether the “audience is a character in a play and an actor’s aside to an audience is a kind of paratext” in her discussion of Restoration Theatre. Saturday evening had people exploring Palo Alto on their own for dinner.

On Sunday morning, Jennifer Chutter discussed “how rapid urban development disrupts the mental maps of urban dwellers because redevelopment is designed for future uses rather than past or present uses of space.” She was followed by Sharon McCarthy who explored “the cultural values that support ecologically sustainable urban lifestyles.” SFU students and alums presented with confidence and poise. Many thanks to Don Shafer who came down to cheer us on. We left Stanford full on new ideas!
SUMMER SOCIAL—JULY 20TH
Please join us at the GLS office on Friday, July 20th to welcome the 2018 cohort, and to catch up with old friends. The fun starts at 7pm at Harbour Centre Rm 2400.

ARE YOU LIVING IN VICTORIA AND LOOKING TO CONNECT WITH OTHER GLS FOLKS?

GLS Alum David Leung has recently moved to Victoria and is looking to connect with some other GLS people who have relocated there. Please contact him at dleunga@gmail.com if you are interested in participating in a get together to share ideas and books you have read.