

MSU is proud to have one of the nation's largest study abroad programs that spans the world and helps to build international understanding through education. The annual **MSU Study Abroad Essay Contest** aims to capture the essence of study abroad by encouraging students to reflect and write creatively about the unique living and learning experiences studying abroad provides.

By submitting your story, you help your fellow students and people in the greater community know, feel and appreciate what it is like to study abroad. Studying outside of the U.S. provides a complex range of feelings and powerful insights into the differences among the cultures of the world as well as a deeper understanding of ourselves and our own culture(s). Writing and submitting an essay is your opportunity to reflect on and share your experience of studying abroad.

The winning entries will be honored at a special reception on Friday, November 21, 2008, during the International Coffee Hour.



## ELIGIBILITY

MSU undergraduate or graduate students who have participated in study abroad are eligible.

Essays must be no more than four pages, typed and double-spaced. Include your name and e-mail on every page.

Essays should be submitted by 5:00 pm, October 27, 2008 via an email attachment to Chris Barden at [barden@msu.edu](mailto:barden@msu.edu).

**NOTE:** Any and all submissions to the annual MSU Study Abroad Essay Contest may be used at the discretion of the MSU Office of Study Abroad for promotional purposes. By submitting your entry, you agree that your essay can be used in this way.

## AWARDS

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$1,000
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	\$500
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	\$250

Funds for winning entries will be placed into student accounts.

## DEADLINE

Essays must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., **October 27, 2008**.

## HOW TO WRITE YOUR ESSAY

There are six topic areas you may choose to write about

- Unusual encounters
- Cross-cultural (mis)understanding
- New academic perspectives
- Personal growth
- Professional development
- Adjusting – abroad and back home

While we welcome stories about any aspect of your study abroad experience, please note that we are not looking for a travel log, diary, or journal of your experiences, but rather for a well thought out, carefully composed creative piece of writing in essay form.

Remember that the use of comparisons, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices can help others relate to your experience. What metaphor or image for your unique experience can you come up with that helps others understand your story better?

(over)

In writing your essay, please choose one of the following topics. Be sure to write your topic (for example: Unusual encounters) on every page.

- **Unusual encounters**

- What was one encounter that surprised you while abroad? What did you think and feel during the encounter? Would things have happened differently back home? How and why?
- Describe a unique cultural or social aspect, event, or practice of the country in which you studied. These can be special holidays, festivals, national events, business or everyday practices.

- **Cross-cultural (mis)understanding**

- Describe encounters that demonstrate cultural differences and similarities between the country you studied in and the United States. Culturally and socially, what things are similar between life in the U.S. and in the country in which you studied? What things are different?
- Give examples of interactions in which cross-cultural misunderstandings occurred. What transpired that was misunderstood by either party? What insights into the other culture did you gain? How did you cope/deal with such misunderstandings?

- **New academic perspectives**

- How is college life different or the same in the other culture?
- Have you gained a new perspective on your major?
- Are classes in your major taught the same or differently than in the United States?

- **Personal growth**

- In what ways have you grown as an individual as a result of living and learning abroad – especially pertaining to your career goals and academic goals?

- **Professional development**

- Does your intended profession exist in this culture? If so, what roles do such professionals play in the culture and what is their status?
- How are businesses run differently as compared to the United States? What is the business culture like? (e.g., What is considered professional dress? Do companies provide employee benefits?)
- What new skills did you acquire that might help you in your future professional career?

- **Adjusting – abroad and back home**

- How did you adjust to new ways of eating, dealing with bureaucracy, meeting people, making friends, etc, in your host country?
- Describe your reentry into the U.S. way of life after you returned from abroad.
- Have your career and academic goals changed as a result of your study abroad experience?