

## ***LETTER FROM THE FIELD***

***Katie's second Letter from the Field was written in August 2007 after she had completed her freshman year at Beloit, and a summer field school in Chile.***

Hello, again. It's been a while since I last updated, and that's because I've been really busy. I have much to share. Of course, this last semester at Beloit was spent finishing my core anthro courses, Physical and Cultural Anthropology.

The cultural anthro course ended up being very interesting and the most challenging one I've taken so far. I've learned so much: TONS of vocabulary, how to conduct an ethnographic study, and most importantly, to keep an open mind about all aspects of a culture. I can now appreciate the differences between cultures rather than just acknowledging them. One of the more fascinating things I learned was that there is no cultural universal and to think that there is, limits our ability to understand any culture. It was also surprising how many ways cultures vary (language, communication, religion, laws, kinship, going to the bathroom, how color is perceived...just to name a few!). We were given short, field note studies to do every weekend where we would have to observe and interview people on different aspects of culture. Then, we would write up a short paper describing exactly what was discovered during our observations and drawing hypotheses about their culture based on our research in terms of race, age, gender, ethnicity, and/or class. This part was hard at first, but we learned how to accurately describe and draw hypotheses throughout the semester and it became much easier and pretty fun! I'm definitely glad to have that skill. But, all in all, that course turned out to be very challenging and enjoyable...despite some apprehensions in the beginning.

While Cultural Anthro was enjoyable, Physical Anthro was downright fun! The material was interesting and came so easily to me, that I fell in love right away. I learned all about primate evolution, the human skeleton (and how it differs from an ape's), the functions of the brain, and the varying physical features that distinguish each specie of biped. It feels really cool to have two skeletons in front of me and be able to tell whether it is a *Homo habilis* or a *Homo ergastor*. I liked the course so much that I'm considering switching my concentration to physical anthropology...but it's only my first year. I'm going to take a few more courses before I make any final decisions.

Well, my Spring Semester (and my first year of college) came to an end, and I finished out strong. Along with my two anthro courses, I took statistics (which is a good course to take if you're interested in studying archaeology) and Spanish (since I'm considering in focusing on Central or South American archaeology).

The Spanish course especially came in handy when I went to Chile this June for my summer field school! It was a blast, but there were quite a few bumps in the road along the way. The "bumps" (which I'll talk more about in my later posts) prevented us from digging as much as we had hoped. So this trip was less hands on and more learning about sites, the history, and the present day culture of Chile. Despite the disappointing lack of actual digging, I still had a great time, saw many sights, tried new foods, and learned a

great deal.

Can't wait to share my experience and pictures with you!

-- Katie Schurr