Past Student Reactions to these Classes:
Past student comments regarding these courses have been positive, indicating that the goals stated above are being met. While we don’t have the space to cite these comments in detail, in summary their comments have included skills developed in ethnography, items learned regarding Jamaican culture, history, and its people, reflections on contrasts between US and Jamaican cultures, things learned about themselves as the experience one of the most transformative aspects of ethnography: the interactions between the “self” and others. With regards to this transformative aspect, student comments range from perceptions at the first introduction to the country and its people, and other issues that this experience bring into play, such as issues related to religion, sexuality and gender, self identity, race, and class and other socioeconomic factors. With regards to personal identity, students of West Indian heritage, both the children of immigrant parents who were born and/or raised in the US, or who grew up in the West Indies, but are studying in the US, are particularly interesting. Other student comments included the impact of the experience on helping them visualize their majors, field for graduate training, or future careers. We will include a couple of these comments here that also indicate this field school for students who may have an interest in one day working in international settings.

Email from a former undergraduate student:
“I also wanted to tell you that the trip to Jamaica really made a huge impact on me. I have decided to apply to the UMD School of Public Health for grad school and plan on doing Community Health Education. Working with the 3C’s [Jamaican NGO, Children and Community for Change] really opened my eyes to a lot of things and I’d like to continue working in the Caribbean.”

Email from two former graduate students:
“Dear Dr. Whitehead. Both Beth and I found our Jamaica experience to be invaluable in our training for Public Health Research and Education. We are planning to co-author a paper on the uses of ethnography within the field of Public Health and the value of a study abroad such as the one we did in training Public Health students. We feel the unique course you offer is invaluable training for students in our discipline and would like to promote this type of program. We feel that public health research and practice is strongly influenced by social-ecological perspectives. Ethnography allows students to see how the historical, economic, and social environments affect health outcomes for populations. Ethnography also provides an essential set of research methods and theoretical traditions, to equip public health students to study the social determinants of population health. Finally, ethnographic field schools allow students to experience culture shock in a supportive environment that facilitates understanding and introspection.”

Course Fee: $3,865
For registration, scholarship, and other information: www.international.umd.edu/studyabroad
ANTH498W / ANTH698W (Ethnographic Fieldwork: National Celebration and Identity) and ANTH498Z / ANTH689V (Internship/Ethnographic Assessment: “Introduction to Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Issues in Jamaica”) are presently the primary components of an annual ethnographic field school Jamaica that has been established during the summer of 2005. These two courses are carried out during simultaneous dates (July 12 through August 11) on the campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) and in the cities of Kingston (3 ½ weeks) and Ochos Rios (the final 3 days). The field school is directed by Tony Whitehead, Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Cultural Systems Analysis Group (CuSAG) at the University of Maryland, with instructional contributions of a teaching assistant, and from select UWI professors and other Jamaicans.

The double numbers (ANTH498W / ANTH698W, ANTH498Z / ANTH689V) indicate that each course is available for both undergraduate (498) and graduate (689) registration. Students can register for only one of these courses, not both, at either the graduate or undergraduate levels. Those taking the course for graduate credits can be expected to have more detailed assignments, including: (1) coordinating teams for ethnographic field activities; (2) developing a more scholarly final product, either a well researched (with citations) paper, or a proposal for further research on an issue that was informed by the field school experience.

Goals and Overlap in Courses:
The goals of both courses are to provide students with: (1) an opportunity to enhance their skills in such ethnographic methods as observation and participant observation; and (2) a cross cultural experience using rapid learning techniques that will allow them to learn about the culture of their host country, and by contrast their own culture, and about themselves. In order to achieve these goals in a short period of time, there is considerable overlap in the content of these two courses. The following will provide the reader with areas of overlap and difference in the courses, as well as some sense of student requirements:

1) Ethnography of National Celebrations, (As Scheduled, Weekdays, Evenings or Weekends). A significant component of the National Identity and Celebration course is the ethnographic study of Festival celebrations in Kingston, Jamaica in July, and celebrations associated with Emancipation Day (August 1) through Independence Day (August 6). However, students in the Internship Course are also required to attend these events, not only for entertainment purposes, but more importantly to achieve the course goal of rapid cultural learning, and to develop learning synergy for students across the courses.

2) Organizational Ethnography and Internship Activities, (9am-4pm, Mondays through Fridays). Students in both courses will work with select organizations working on youth health issues. Students in the Internship Course will focus their ethnography on the internship organization, its mission and goals, organizational staff perceptions of the problems that the organization is attempting to address, the level of success that staff persons think it is achieving, reasons for this level of success, and what more does it think should be done to achieve success. The students in the National Identity and Celebration students will use the internship activity to gain access to populations that they might not otherwise have (e.g., Jamaican youth). They will focus their ethnographic work, however, not on organizational programming, goals, and objectives, but on issues of personal, gender, and national identity.

3) Cultural Tours and the Ethnography of Social Settings (As Scheduled, Weekdays, Evenings or Weekends). Cultural tours will be organized for students not only to the Festival and national holiday celebrations, but also to select museums, such as the Marley and Garvey museums, theater, and concerns. There will also be group ethnographic tours of various social settings such as local markets, beaches, dance halls, neighborhoods of varying socio-economic status, etc. Students will be taught to understand such settings as theaters of performance in various cultural patterns and routines, but so are other social settings in which they will encounter in their daily public activities. These ethnographic tours and studies of social settings are very important to the course goals of rapid cultural learning. National Celebrations and Identity students will focus their observations on issues of identity, and Internship students will focus their observations on issues that may be pertinent to the problems that are being addressed by the organizations with which they intern.

4) Classroom Lectures and Discussions (6:30-8pm Mondays through Fridays). Because of commitment to daytime organizational ethnographic and internship activities, classroom lectures and discussions are held on the UWI campus during the week, in the evenings, with the exception of when certain cultural events are scheduled. During these sessions students will learn basic ethnographic methods and settings and topics related to Jamaican culture and history, and get immediate feedback on their ethnographic and personal experiences. Fieldnotes are submitted at the end of each week, and final papers focusing either on topics related to issues of celebration or identity, or on the activities of the internship organization.

For more information, contact Dr. Tony Whitehead: 
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“Ethnographic field schools allow students to experience culture shock in a supportive environment that facilitates understanding and introspection”

MPH Student, UNC Greensboro (2008 field school participant)