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Mary Malone, Assistant Professor of Political Science, travels to Germany

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International Perspectives

Center for International Education

MARY MALONE, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Professor Mary Malone recently returned from Germany where she attended the Law and Society Association's annual conference in Berlin.



For political scientists, Berlin is a fascinating city. Rarely does one encounter a city that has undergone so many dramatic transformations in such a relatively short period of time. Thus, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to Berlin this summer to participate in the 2007 Law and Society Association's annual conference. At the conference, I was part of a panel that examined the rule of law in the developing world. The panel participants approached this topic from a variety of vantage points. One theorist examined the legal framework of the United Nations Millennium goals and poverty reduction programs in Uganda, while another focused on the changing role of legal norms in Vietnam. My paper was one of two that examined judicial reform and legal culture in Latin America. While most of my work focuses on the Latin

American region, it was very insightful to compare the trends I identified with those of the other panelists, particularly those working in such different geographic regions. My research benefited tremendously from the perspectives of these other panelists, as well as from members of the audience who approached the study of the rule of law not only from other geographic perspectives, but from other academic disciplines as well. Indeed, the discussant of the panel based much of his critique upon economic theories of the rule of law, and his critiques will ultimately strengthen the paper that I presented.

Since my paper assessed how legal culture changes as nations transition from dictatorship to democracy, it was quite interesting to present this research in Berlin. To understand how democracy breaks down and can be restored, it is imperative to examine German history for the many lessons it offers to nations struggling to democratize today. In my courses on democratization and comparative politics, students examine how the institutional weaknesses of the Weimar Republic undermined German democracy in the 1930s, and how the new democratic government of 1949 strived to avoid such pitfalls with greater attention to institutional design. Students also examine how dictatorship fell in East Germany in 1989, and the mechanisms by which the democratic institutions of the West were extended to the rest of the country. By touring the many historical sites of Berlin, one gains a greater appreciation for these dramatic transformations, one that will undoubtedly enrich future classroom discussions. Indeed, the many historical exhibits on the site of the former Berlin Wall provided an excellent overview of the many transformations Berlin has endured from the 1960s to the present.

On a final note, my visit to Berlin has also proven beneficial to my department. The Political Science Department has been contemplating establishing a study abroad program, and has considered Berlin as a possible site. After visiting the city, I was able

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to share my impressions with the rest of the department as we consider moving ahead with the study abroad program. Based upon my visit, I would whole-heartedly recommend Berlin as a great candidate for a study abroad program for political scientists.

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