

Argentina lends San Jose State students broader perspectives, deeper convictions

BY WILLIAM GOODRICH

SENIOR LEAD, SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY, INTERNATIONAL AND EXTENDED STUDIES

Dr. Michael Gorman, Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, spent three weeks this past summer in Argentina. No, it wasn't for vacationing or sightseeing or relaxing. It was to empower 12 students to gain a global perspective of social work, social justice and human rights in a country that has struggled with these issues and is still coming to grips with its history of human rights abuses and the economic crisis of 2002.

Dr. Gorman's faculty led course, Social Work 285/189, open to any upper division or graduate student, was his fourth summer program in Argentina and was conducted in Buenos Aires June 6-25, 2010. The class had ambitious goals ranging from learning a global perspective of social justice and human rights to taking tours of important historical and cultural locations in the greater Buenos Aires region. Activities included staying with Argentine families in the middle class barrio of Palermo, attending lectures given through the University of Palermo and museum tours.

For many of the students the highlight of the trip was meeting Patricia Isassa. In July 1976, at age 16, Patricia was targeted for her part in organizing a high school student union in Argentina. She was kidnapped by Argentine police and soldiers, tortured and held prisoner for two and a half years without a trial. Since her release she has been an advocate for justice and human rights, with a documentary film made of her experiences.

And what do participants have to say about their time in Argentina?

"...it was everything I'd hoped for and more." — Richard

"The course beautifully enriched my knowledge about social justice, human rights, and social work in Argentina. It also broadened my international social work perspective and deepened my belief in international advocacy for disempowered people." — Iris

"Overall, the trip was amazing because I was able to meet great people and I was able to experience the culture of another country. I have been to Mexico many times, but this experience was very different in a positive way." — Irene

"This trip has had a lasting impact on me. I now have much more concern for the big picture of human rights around the world." — Karen

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