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# SCII Agenda Newsletter

*October 2022 Issue*

*The mission of the Schoolcraft College International Institute (SCII) is to coordinate cross-cultural learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff and the community.*

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## Partnership Building COMA / ESL

by Annika Sholander & Deborah Taracuk



One of our collaborative events during the 2021-2022 academic year.

In the Fall of 2021, we created and launched a partnership between Schoolcraft College's Intercultural Communications class (COMA 240) and International Learning Support. As the instructor for COMA 240, Deborah realized the importance for her students to experience learning beyond their textbooks and class videos, and feels *nothing compares to in-person conversation*. Annika desired for her English as a Second Language (ESL) students to meet with other students on campus so they could practice their conversational English with multiple English language speakers. Both goals facilitated a partnership which resulted in enriching students' cultural experiences on campus.

Together, we hosted events each term during the 2021-2022 Academic Year. Our very first event was a *Meet and Greet* where students got to know each other and share interesting facts about their cultures. At the second meeting, COMA 240 students interviewed International/ESL students as part of their *Educational Awareness* assignment. For this assignment, students learn about high- and low-context cultures, power distance, and other communication topics through the lens of education; the student exchanges allow them to apply these topics across cultures to explore similarities and differences. We repeated this

again during the winter semester.

Whether the group was large or small, we observed that our students always wish they had more time together. COMA students return to the classroom energized and excited! The experience allows them to see more clearly the value of intercultural communication skills in an increasingly diverse world. ESL students tell us they are excited at meeting new students, sharing their culture, and learning about other students' cultures. Overall, student feedback is positive and they repeatedly tell us that they want more opportunities like this.

Once again during the 2022-2023 academic year, we have coordinated our partnership and we invite other students to join us. These meet-and-greets are open to all students who would like to be interviewed about their culture; they may join the conversation at the following events below. Faculty wishing more information about the partnership are encouraged to reach out to Annika and Deborah.

**Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> 4:00-5:00 p.m. *General Meet-and-Greet***

**Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 4:00-5:00 p.m. *Interview on Education***

**Location: Bradner Library, Room 110**

*For question please contact either Communication Department Faculty Member Deborah Taracuk [dtaracuk@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:dtaracuk@schoolcraft.edu) or Annika Sholander as the International Learning Support Academic Success Coach in Learning Support Services (LSS); she is also an Associate Editor for the Agenda and can be reached via phone (734)462-5326 or email [asholand@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:asholand@schoolcraft.edu).*

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# Home

by Helen Ditouras



Picture of my uncle Kosta and I in the village  
Krya Vrysi



Sharing a meal with my goddaughter Tatiana  
(left) and her family/friends in Cyprus.

I first travelled to Greece in 1977 at the age of one with my parents and brother. Those early years marked my parents' humble beginnings as emigres to Canada, so a trip from Canada to Greece involved many laborious stops: Windsor to Toronto, Toronto to Serbia, Belgrade to Thessaloniki via train, and then Thessaloniki to [Krya Vrysi](#) – my father's village – by bus. However, once my dad secured a job at General Motors years later, these trips to Greece would occur with ease and efficiency. In the past, the journey to my father's village involved familiar sights and scents; primarily, the sweet smell of tobacco leaves that lined the open fields, acres at a time. However, this year, having returned after to Greece after 22 years, the fragrance in the air I expected to inhale was curiously absent. When I asked my uncle about this, he replied that the village was no longer growing tobacco; the planting of peaches had replaced the old crops. He said the only tobacco crops remaining in the village belonged to Albanian immigrants who after 25 years had made Greece their home.

This past July, I arrived in Thessaloniki with my father to be greeted by my uncle who had not seen me in 22 years; the last time I saw him was at my cousin's wedding - his eldest daughter – who now had children older than my own. Our time in the village beckoned relatives who wanted to unite with the prodigal daughter who had stayed away for an excessively long time. My visit inspired countless stories and memories narrated by my uncle who was eager



to reconnect after decades of absence.

While my days in Greece included visits from family and neighbors, my evenings in the village comprised of nightly visits to the [Panigiri](#) - a cultural festival organized during the summer months in the villages of Greek islands and mainland towns where a patron saint is celebrated. Here, I encountered delicious food, street vendors, cultural performances, and a routine visit to the church which remained open for the night and invited patrons to tacitly enter and light candles for the living and the deceased. It was there that I found peace and reconnected with the power of prayer – thousands of miles away from home and the bustle of North American life.

Halfway into my trip, I boarded a plane from Thessaloniki and flew to the breathtaking island of [Cyprus](#) – a country less than an hour and a half away from Greece. When I landed in Cyprus, I was warmly received at the airport by my goddaughter, Tatiana, and her father, who drove me to their village, [Deryneia](#). This was my third time visiting the island and I had fond memories of their family and the spectacular beaches that rendered Cyprus a popular tourist destination. Our days were spent lounging on the beach while swimming in crystalline waters, and our nights were reserved for family friends who competed to host us for dinner and drinks. One unforgettable night, Tatiana and I swam in warm, moonlit waters, and observed the constellation of stars above us.

When I returned to Greece, I was determined to visit [Albania](#); a neighboring country that held tremendous significance for my family and I. As a child, I never questioned the fact that our village had equal parts Albanians as it did Greeks; or that my grandmother spoke fluent Albanian. Aside from Greek, my parents spoke two different dialects – Vlach and Dopia - so I just assumed Albanian was another one of the many languages that existed among us. What I later discovered from my father and “23 and Me” - the popular DNA testing kit – was that my family ancestry could be traced to present-day Albania. My aunt informed me that several of my grandmother’s family lived in the city of [Korce](#), and while she had lost touch with them over the decades, generations of our family resided in this country I had never encountered in all the years I had travelled to Greece. A trusted Albanian friend crafted an itinerary that would allow me to target several places of interest in Korce during my short stay. With my aunt, we boarded a bus from the Greek town, [Veria](#), and enjoyed a scenic ride that lasted approximately 2.5 hours to the border.

Our visit to Korce included several sites on our itinerary like the beautiful [Resurrection of Christ Cathedral](#), [The National Museum of Medieval Art](#), [Old Bazaar of Korce](#), and my absolute favorite, [Komiteti Kafe Muzeum](#) – a memorable café and museum filled with relics from Communist-era Albania. Along with a narrated tour, the bartender also served me a delicious honey and cinnamon flavored [raki](#) – a drink sometimes referred to as the national drink of Albania. While I generally abstain from such strong drinks, I thoroughly enjoyed the sweet warmth that accompanied each sip of raki and in hindsight, regretted not bringing a bottle of this spirit back to Canada. And while most of the locals spoke Greek because of the number of Greek Albanians that lived in the city, I still had an opportunity to practice some nominal Albanian greetings such as Miredita (good day), Faleminderit (thank you), and my most-used phrase in moments of confusion, Me Fal (excuse me)! The people of Korce were warm and exceptionally helpful; if you were lost, confused, or eager to find a landmark, the locals were more than happy to direct you to your destination.

With excitement and anticipation, I am planning a trip next summer to Greece; this time, with the accompaniment of my son who has yet to visit our home and with my cousins who are eager to re-experience the sights and sounds of all things Greek.

*Helen Ditouras is a Professor of English, Co-Chair for SCII, and a Consulting Editor of the SCII Agenda; she can be reached at [hditoura@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:hditoura@schoolcraft.edu).*

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# Conference Keynote University PGRI Semarang

by Colleen Pilgrim

**UPGRIS**  
Universitas PGRI Semarang

Enhancing Professional Academic Culture:  
Freedom to Teach, Freedom to Learn,  
and Freedom to Innovate

**5<sup>th</sup> ICESRE**  
The 5th International Conference on  
Education and Social Science Research

**5 October 2022**  
Virtual Conference

**Keynote Speakers**  
Prof. Dr. Mike Hardy CMG OBE (Coventry University, United Kingdom)  
Prof. Dr. Ismet Fanany (Deakin University, Australia)  
Prof. Dr. Colleen Pilgrim (Schoolcraft College, United States of America)  
Dr. Wiyaka, M.Pd. (Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia)

**Conference Chair**  
Mega Novita, Ph.D. (UPGRIS)

Recently, I was invited to be a keynote speaker at *The 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Education and Social Science Research* with the topic of *Enhancing Professional Academic Culture: Freedom to Teach, Freedom to Learn, and Freedom to Innovate* hosted by [University PGRI Semarang in Indonesia](#). The participants were faculty and students in the social sciences and education field from across the globe. My specific address focused on the need to embed more broad skills in our undergraduate education and was titled: *Freedom to Innovate: Embedding Critical Thinking and Cultural Awareness in Our Course Content*.

My keynote focused on how the plethora of information from the Internet necessitates critical thinking by our students so as to navigate the constant stream of content from news sources and media pages. Additionally, social and cultural awareness is needed so that students think beyond their own cultural lens. However, rather than simply adding this to the lesson plan as a new skill to teach, I outlined how these skills are embedded within my courses. In my address, I provided specifics from my own teaching and campus initiatives within this framework of embedded skills within course content.

Part of the keynote also emphasized the institutional support at Schoolcraft College in my endeavor to embed critical and creative thinking, and social and cultural awareness into my courses. As many readers know, [Schoolcraft Core Abilities](#) are “broad outcomes or skills that every graduate is expected to achieve” and each course on campus must fulfill either one or two core abilities within the course content.

In addition, the keynote stressed the important role in my teaching and global work provided by the SCII and the [Midwest Institute for International and Intercultural Education \(MIIE\)](#). Connections within both organizations led to

global collaboration with colleagues at [Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia](#) in Jakarta, (Professors Theresa Shanti and Nani Nurrachman) and fellowship funding from the [Council of American Overseas Research Centers \(CAORC\)](#) and [The American Institute for Indonesian Studies \(AIFIS\)](#). In 2018, I went to Indonesian as a guest lecturer and to conduct research in Jakarta with my colleagues at Atma Jaya. The following year, Professor Theresa Shanti came to Schoolcraft campus in the United States to lecture with my students and to conduct additional research. These exchanges led to my current collaboration with the University PGRI Semarang. My keynote will be presented again at the upcoming MIIIE Conference on Schoolcraft Campus on Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup>.

*Colleen Pilgrim is a Professor of Psychology and the Editor of the SCII Agenda; she can be reached at [cpilgrim@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:cpilgrim@schoolcraft.edu).*

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## Highlights on Campus

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## Schoolcraft Hosts Midwest International Conference

Schoolcraft College will host the on-campus [Midwest Institute for International and Intercultural \(MIIE\) Conference](#) on Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup> and Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. The conference will be "kicked off" with opening remarks in 210B of [VisTaTech](#) from Chief Academic Officer Stacy Whiddon and we hope to see many of you there!



**The conference is open to all staff and faculty, but you must preregister by contacting Helen Ditouras at [hditoura@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:hditoura@schoolcraft.edu).**

The Midwest Institute is directed by [Theo Sypris](#) and located at [Kalamazoo Valley Community College](#), Kalamazoo, MI.

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## Panel Discussion: Where Science Meets Pseudoscience

On Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-2:30 in MC 100 I will be hosting a panel discussion on the October Pageturner's book titled *On the Fringe: Where Science Meets Pseudoscience* by Michael D. Gordin. There will also be a general discussion of the book on that prior Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-2:30 in BTC 120. Apart from my hosting/presenting duties for the panel, the panel will also include Isabelle Garrett, an honors student, and one of our Chemistry professors, Jerome Lavis.

The book provides a unique opportunity to bridge the humanities/sciences gap and should result in a very enjoyable and interesting discussion. The reason this is of particular interest for the *International Agenda* crowd is because pseudoscience is far from uniquely American. For example, in Chapter 4 of the book, Gordin discusses the "Aryan" physics that developed out of Germany in the 1930's, and "Lysenkoism", an alternative plant-breeding method that did great harm in Stalinist Russia. While reading the book ahead of time is helpful,

it is not essential. The discussion will be interesting to anyone with scientific curiosity.

You may also attend the session via

Zoo: <https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/c6bb3a9e058048abaf3b79ac4fa79669>

+1-571-392-7650

PIN: 819 517 4794

*Mark Huston is a Professor of Philosophy at Schoolcraft College and an Associate Editor of the SCII Agenda; he can be reached at [mhuston@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:mhuston@schoolcraft.edu).*

For additional information about SC PageTurners contact Denise Schell at [dschell@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:dschell@schoolcraft.edu).

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## Free Resilience Training: Schoolcraft College Faculty and Staff

Explore the [Reimagine Resilience Program](#), an innovative online professional development program for U.S. educators and educational staff offered at [no](#)

cost to SC Faculty and Staff by Teachers College, Columbia University through July 2023. Several Schoolcraft faculty have already registered for the training and are currently completing the program.

Educators and educational staff have a vital role to play in preventing hate, violence, and disconnection in our students. By visiting schools across the U.S., we have seen that a connected and engaged classroom builds a resilient community. Discover how resilience counters narratives of hate to prevent incidents of hate-fueled violence. Learn how your existing classroom practices can make students cultivate deeper relationships with their peers, feel supported by their teachers and staff, and develop a sense of belonging to their school.

Please contact Professor Helen Ditouras at [hditoura@schoolcraft.edu](mailto:hditoura@schoolcraft.edu) for registration.



Join us on **Wednesday, Nov 2, 2022 | 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.** for a SC Focus Series lecture by Dr. E. Anthony White, *Using Research to Assist Law Enforcement and Community Engagement*. Dr. White's presentation will focus on the benefits of police departments engaging researchers to assist or facilitate in the development, implementation, and assessment of programs. Further, police and community partnerships/approaches that have been proven to reduce crimes of violence or improve the quality of life in the communities will be discussed. The lecture will be followed by time for Q&A.

- [Join Zoom Meeting](#)
- Meeting ID: 885 7658 9621
- Passcode: 200799

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