Morgan’s Majors: Journalism, Religious Studies

Program: UW Buddhism and Service Learning in Cambodia, Summer

Academic Life: My academic experience varied from sitting in a classroom with my fellow UW-Madison students listening to a structured lecture, to taking a ride on a tuk-tuk to various NGOs. I took one class during my summer abroad, and it revolved around researching how Buddhism and service work correlate in Cambodian society. To learn how service work and Buddhism manifest in Cambodian society, it required us to branch away from our assigned readings and discussions to seek real experience. I found myself educated at monasteries, rural villages, social enterprise restaurants and by landmine victims, monks and socially responsible business owners. What a truly beautiful and beneficial way to learn.

Advice for Someone Considering Morgan’s Program: Siem Reap, Cambodia is the definition of juxtaposition. When you exit the door in the morning, you run into something that will make you laugh uncontrollably, like five adults and a child crammed onto a motorbike. When you turn the corner, you can see something so disheartening it creates tears, like a child selling bracelets on a school day. After the next block, you can see something beneficially affecting society, like a fair trade store or non-profit restaurant. However that’s all blow to pieces when you see something unjust lurking on the corner of the next street. This constant contrast is one you learn to embrace with time. It may cause you immense pain the first week, but after a month you find beauty in it all.

What Morgan Learned About Herself: I learned I have a passion for ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching, and plan to pursue it in the future. Keep in mind I went on this trip to experience Buddhism, and cared little for the teaching aspect of the program. However, it became the definition of my time abroad, and will direct my future travels.

“What a truly beautiful and beneficial way to learn.”