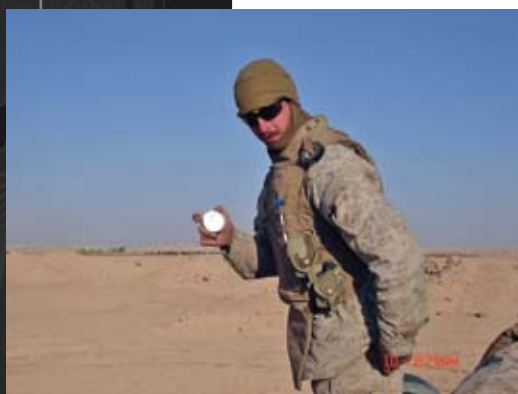


Adapting in Iraq: Multicultural Education the Hard Way

Stephen Williamson was a student at IUPUI when 9/11 struck. He enlisted in the Marines and expected in his first tour of duty to be fighting at the front lines. However, by his second tour, the challenge wasn't tactics as much as it was tact. To fulfill his military assignment successfully, "to keep the peace," he had to design his own crash course in Islamic culture. After two tours, Williamson returned to IUPUI and



brought a unique perspective to a class on multiculturalism. In a paper for that course, he describes one way the Marine Corp adapted to its environment in order to do its job better:

"Arab men distinguish their status by the thickness of their beards and mustaches. The shaving or trimming of the beard (when it is less than a fist's length) is a major sin. It is commendable for a warrior to lengthen his moustache with the sole purpose of instilling awe and terror within the ranks of the enemy. It was because of this cultural display that senior unit leaders within the Marine Corp granted permission to enlisted personal to grow out their mustaches beyond military regulations in order 'to look more manly' and so establish their authority in the locality. Adapting the customs of the native land enabled us to be more in touch with the people. This would also lead us to strengthen relations with native clans."

Of Note

Promoting the Chinese Language

In 2007, China sped past Germany to become the world's third largest economy. A generation ago, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to find an Indiana high school that taught Chinese. That has certainly changed. Now, more than 1,200 students in Hoosier high schools are learning the language of nearly 20% of the world's population. Still, students studying Chinese represent barely one tenth of one percent of the Hoosier high school population.

The Chinese Pedagogy Institute, established in 2008 under the direction of Jennifer Liu, IU Bloomington associate professor of East Asian languages and cultures, is working to increase interest in the Chinese language. Evidence of that came last summer when middle and high school students could be seen outside the School of Education practicing tai chi. Indoors they were working on Chinese calligraphy and studying other aspects of Chinese language and culture. Their activities were designed by two dozen middle and high school teachers in an intensive two-week course on teaching Mandarin Chinese.

Professor Liu, as lead instructor, is excited about the success of the program: "As a curriculum specialist, I can see how much the teacher trainees have learned in terms of knowledge and applied skills. Equally important, the teachers themselves describe the event as 'life-changing' and one of the best in their professional lives."



The institute hopes to offer the combined workshop again in the summer of 2009. With the support of the Center for the Study of Global Change, it has already expanded its outreach to students both older and younger. On Saturdays at the Monroe County Public Library, children from ages two to seven learn basic Chinese words and phrases as they play games and sing songs. Older children take a structured class where they learn to talk about daily activities in Chinese. The institute also proposes to offer high school seniors and college students a chance to earn university credit in an eight-week summer residential Chinese immersion program in 2009.