



I would absolutely recommend the OSEA program to other students. I believe I benefitted greatly from the experience. OSEA made it possible to accomplish many things in a short period of time, and presented many approaches to field work in the Yucatán so that students walked away with a much broader understanding of the area, the people, and the possibilities for their own future research – all in addition to a completed research project! OSEA provides students with an amazing experience as well as the opportunity to do hands-on field research.

The most note worthy experience was when people who I interviewed really opened up to me and told me very personal stories. At that point I knew that I was making people feel comfortable enough to trust me.

I felt encouraged to participate and as though my opinions were important. I was really happy with the dynamics of the group. The students worked together very well and everyone was very contributive to the discussions. The instructors treated us with respect and took the time to listen to what each one of us had to say. Rather than a teacher/student atmosphere, I felt as though we were all equals, and that we all had the chance to contribute whenever relevant.

The guidance I received for creating and conducting a research project was ample in allowing me to conduct the project I desired. Everything from the stress of detail on the research proposals, to the time and effort Sarah put in to help me create a survey, to the fact that Quetzil's and Sarah's door was always open to offer assistance were all aspects of the OSEA experience that were meaningful on a educational and personal level. The desire to see the students succeed and enjoy themselves shined from the guidance that was given.



The OSEA program was a great way to start doing fieldwork. I was in a supportive environment yet had the freedom to make my own decisions and do my research as I thought was best. The progression of the classes and close group environment to some group time and some time to work on projects to then just time for our projects was helpful and productive. It was really neat for Quetzil to have such strong connections there and for everyone in the town to know somewhat of what we were doing. Pisté is an amazing place to do fieldwork. The people are so friendly, open and helpful. It was a great environment to begin fieldwork. It is small enough to not be overwhelming and large enough to have plenty of people to talk to and always have more that you could do.

This experience was one of the most memorable of my life, and, as I hope I have made clear, I haven't had much to complain about. You were accessible and helpful instructors, and good and thoughtful friends. I could not possibly ask for a better introduction to "doing" ethnography, or to the people of Pisté. Thank you for this, and believe me, I not only would recommend your program to others, I already have!

Excursions are always fun – you can't go swimming too often, I don't think! It would have been interesting to have had more excursions in and around Pisté. I think it was very important that the students were able to have group activities together, in that these helped to emphasize that students were encouraged to be independent, rather than isolated.



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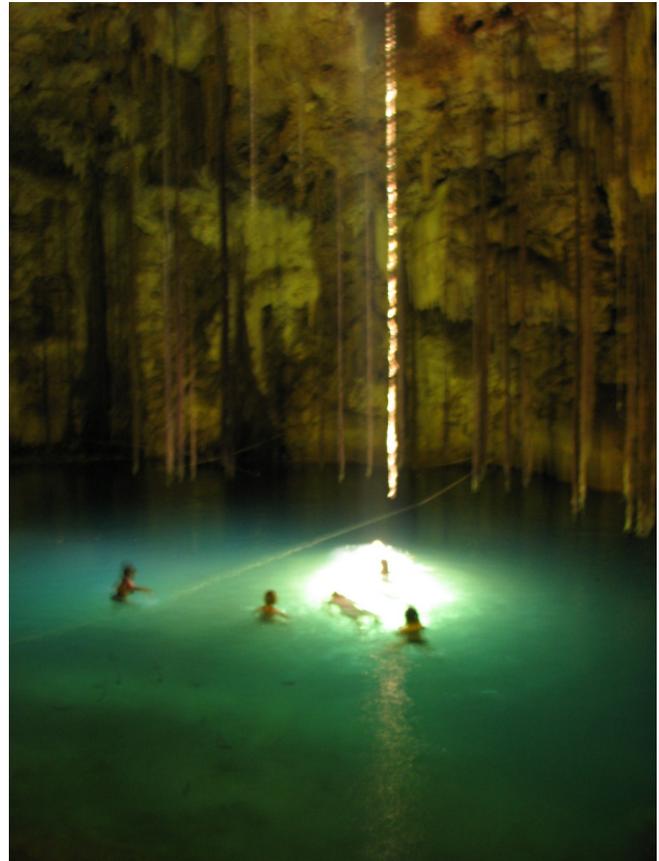
"openschoolethnograph" Channel on YouTube

My Student Testimony of the OSEA Field School

As an undergraduate Anthropology major, I felt I needed experience in field research to solidify my future academic goals. I heard of OSEA through my university and immediately felt a connection with the program. After being accepted to the program, I began to feel many emotions surrounding my departure for field school. Like many students, I felt anxious and nervous about leaving the comfort of my home to live in a foreign country for two months. However, prior to and during field school, Dr. Castañeda and the OSEA staff were very helpful and supportive. The community of Pisté is very welcoming and eager to help. Becoming accustomed to the town proved to be a very fast and exciting process because of the genuine kindness of the people I met. As for the field school, although challenging, was one of the most rewarding academic experiences I have had. Dr. Castañeda's program allows the students to explore the ethnographic process by granting them the freedom to create an individual research topic. During the final days of field school when I had submitted my ethnography, I was able to understand the remarkable academic experience I had just achieved. For me, OSEA field school was a life changing experience. In two months I grew as an individual and managed to conduct and finish research in my area of study. Currently, I am applying to professional school and I can honestly say that OSEA has ranked as my most meaningful experience on all of my resumes. I recommend OSEA to any student, no matter what their area of study may be.

My name is Gabrielle Acquaro (OSEA 2010) and I can be reached at gacquaro@indiana.edu for any questions surrounding my experience through OSEA.

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... Another thank-you for the work you put into helping me by writing a letter of recommendation, last March... the most incredible opportunity fell into my lap... I have been hired by a new non-profit and it is the most perfect I could imagine for myself. The basic mission is reducing child hunger in the tri-county area around Detroit.

But what did we talk about in the interview? Why did my new boss hire me? The first question he asked was, "What is this time you spent in Mexico?" He hired me because of the anthropological viewpoint I brought to the issues we discussed and because of the great story I told him about what I learned in Pisté. Yes, I'm sure four years of college was a part of what made me qualified. But those two months mattered, disproportionately so. Not only that, but I have OSEA and you to thank for pointing me in the right direction and arming me with a lens with which to view the world on a personal level. I'm so excited about this job, I can't help but bubble over.

Michelle
(OSEA 2010)

