

**From:** Bill Spedding  
**To:** [Amy Miller](#)  
**Subject:** Hi Amy!  
**Date:** Monday, May 29, 2017 10:38:00 AM

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Dear Amy,

I hope that all is well with you and the oppressive heat hasn't hit yet in Dallas. We have enjoyed a mild May in San Antonio, but we all know what's around the corner.

I am heading out with 19 students to Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic starting on Wednesday to study WWII, the Holocaust and the Cold War. I will have email access, but I wanted to be sure to get this information to you before I leave so I meet the mid-June deadline. I hope that these documents will illustrate how inspired I was by the trip to the UAE and how I integrated it into a class project that my students worked on over 8 days in May. I have uploaded the project description, the student grade sheet and .pdfs of their presentations to the Google Drive shared previously and linked here <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0BxtcczRpf0Y7X3V3cnZjby1pcUk?usp=sharing>. Please let me know if I need to change any permissions settings for you to access them or if there is anything else you need from me in regards to lesson design gained from this past trip.

I polled my students after their presentations about what myths about the UAE had been dispelled from their week of research. Here is a brief summary:

<b><u>Myth</u></b> <b><u>understanding</u></b>	<b><u>New</u></b>
I thought most women in the Arab world were really oppressed.	Now we know about the amount of variation in the Arab world and the opportunity for women in the UAE.
I thought all the Gulf States did was export oil	We didn't know about the UAE's role as a global tourist, financial and thought leader center.
The whole Middle East is in turmoil.	I didn't know the extent that the UAE was committed against an improper interpretation of Islam and how they are working to combat negative views and to foster positive visions.
Most scientific and thought innovation is only coming from East Asia and the West.	How the UAE is approaching its environmental challenges is innovative and exciting. They are gathering intellectual resources, funding innovation and trying to change the future.

I think that my students learned a great deal as I hope will be evident on their presentations. I didn't edit them, and some contain some information that could be disputed, but that gave us some interesting avenues for discussion in class. Many of these 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who completed this

class project are also committed members in Keystone's Model UN group. They were inspired by their study of the region. Our Model UN will be working with another area school to design a fall conference and simulation that impacts about 80-100 students. One of the core countries will be the UAE, although the organizers haven't decided on whether they will tackle the Yemeni crisis or another issue in the general Gulf State region. I'll keep you posted.

On a personal note, the trip was truly amazing and I still get to bring up my experiences with friends and colleagues in a variety of ways. I shared the guide books from the Abu Dhabi Guggenheim with my art teacher and the UAE space program info and journal with my astronomy nut 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> science teacher. The Ministry of Happiness coffee table art book is now housed with our school counselor who is deeply committed to happiness and well-being studies with our K-12 students. I saw a 4<sup>th</sup> grader thumbing through it while waiting in her office the other day. Last, but not least I shared the dates and camel milk chocolates with everyone, and they were especially appreciated by our 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade history teacher who taught for a number of years in Lebanon. She was the contact from which I heard about this travel opportunity with the WAC. I am glad to be on the list-serve now and I do hope that I'll get to apply for another WAC trip somewhere down the road.

Finally, thanks for all that you did on the trip to organize, to make us feel welcome and to give us a life changing experience. I hope that you found a great place for your elephant pillow!

Best wishes to you and I hope that our paths will cross again.

Thanks,

*Bill*

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