Greetings IEDP Friends and Colleagues,

As the IEDP gets ready to wrap up another semester and another year, we look back at everything we've done. We are busy finishing term papers and finals and already starting to plan for next semester. This semester has seen some great lectures that you can check out below in our Storify-ed tweets and you can watch the lectures on our YouTube channel. We are also featuring some upcoming conferences where our students and faculty will be presenting.

Please find our faculty spotlight this month, Dr. Flavio Cunha of Penn Economics, and be sure to enjoy the interview with alumna Hannah Weitzer. As always, you can connect with us through Twitter, LinkedIn, and Tumblr. Have a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to connecting with you again in the New Year.

Best,

Kara Doriani and Adam Saks

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Upcoming Conferences

NYU South Asia Conference
Friday, February 14, 2014
New York, NY

Penn Ethnography in Education Research Forum
February 28 to March 1, 2014
Philadelphia, PA

CIES 2014 Revisioning Education for All
March 10 to 15, 2014
Toronto, ON, Canada

Teachers College ALAS Education Across the Americas
Late March, 2014
New York, NY

April 3 to 7, 2014
Philadelphia, PA
IEDPers enjoy a relaxing Game Night in Rittenhouse Square

Faculty Spotlight - Dr. Flavio Cunha

Assistant Professor of Economics, Dr. Flavio Cunha (pronounced Coon-ya) earned his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and has taught at Penn since 2007. Originally from Brazil, Dr. Cunha’s work focuses on the research and development of solutions to poverty and inequality around the world and in the United States. These interests sprung from a childhood spent in an economically poor town in Brazil, as he questioned why Brazil did not experience economic growth like other developing nations such as South Korea and China.

Dr. Cunha’s interest in labor income inequalities led him to his current work in the field of early childhood development (ECD). His research findings suggested that 50% of labor income inequality is due to pre-existing heterogeneities across workers (human capital), and 50% is due to labor shocks (environmental conditions). Discovering that 80% of difference in human capital between workers at age 40 were already present at age 5, Dr. Cunha realized the significance of early childhood investment to the furtherance of long-term societal growth.

The main determinant of long-term economic growth, he said, is technological advances. The reasoning behind this is that technological advances allow work to be done at a much faster rate and at lower cost. New technologies arise from research and development, which are possible only when societies have substantial-enough human capital. Since it is clear that human capital starts being produced from the moment of conception—for example, consider how smoking during pregnancy affects brain development—investment in early childhood development becomes an important way to create a situation in which...

MOOCs4D: Potential at the Bottom of the Pyramid
April 10 to 11, 2014
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

NYU International Education Conference
Mid-April, 2014
New York, NY

Recent Tweets

A "sketch" of doctoral education across Africa: via @uniworldnews

RT @GdnGlobalDevPro: Oxfam chief on the global problem of #gender #equality #uganda

RT @m_clem: "Refugees, Immigrants, and Education in the Global South" ed. by @AmeenaBK & Bartlett

Bringing design thinking to social problems - @FastCompany on @ideo

IEDP Lectures

Click on the links below to read the Storify lectures and check out our YouTube channel for video of the lectures:

Attaining Education for All: How do India and China Compare? with Abhimanyu Singh of UNESCO

Heterogeneity in the Classroom: A Systemic Approach to Liberating Teachers in Developing Countries with Dr. Joshua Muskin of the Aga Khan Foundation

A Global Framework for Advancing Early Childhood Development Policy: Emerging Findings from Sub-Saharan Africa with Dr. Michelle Neuman of the World Bank
people have equal opportunity in the market.

Most recently, Dr. Cunha has been using his expertise to help the World Bank on a project to improve child development in northeast Brazil. The objective of the project is to provide parents with information about the importance of interaction in facilitating their child’s development. Dr. Cunha’s data collection has found that parents in this region believe their impact on their child’s development is low. The project intends to utilize scientific knowledge about cognitive language development to create a curriculum that parents can understand so they learn to interact with their children.

Next semester, Professor Cunha will be teaching a course in GSE on the economics of international education (EDUC 545.001). In the class, students will compare how educational models in different countries and how this affects early childhood development. The role of economic theory will be discussed in terms of its relevancy to educational development. Lastly, the course will explore questions about program evaluation such as: How do we know if a program is working? Does a particular program work for some but not other children? And, what techniques should be used to evaluate programs implemented in different contexts?

For students starting out in the field, Professor Cunha stated simply: "Find your passion. You have to find the thing you can't stop thinking about." Even if he works for 12 hours in a day, it doesn’t feel like work because it interests him. "That's a great source of happiness," he said.

Alumni Interest - Hannah Weitzer

When I came to graduate school, I had just finished five years of international work with grassroots bi-national Palestinian-Israeli NGOs that run youth educational and empowerment programs. I was looking for both a change of pace and an opportunity to broaden my horizons beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. IEDP at GSE appealed to me as a great way to build on my past experiences and expand my perspectives. Within IEDP I was able to focus my studies around my interest in the intersection of education, civil society, and grassroots activism as tools to promote human rights and social change. The knowledge I gained through coursework and research at GSE gave me tools and language to translate amorphous ideas I had previously held about education, development, and grassroots movements into more concrete thoughts, theories, and arguments.

After graduating from GSE in 2011, I joined the staff of an international education organization, Global Nomads Group. I am now in my third year as Program Manager, focusing on developing and managing virtual exchange programs that connect secondary school students in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the US on topics of cultural exchange, media literacy, and global
citizenship, using project-based curriculum, interactive videoconferencing, and social networking. My past experiences of working in Israel/Palestine and my studies at IEDP continue to influence my current work as I explore ways to use educational frameworks to promote human rights and social change.