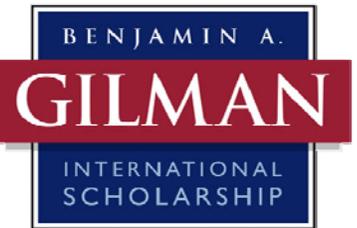


## HEATHER HUNT, EGYPT, 2009

Southern Methodist University  
Texas



I travelled to Egypt with the support of a Gilman Scholarship to pursue Arabic language studies and conduct research for my history distinction thesis at the American University in Cairo (AUC). While attending classes in Cairo I also volunteered as an English teacher with Better World. I taught a class of twenty-five native Arabic speaking refugees the English language. I also worked alongside my Arabic professor with a group of women to promote human rights awareness for women in the Arab world.

The ability to conduct on site research for my history distinction thesis and discuss my paper with leading Egyptologists was priceless. I used the research, materials, critiques, and advice I gathered in Egypt to complete my departmental

distinction thesis upon my return to Southern Methodist University. I presented my thesis, passed an oral examination and received distinguished honors for my work at my graduation.

One of the most gratifying experiences of my time in Egypt was the opportunity of language immersion. While attending AUC, I took both modern standard and colloquial Egyptian Arabic. My daily exposure to the Arabic language in and out of the classroom enhanced my language abilities. Through classroom and daily life experiences I began thinking in Arabic. To understand any culture holistically, one must grasp the dynamics of the language. I experienced this personally, as I saw how the Arabic language drives Arab culture. As I began to think in Arabic I found myself more integrated into society.

I believe that experiences shape and cultivate a person. Without the Gilman Scholarship I would not have spent a semester studying in Cairo, and therefore my life path would

have taken a different direction. I know the Gilman Scholarship changed my life in terms of personal development, goals, interests, and beliefs. My time in Egypt reinforced my belief in the importance of cultural exchange, which led me to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship. I received the Fulbright Scholarship in 2011 to further my knowledge of the Middle East and Arabic. Both Gilman and Fulbright opened my eyes and fostered mutual understanding and cultural exchange!

***“The ability to conduct on site research for my history distinction thesis and discuss my paper with leading Egyptologists was priceless.”***

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

For my Follow-on Service Project, I became a liaison between the study abroad office and students interested in going abroad. While in Egypt I blogged about my experiences. After returning to Southern Methodist University (SMU). I continued my study abroad outreach. Through

email correspondences, phone conversations, and personal meetings I mentored and encouraged students interested in travelling abroad, specifically to destinations in the Middle East. I also began speaking at local high schools encouraging students to consider studying abroad

in college. I stressed the importance of early planning in order to maximize scholarship opportunities. I also served as a panelist on a monthly study abroad question and answer session at SMU.