emerge as well from their brief exposure to a new culture. One student has had her backpack stolen at an Internet cafe. Laura Troyani ’05 is taken aback by the limits to political discussion—by the fact that Chile appears “so divided.” Eric Price ’05 is struck by “the level of classism,” by the “shocking” fear of seeming “low class” in appearance or manner—a theme Alexandra Hynes ’05 echoes. Melissa Dell ’05, who worked in rural Peru last summer, sees similar attitudes in the relatively homogeneous Chileans’ seeming disdain for darker-skinned Peruvian immigrants.

In the next few weeks they report vivid political debates, fresh cultural encounters, and experiences that challenge their American assumptions. By semester’s end, they will likely make discoveries similar to those of the two study-abroad classes who preceded them: four students each in the spring and fall 2003 terms. All had some facility in Spanish, and wished to perfect it. Some spent lots of time with their Chilean families. Others traveled nearly every weekend, to the northern desert, the Yosemite-like parks in Patagonia, the Andes, Easter Island, Buenos Aires. Most report lighter academic loads than in Cambridge. Flora Lindsay-Herrera ’05, in Chile last fall, found the term “a lot less stressful than Harvard,” with fewer extracurricular demands and smaller classes. It was “nice just to have a break,” she says. The students praise the DRCLAS staff for help from their arrival through arranging high-level internships.

A few had transformative experiences. Government concentrator Lucas Tate ’05 (a risk-taker who spent the fall semester of his second College year bicycling across America) immersed himself in poor Santiago communities and in farm communes during the spring of 2003, coming into touch with “amazingly different ways of life. That was what I really wanted.” He emerged with a sense of “people who fight for social justice, for some sense of fairness in the way you structure society and you take care of people,” even with scarce resources. “Having seen that, it’s emboldened me to be more demanding of U.S. politicians and policymakers to do something decent with the embarrassment of resources we have.” Brian Matthay ’04, an environment-