

First Year Experience Reading Project: Fall 2009

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time

Welcome to the Florida Gulf Coast University First Year Experience Reading Project! Every year, all first year students and many faculty and staff, including your Orientation Leaders and the Resident Assistants in Housing, join together to read a common book. Students will be introduced to FGCU's nine learning goals during orientation; they are at the heart of all our academic programs. The reading project for this year provides a foundation for meeting *FGCU Learning Goal: Community Awareness and Involvement*, which is defined as:

- Know and understand the important and complex relationships between individuals and the communities in which they live and work.
- Analyze, evaluate, and assess human needs and practices within the context of community structures and traditions.
- Participate collaboratively in community service projects.

The First Year Reading Experience Project asks that you consider this important concept in relation to a best-selling work of contemporary literature, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*, written by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.

Fall Semester Composition I & II Assignment Directions: Before you begin to read *Three Cups of Tea*, review the questions below with care. As you read the book closely, make notes in the margins and highlight passages that you find important. Consider these ideas as a way of preparing to join the campus and classroom dialogue in the Fall. During the first weeks of the Fall 09 semester, students will be required to write an essay in their Composition I and II classes with specific guidelines distributed by individual faculty. The Study Guide Questions below are intended to get the wheels of thought turning in preparation for this required writing assignment and other future assignments highlighting this book.

Study Guide Questions

1. Through his efforts, Mortenson has a moment where he thinks back to his life as a climber and remembers how simple it was: "The path was clear" (90). As soon as he begins his humanitarian efforts, his path becomes far more complicated. Is this a necessary difference between individual pursuits and community involvement? What is gained in his communal efforts that balances the loss of a clear path in his individual efforts?
2. Mortenson encounters children in Pakistan who possess a "fierceness in their desire to learn" (32), but who lack teachers, infrastructure, and books. Contrast this with the typical American school experience, where children often rebel against the educational system. What accounts for this difference? What is the relationship that individual students have with the educational communities that they join in America and in Pakistan? How does your experience fit into this more general description?

3. Mortenson is convinced that education, especially the education of young girls, has the ability to change the future. How important is global access to fair and unbiased education? Does *Three Cups of Tea* contain a blueprint for global change? What type of change does Mortenson think will happen as a result of the education he proposes? How will this change affect individuals and communities and the relationship between them?

4. The image of the three cups of tea provides a powerful backdrop for the entire narrative. Mortenson's connection with Haji Ali and a handful of others, and his participation in their rituals, fuels his mission to help countless others. What does this book seem to say about the far-reaching consequences of individual friendships? How do these individual relationships affect our communities? Do you have any personal experience with this sort of friendship?

5. Mortenson winds up having a huge impact on communities halfway around the world from his home. Usually people are most interested in their own communities, but he finds inspiration in a very different culture from his own. How does *Three Cups of Tea* exemplify FGCU's Learning Goal of Community Awareness and Involvement? To answer this, consider the three elements of FGCU's learning outcome listed above (the bulleted items after the first paragraph).

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