While the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been ongoing for generations, recent events have brought it once again to the forefront of international affairs.

In December 2008, after the end of a shaky six-month truce, Hamas—which governs the Gaza Strip—began launching rockets into Israel territory. Israel retaliated with heavy airstrikes, eventually launching a ground offensive into Gaza. After a month of heavy civilian casualties, mostly Palestinian, Israel and Hamas each unilaterally declared that they would cease fire.

However the almost month-long war has provoked numerous protests and demonstrations around the world, led by supporters of each side.

It has also, however, inspired conversations about how to build peace and cooperation in the region. In his first days in office, President Barack Obama indicated that helping to facilitate a Middle East peace process would be one of his administration’s foreign relations priorities. On his first day in office President Obama called leaders in Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the President of the Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank territories.

Soon after, the President appointed George J. Mitchell as special envoy to the region. Mitchell, who is of Lebanese and Irish heritage, is a former leader of the Senate. He notably helped to broker peace in Northern Ireland. Mitchell is considered to be neutral on the conflict, neither pro-Israel nor pro-Palestine. His appointment was seen as a substantive indication that the Obama administration would indeed follow through with a Mideast peace agenda.

President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton also approved a memorandum of understanding with Israel that pledged support for efforts to stop the flow of weapons into Gaza. The agreement, which was one of the last acts of the Bush administration, was signed by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. Livni now seems poised to become Israel’s next Prime Minister following elections in February in which her Kadima party won the majority by one vote.

It is with peace-building in mind that this semester’s State of the World seminar, which is titled "Some Common Ground: International On Common Ground: International Students Discuss Israel/Palestine Dilemma"

by Desa Philadelphia, Publications Editor
USC launches world’s first magazine focused on Public Diplomacy issues

by Desa Philadelphia, Publications Editor

In 2006 USC launched the world’s first graduate program in Public Diplomacy, establishing a Master of Public Diplomacy program as a joint effort of the Annenberg School for Communication and the School of International Relations. This semester the program launched the first magazine that is entirely devoted to Public Diplomacy issues. Titled PD, the magazine’s goal is to facilitate dialogue on public diplomacy issues between scholars and practitioners around the world.

The field of Public Diplomacy has been undergoing a transformation in recent years. Previously, it was considered the domain of governments that sought to communicate with, and influence, audiences in other countries with the goal of facilitating their national interest and foreign policy goals. A developing theory of public diplomacy is that it does not just encompass the international communication of governments but also that of non-governmental organizations, and even ordinary citizens. The idea is that all these constituencies conduct activities that influence others, and helps shape the global images of their home countries.

PD will have a limited print run and will be available online at Publicdiplomacymagazine.org. It will be published twice per semester.

The editors can be contacted at dialogue@publicdiplomacymagazine.org.
The U.S. Tax Season is Here!

by Rebecca Peterson, International Student Advisor

Most non-nationals are liable for taxation on any income earned in the United States from the beginning of their arrival in the U.S. Income normally includes salary, taxable scholarships/fellowships, income from U.S. mutual funds or U.S. bank accounts, etc. Taxes for each calendar year (in this case, 2008) are reported in the Spring of the following year and tax forms are filed with both the U.S. Government (federal) through the International Revenue Service (IRS) and the U.S. state(s) in which income was earned. For example, if you earned income in California (CA) and New York (NY) you would file separate state forms for both CA and NY.

This tax season you have until Wednesday, April 15th to file your federal and state forms. Generally, all F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents are considered non-residents (NR) for tax purposes for their first five years in the United States and would file federal form 1040NR (long form) or 1040NR-EZ (short form). Scholars are typically considered NR regarding taxation for their first two years in the United States. H-1B, TN or O-1 status holders who have been in the U.S. for more than 183 days should go to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (irs.gov) site resources to see if they should file resident rather than non-resident tax forms, specifically Publication 519 (U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens). ALL non-residents and each of their dependents must file federal form 8843, Statement of Non-Residence, each tax season even if no income was earned. You should note that being a resident for tax purposes does not mean resident for immigration purposes.

Possible Income Exemptions

1. Tax Treaties: Some countries are eligible for varying amounts of income exemption from taxation under tax treaties between their home government and the United States. If you were paid through USC and entered into the USC non-national payroll system (GLACIER) in a timely manner, these treaties should have been applied to your status. IRS form 8233 is what you would use to request a tax treaty and IRS Publication 901 lists current U.S. tax treaties. If you did not claim a tax treaty during 2008 and wish to, you will need to fill out and submit IRS form 8233 with your tax return. Tax treaties only pertain to federal and not state or local taxes.

2. F.I.C.A. taxes (Social Security & Medicare): F-1 and J-1 visa holders are exempt from paying FICA taxes for their first five years in the United States and these taxes should not be deducted from paychecks. J-1 scholars and researchers are typically only exempt for two years. If your employer has mistakenly withheld FICA taxes, you must work with them directly to request a reimbursement. If they will not assist you, you can file IRS forms 843 or 8316 to request reimbursement. Please note that J-2’s with work authorization are not exempt from FICA taxes.

Received Documents

You will possibly receive in the mail forms to assist you with filling-out your tax forms such as:

a) W-2: Statement of payroll amounts from an employer
b) 1042-S: Statement of tax treaty or scholarships/fellowships
c) 1099: Statement of income earned on bank accounts/mutual funds, etc.
d) 1098T: This form is only used by citizens and permanent residents for a possible education credit and is not of use to non-nationals.

Please go to the OIS tax section webpage for more detailed descriptions of these forms and their content.

Continued at Taxes! on page 10
BOOKS
Moving Between Two Worlds

by Desa Philadelphia, Publications Editor

Excerpt: Ruma feared that her father would become a responsibility, an added demand, continuously present in a way she was no longer used to. It would mean an end to the family she’d created on her own: herself and Adam and Akash, and the second child that would come in January, conceived just before the move. She couldn’t imagine tending to her father as her mother had, serving the meals her mother used to prepare. Still, not offering him a place in her home made her feel worse. It was a dilemma Adam didn’t understand.


For immigrants, becoming American is hard enough: what with learning the rules of the National Football League (NFL), navigating regional differences of cultures and accents, and having to choose between Pepsi and Coke or Burger King and McDonalds.

Added to that is the problem of trying to hold on to the culture and customs of the homeland while adapting to this new life. The result is often a tug of war between past and future—between looking forward to becoming the hero of one’s own telling of the American dream; and not wanting to completely lose the self one has come to trust, the self that was made in the home country.

Author Jhumpa Lahiri is a master at giving body and breath to this conflict. Her characters are Indian and Bengali immigrants who try to keep their hearts intact as they move between two worlds. They form new communities in the United States but try to ground their children in the values they have always held, even as they encourage those children to claim the guarantees of their American birthright.


Lahiri’s debut collection, Interpreter of Maladies, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999. Her 2003 novel, The Namesake, was made into a movie.


In Things I’ve Been Silent About, released in January 2009, Nafisi shines the light on her parents. Her book is about growing up with a mother who aspired to be much more than she was, even while becoming one of the first women to hold a seat in Iran’s parliament; and a father who was both enchanting and manipulative. The book also chronicles the changes that the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79 forced on the country, and on the family (Nafisi’s father, who had been mayor of Tehran, was jailed).

Nafisi is a Fellow and lecturer at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where her classes focus on culture, religion and gender; as well as Middle East issues.
MUSIC
The Sound of (World) Music
by Desa Philadelphia, Publications Editor

It can be hard to find music other than pop hits in the United States. Music from the rest of the world is available, however independent artists have a hard time breaking through all the noise about Britney Spears, Madonna and other flashy celebrity acts. Luckily there are places in Los Angeles where you can hear the songs that people are singing and dancing to all around the world. Here is a sampling:

The radio station KCRW (89.9 FM) is on the campus of Santa Monica College. However, its sounds reach far and wide. Fitting, since KCRW has become known for the music lineup it culs from just about every genre that is being played around the globe.

On Morning Becomes Electric, host Jason Bentley spins music from artists you may or may not have heard of. Every once in a while Bentley brings in an international superstar but this venue is usually reserved for the best of what you’re not hearing on pop radio. As the name suggests, the picks are diverse. The show is on from 9 am to 12 pm. At 11:30, there is usually a live performance by an in-studio guest.

Aaron Byrd (Fri 12 am to 3 am) and Garth Trinidad (weeknights from 8pm to 10pm) are known for scouring the globe for soulful hits, “from the favelas of Brazil to the Tuareg culture of Timbuktu.”

KCRW also has many hours of news from National Public Radio, Public Radio International (which produces The World, a news program that always ends with a story about a “global hit”), and local talk show producers.

If you’re just interested in the music, here is what you really need to know: kcrw.com is always on. The station’s website which offers podcasts and live streaming of its music programs has become well known to fans around the world. Many download the free daily “Top Tune” from the website.

Amoeba Music, at 6400 Sunset Blvd. in Hollywood, has become known as the place for the best selection of music in Los Angeles. Yes, it stocks all the Top 40 hitmakers but it also has a vast selection of independent artists, which it also supports with an in-store concert series.

Amoeba is also the go-to place in L.A. if you’re trying to find a special import CD from home. Expect to pay just as much for the hitmakers from other countries as you would for Kanye West, but also expect to be thrilled when you find that CD that you thought no one in the United States knew about.

For more information, go to amoeba.com.

They are not actually in Los Angeles. In fact, Cumbancha operates out of an 1830’s farmhouse in the small town of Charlotte, Vermont. However, Cumbancha is responsible for bringing some of the most dynamic acts from around the world to audiences in the United States, including Los Angeles. The label’s first release was the Idan Raichel Project, a band from Israel that encompasses all the musical genres that have made their way to the country as its population becomes more diverse.

Other Cumbancha acts include Novalima, a band from Peru that is also great at genre-bending; Zimbabwean soul singer Chiwoniso; and Rupa and the April Fishes, a raucous San Francisco based act which is led by a multilingual Indian-American doctor turned singer.

The term Cumbancha (Cuban of West African origin) refers to an impromptu party, and the music from this label makes you feel prepared to start a party anywhere in the world.

To find out L.A. tour dates, go to cumbancha.com.
Native American Author, Sherman Alexie, to Speak at USC

by Judy Hartwich, Senior Associate Director

I am a big fan of Sherman Alexie. The first book of his that I read was a collection of short stories called *The Toughest Indian in the World*. I don’t remember how I learned about the book, possibly from a small ad in the *New Yorker* magazine.

As soon as I started the book, I knew that this was a new voice for me and that he was an author who I would continue reading until I finished everything he’d written. I went on to read his other short story collections, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, and *Ten Little Indians*, and then the novels *Reservation Blues* and *Indian Killer*.

I was fortunate to hear Alexie speak at Pasadena City College a number of years ago and am pleased to be able to hear him again at USC on February 26, when he is featured in a USC Spectrum event. For international students this is a rare opportunity to get an American perspective that, unfortunately, you would not normally encounter in your sojourn in the United States. I highly encourage all of you who can, to come and hear Sherman Alexie on campus.

Here is some background on this important writer from his website [ShermanAlexie.com](http://www.shermanalexie.com):

Sherman J. Alexie, Jr., was born in October 1966. A Spokane/Coeur d’Alene Indian, he grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, WA, about 50 miles northwest of Spokane, WA. Approximately 1,100 Spokane Tribal members live there. Born hydrocephalic, which means with water on the brain, Alexie underwent a brain operation at the age of 6 months and

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**Here is what some critics have said about Sherman Alexie’s writing:**

“Alexie reveals himself to be a more fearless writer than one might ever have imagined: the stories are bold, uncensored, raucous, and sexy ... apt and true;...The lives he portrays are so finely detailed, the tales so carefully woven, that even the most culturally sheltered reader is transported..”

—San Francisco Chronicle Book Review

“A funny, irreverent, sardonic but sentimental, rebellious voice set beside his elder(s)... Alexie is the bad boy among them, mocking, self-mocking, unpredictable, unassimilable, reminding us of the young Philip Roth.”

—Joyce Carol Oates, *The new York Review of Books*

Stunning...Alexi’s prose contains the reverberations and human noise of the best Raymond Carver stories...Although Alexie’s stories may taste like grief, they read like heaven.”

—The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Continued on the next page
was not expected to survive. When he did beat the odds, doctors predicted he would live with severe mental retardation. Though he showed no signs of this, he suffered severe side effects, such as seizures, throughout his childhood.

In spite of all he had to overcome, Alexie learned to read by age three, and devoured novels, such as John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, by age five. All these things ostracized him from his peers, though, and he was often the brunt of other kids’ jokes on the reservation.

As a teenager, after finding his mother’s name written in a textbook assigned to him at the Wellpinit school, Alexie made a conscious decision to attend high school off the reservation in Reardan, WA, about 20 miles south of Wellpinit, where he knew he would get a better education. At Reardan High he was the only Indian, except for the school mascot. There he excelled academically and became a star player on the basketball team. This experience inspired his first young adult novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. In 1985 Alexie graduated Reardan High and went on to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, on scholarship. After two years at Gonzaga, he transferred to Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman, WA. Alexie planned to be a doctor and enrolled in pre-med courses at WSU, but after fainting numerous times in human anatomy class realized he needed to change his career path. That change was fueled when he stumbled into a poetry workshop at WSU.

Encouraged by poetry teacher Alex Kuo, Alexie excelled at writing and realized he’d found his new path. Shortly after graduating WSU with a BA in American Studies, Alexie received the Washington State Arts Commission Poetry Fellowship in 1991 and the National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship in 1992.

For more about Sherman Alexie and to read excerpts of his work, go to his official website: ShermanAlexie.com
L.A. Today Takes You From the Beaches to the Mountains
By Trisha Saini, International Program Assistant

USC has one of the largest populations of international students. Our students come from countries all over the world such as Germany, France, Malaysia, India and Israel, increasing the diversity of our campus.

However, though our international students thrive at USC, they have traveled thousands of miles away from home to come here, to a completely foreign environment. To help with the difficulty of adjusting to a new place, the USC Office of International Services has created several programs for our international students to get better acquainted with life in their new home away from home.

The L.A. Today program helps students understand what the city of Los Angeles has to offer. Many international students come here for the first time to study and this program allows them to experience the culture, famous locations and diversity of this city. Our past events have included a Hollywood Movie Star Home Tour, Halloween carnivals, ski trips to Big Bear and star parties at Griffith Park Observatory. Although we do take students to the tourist locations of Los Angeles, we also take them on outdoor excursions so they can experience skiing and hiking.

Our most popular event of the spring semester over the years has been our Big Bear Ski Trip. During this event, we take more than 50 students on a day trip to Big Bear mountain resorts, about a two hour drive northeast of Los Angeles, where instructors teach them how to ski or snowboard. Many students who come on this trip have never experienced snow before and learning how to ski and snowboard in the mountains of Southern California has been a very memorable experience for them. Over the years, the L.A. Today program has become more and more popular because of the diversity of our events. We hope that these events continue to help our international students understand Los Angeles and enjoy their USC experience.

For more information about our events, log on to: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/Activity/Programs/latoday.html or visit the OIS office in STU 300!

Diners’ Club Serves Up the Fun
Sara Behbahani and Lauren Brooks, International Program Assistants

Want a real taste of L.A. while meeting some cool USC students? Then Diners’ Club is the place for you! This semester we have exciting plans that will be sure to tickle your taste buds and introduce you to a world of culture, tradition, and history. Our program allows all international and domestic students to experience the diversity of Los Angeles by indulging in the cuisine from various regions of the world while mingling with some of the most interesting students and scholars here at USC!

More than sixty people showed up for our recent Wild Wild West night at the Saddle Ranch Chop House! On March 6 at 7:30 PM we will go out for a Night on the Town—in Hollywood. We’ll sample the spices at Electric Karma Indian restaurant in April. And Olvera Street is our destination for Mexican food in May!

For more information email your questions to OISDC@usc.edu.
Look for our postings at the OIS office in STU 300!
Israel/Palestine from Page 1

*Students on the Israel/Palestine Dilemma* is being convened. Every semester the Office of International Services sponsors the panel in order to give students a forum to share their perspectives and experiences with regard to a current issue of global political, social and economic importance. The seminar on the Israel/Palestine conflict will take place on **Wednesday, March 4 at 5 pm in the Doheny Memorial Library, Room 240.**

The panel will be comprised of students from Egypt, France, Israel, Palestine and the United States. It will be moderated by Dr. Laurie Brand, the Director of the School of International Relations, who specializes in Middle East international relations. Dr. Brand is a past president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America and currently chairs its Committee on Academic Freedom.

*The following news sources have had comprehensive coverage of the Israel/Palestine conflict:*


**Al Jazeera English**: Use their regional links (Middle East) to follow the latest fallout of the conflict: [English.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net).

**Bitterlemons.org**: This website presents both Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints on the conflict and on the peace process. Produced, edited and partly written by a Palestinian and an Israeli, it seeks to promote understanding.

**Haaretz Daily**: The Israeli newspaper has ongoing coverage at its website Haaretz.com.

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**STATE OF THE WORLD PANEL DISCUSSION**

**Some Common Ground:**
International Students on the Israel/Palestine Dilemma

A panel of international and U.S. students will share their perspectives on the recent escalation of the conflict in the Middle East

Moderated by
Dr. Laurie Brand, Director, School of International Relations

**Wednesday March 4, 2009**
5 pm to 6:30 pm
**Location: Doheny Library, Room 240**

*Sponsored by the Office of International Services. For additional information: 213-740-2666*
Taxes! From Page 3

Filing for Taxes

Federal
This year, OIS is providing FREE online software called CINTAX to assist USC non-residents with their federal tax forms. It can be accessed through the main OIS website (“Taxes”) and will assist you with both filling out the correct federal forms applicable to you (such as the 1040NR/1040NR-EZ and 8843 forms) and generating them. You will need to have either a Social Security Number (SSN) or Tax ID number (ITIN) in order to file your returns. If you do not have a Social Security Number, are not eligible for an SSN, CINTAX will assist you with filling out a request for an ITIN Tax ID number through form W-7. Once you have completed all steps in CINTAX, you will print your forms to sign and mail to the address provided by CINTAX.

We strongly encourage you to make copies of all forms and supporting documents and to mail the originals with a tracking number to document receipt. Please make sure to have all your information forms (W-2, 1042-S, 1099, etc.) before you fill out your tax forms in CINTAX and mail them. Once your tax forms have been received by the U.S. Government, it is extremely difficult to then file an amended return and CINTAX or OIS would not be able to assist you with this. Also, of special note is that non-residents are NOT eligible to file their taxes electronically (E-file) but must print and sign hard copies to mail-in.

If you are considered a resident for tax purposes, you will need to file forms 1040, 1040A or 1040-EZ, depending on your particular case and, unfortunately, cannot use CINTAX.

State
We offer free State of California workshops to assist non-residents with filling out their CA tax form. (540NR) and state tax booklets are available at the OIS front desk. Please bring to the sessions your completed 1040NR from CINTAX and any W-2’s received. If you are a resident for tax purposes, you would fill out CA 540 or 540-EZ on your own.

The March Workshop is scheduled for:

Friday, March 27
4pm to 6pm
Location: Taper Hall of Humanities Room 202

Important websites and resources
Federal website, Internal Revenue Service: www.irs.gov
For:
• Publication 519 (U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens)
• Publication 901 (U.S. Tax Treaties)
• Form 8233 Request for tax treaty exemption
• Form 843/8316 Incorrect withholding of FICA tax

State of California website: www.ftb.ca.gov
Other state websites: http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/forms.html

Thinking of using Tax Filing Software? Be Aware of Potential Problems:

Major tax software packages such as TurboTax and H&R Block TaxCut do not provide forms 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ as part of their software so you would not be able to file for federal taxes with them. You can purchase tax software programs such as TurboTax and TaxCut to do both your federal and state(s) tax forms but be careful not to buy used software as U.S. tax laws can change each year. Software can be purchased at stores such as Target or Best Buy or online. You can also use the services of a local Certified Public Account (CPA) or work with a tax reporting firm (such as H&R Block) if you have complex tax questions and they will quote you a fee for services based on your particular case.

PLEASE NOTE:
The staff of the Office of International Services is not trained or licensed to answer questions concerning your tax situation or offer any tax related advice.

USC students and scholars should consult tax professionals for specific tax advice.

OIS tax information can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/OIS/tax/tax.html
OIS Celebrates Graduates

The 27th Annual International Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony is scheduled for April 24

by Sarah Bang, International Student Advisor

Students show off their awards at last year’s International Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony.

Every spring OIS celebrates the achievements of our graduating international students and also recognizes those students, staff and faculty who demonstrated passion and commitment in supporting our international student community. This year, the OIS International Graduation Reception and Awards Ceremony will take place at the Radisson Hotel near campus on Friday, April 24 from 5 to 7pm.

OIS will present the following awards: Academic Achievement Award, Leadership Achievement Award, and Faculty and Staff Appreciation Awards. The Academic Achievement Award recognizes undergraduate and graduate international students who graduated in December 2008 or who will graduate in May or August 2009. To be eligible for this award, undergraduate students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.50 and graduate students must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.80. Students graduating in May or August 2009 will be eligible based upon their GPA as of end of Fall 2008.

The Leadership Achievement Award is presented to international or domestic students who have illustrated enthusiasm, motivation and commitment in serving the international student community as student leaders in USC clubs and organizations during the 2008 – 2009 academic year.

The Faculty and Staff Appreciation Awards are presented to one faculty and one staff member at USC for their significant contributions to the international student community. These are individuals who have shown extraordinary dedication above and beyond their job responsibilities in supporting and assisting international students on campus.

If you or someone you know is eligible for any of these awards, please download and fill out the appropriate nomination form on the OIS website, www.usc.edu/ois and submit the nominations in person at OIS, STU 300.

All USC students, faculty and staff are welcome to attend the reception and awards ceremony. We hope that you are able to join us in recognizing the accomplishments of graduating international students and the dedication of those who support our students’ well-being and overall success at USC. If you have any questions about the event or nomination process, please contact the OIS International Program Assistants at IntlGrad09@gmail.com or stop by our office at STU 300.

Good food and music are always part of the festivities.
Business student Harbakshish Sidhu rides the mechanical bull at a Diners’ Club outing to Saddle Ranch Chop House in Hollywood.