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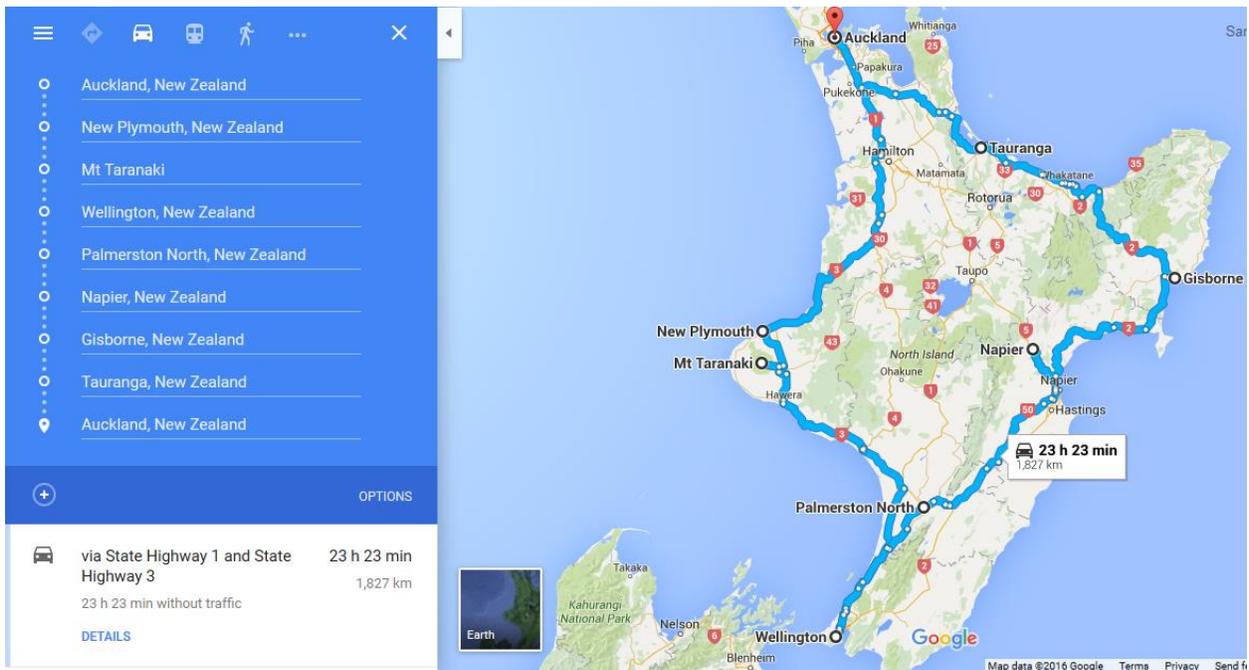
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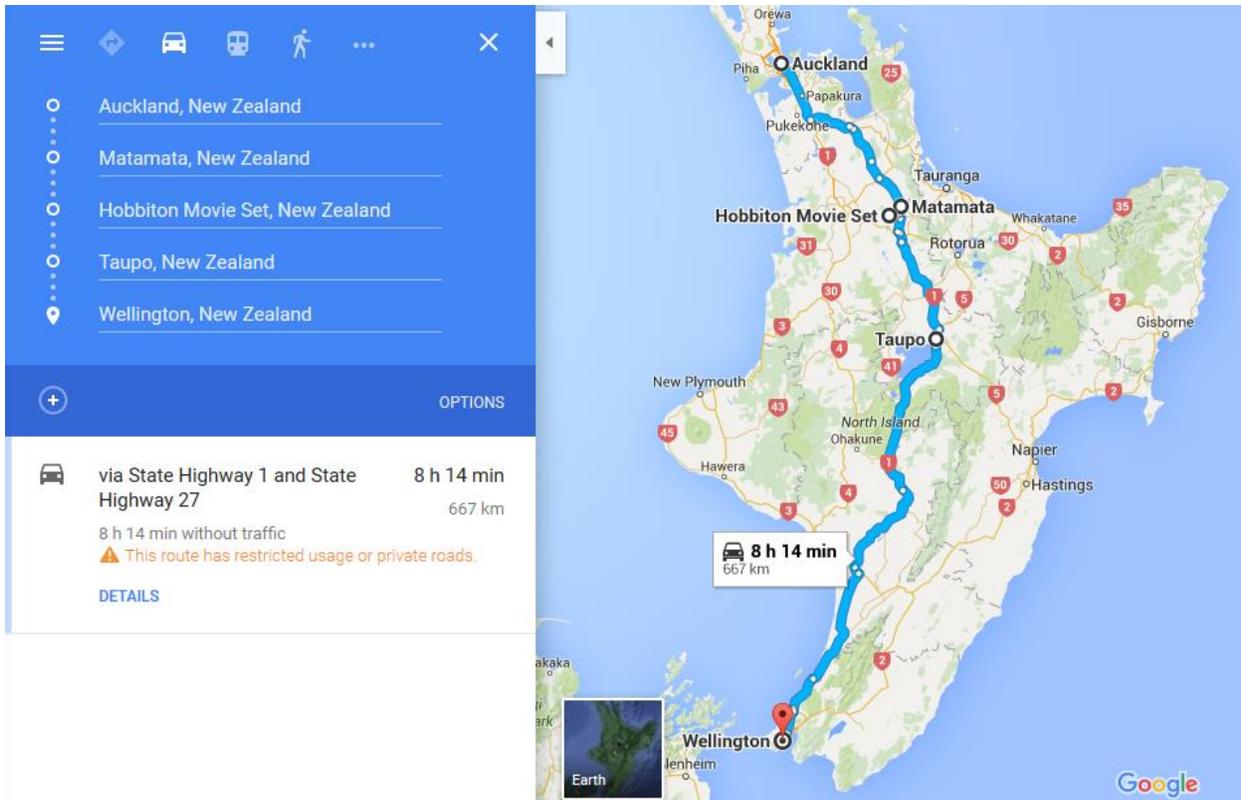
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A map of our travels:



Before the class began: we did a round robin of the northern island from Auckland to Wellington and back again.



The route the class took from Auckland to Hobbiton, Taupo, and then into Wellington. We then left by plane.

Journal Entries:

December 16 – The Flight(s)

We got picked up by green ride around 3 in the afternoon and almost promptly we were pretty slammed for most of the day. The airport is this kind of hurry up and wait thing which I do not like in the least. Unfortunately due to school issues I was up until around 3-4 in the morning doing the lot of my homework prior to taking off and I still have a few things I need to do. That said, the plane seems to be a good place to do it right? Wrong. On the international flight I didn't have any time. Because of all of the stuff we were doing I slept rather solid during the plane flight. I watched fantastic 4 with Selene, and when I woke up about 9 hours later I watched about half of Jurassic world and we had landed.

Not having my arms due to surgery made me particularly frustrated about the whole transportation situation as Selene had to do all of the heavy lifting and I had to instruct her to the point of contention as to what I needed. As soon as we landed in LA we were about 40-60 minutes late and we had to rush to an international terminal for which I had no idea how to get there? Dr. Aoki had asked me to read a prior chapter on LAX and its diverse groupings and history which I must confess I did not do. I decided however that I would look at the cultural elements of the airport prior. There was sincerely no time. LAX was a total nightmare. When we came up to the claim desk for international flights we didn't know if we had to check our baggage and we weren't sure if we needed a new ticket but no one in the New Zealand queue could tell us. We were quite frazzled about it. Regardless a really nice kiwi helped us get back into line at the security checkpoint since he had been through this several times and answered the questions we needed.

On the plane flight there was a rugby player who was in the U.S. for a study abroad off of a sports scholarships and the people next to him chatted him up for some time. I listened in but as I'm not a huge fan of sports I didn't catch much. He gave me the impression that New Zealand is very sports-ey and the people are always in to one sport or another. This seems to make sense from what I understand of New Zealand but this gave me a very "frat boy" feel that I hope isn't what I pull out of the trip as a whole. I hope this is not my own biased stereotype and honestly I am sure it is. There has to be a counter-culture right?

December 17 – THIS DAY DISSAPEARED

It literally did. This day has been wrapped up over the 16th and 18th. Yay for Timey-Wimey Stuffz.

December 18 – The Force Awakens

We landed in New Zealand! Auckland airport was relatively simple to navigate and although our customs visit was long it was uneventful. The uneventful airport hangar however was the center of some issue between Selene and me in that she was stressing quite a lot about the problems of transportation while I personally didn't care what the plan was as long as we got a place to stay, a theater, and a way to travel the country which was likely by car. It resulted in about 2-3 hours of us just sitting around looking for whether we will take a car around to see the country or whether we will take the [scenic train](#) to Wellington and then back to Auckland. We decided on the car so we had transport

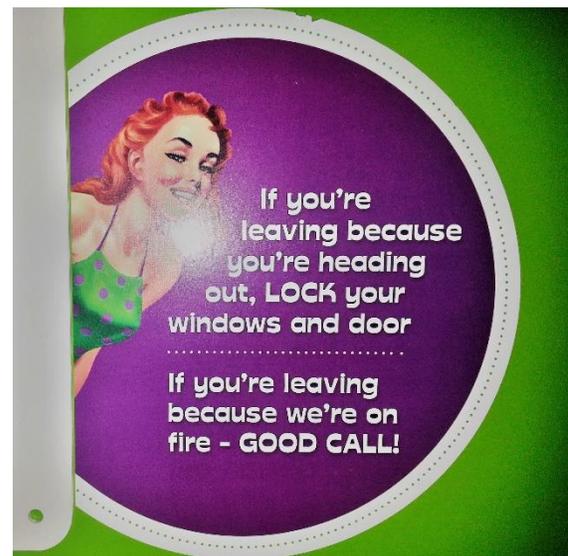
inside cities and around to other less populated portions of the country side and went to take a bus to the car rental station. The bus manager however told us we were getting on the wrong bus...falsely. We were needless to say quite frustrated when we discovered it would be a 35 minute wait for the next bus and we were half an hour from our location, but Selene said to go with it. We walked half the way with all of our luggage and all my pain, and health problems made us get a taxi. We got the car, found a place to stay at JUCY hotels and decided that the stress could be well removed by going to the force awakens and seeing it before anyone else does!



12/19: We considered taking the [northern explorer train trip](#) running from Auckland to Wellington NZ.

The hotel was fantastic. The JUCY hotels in New Zealand are more like a massive backpacking chain where you can rent an RV to see the nation with and more. We opted just for a hotel room for the night while also doing AirBNB for the rest of the trip. (Which I must confess I was worried about given my inability to use arms, and our need to dilate as transgender people...)

The theater that night was particularly interesting as the movies were like twice as much as they are in the U.S. The commercials before the movie weren't really movie related either. There were 3 travel commercials for touring New Zealand featuring the [scenic train](#) mentioned above and then another 2 about food. One in particular was interesting in that an entire ad space was spent on selling Ramen packets in the theater ads. But they didn't call it ramen. They just called it "noodles". It made very little sense to me honestly. Most individuals eating ramen as normal



12/19: Door sign at JUCY that depicts its branding almost perfectly.

are college kids in the U.S and most of the time it is marketed as Asian food. Here in Auckland where you can find every kind of Asian symbol on every kind of sign maybe the Asian-like brand is non-existent? Apparently they only call them noodles here?

The movie itself in my opinion was basically a fan dub. The characters names were switched from Jace to Kylo Ren and Rei seems to be Luke's daughter who is not named Rei. Instead of being Jace solo and Luke's second daughter facing off together as cousins, it was Rei, who as we see is basically unrelated and Kilo Ren who is solo's son indeed. Kilo did not have a particularly strong force movement it seems, but they did give him - the big baddy - emotion and obsession which is a first for the star wars franchise apart from the abysmal attempt of 3.

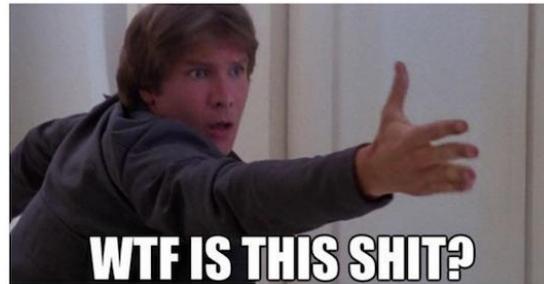
While many of the characters were heavily based on the old scenes and characters fans love about the series, they all had their own unique personhood. It was well liked and received, but the issue is that it was a plot recycled from the old series. I guess that is okay, but I wasn't as exciting as I thought I would be if they did use the expanded universe's canon that originally pitted the next generation of Skywalker's against each other (to be fair this is also the only arch I like and know about).

The screenplay and actors themselves were amazing in my opinion. The attention to minority groups was particularly refreshing to me as well. Rei as a woman carried a lead that was not about learning to be a hero, but about being adventurous and strong as a person. It wasn't about gender, it was about a hero's call regardless of what you're expected to do. Fin's interactions with Rei and Kylo showed a multi-faceted understanding of his gender without making big issues of his race, and adding to the dimensions of traditionally 2 dimensional Stormtroopers, clones, and let's face it; cannon fodder. It showed that he was a strong character where race relations could and would be overcome they did everything they could to avoid black portrayal issues in the media such as the tokenism of his interests. He didn't get extremely mad, he showed reason above violent intention, he didn't have particularly strong suits to weaponry of any form and for the most part, he was treated like a person with emotions that were complex and real.

After the film we decided to turn in for the night. We would be leaving Auckland and going on a coastal route round-robin around the country starting tomorrow. We would first head to new Plymouth, then wellington and after that Napier and right back here for class to start.

December 19 – Auckland to new Plymouth

#StarWars 🍷 tickets already going for \$1,000 on eBay: [screencrush.com/star-wars-tick...](https://www.screencrush.com/star-wars-tick...)



RETWEETS
201

FAVORITES
144



The movie was the highest grossing and tickets were rather....expensive for some.
Source: <http://designtaxi.com/news/380994/LOL-Funny-Reactions-To-Official-Star-Wars-The-Force-Awakens-Trailer/>



This day was long but magical. The country here is gorgeous. It definitely seems like a slightly more tropical Colorado and the only thing it doesn't seem to have....is the elevation. The hills and carapaces are covered in vegetation that is as green as the hills of Oregon but the rock and shale is more similar in feel to the Rockies. I have always said I could probably never leave Colorado because of the mountains but honestly, seeing this country I'm not so sure that that is really true anymore. Ultimately the country has incredibly windy roads and I have no doubt the dense forestry has taken a profound effect on the development of the land (although the farming seems to have taken care of that). Much of the area has been taken for farming purposes of sheep and cattle, but you can see a lot of patches of land not only preserved with its regular vegetation but also thriving. I haven't seen basically any brown along the east coasts at all.

On our way however we did see a few things of note being the first beach I have ever seen, and several of the small towns throughout the area. The black Sand beach brought tears to my eyes. We were traveling down route 2 and the majority of it was spent more or less inland because the coastal route seemed like it would be too much of a problem. We came up on the first eastern horn of the nation toward new Plymouth and as soon as the road hit the coast the mountains opened up as if Grand curtains. The vegetation teased the ocean's waves as they blocked the view and then the big reveal.

The oceans waves were maybe 2 or 3 feet high crashing on the water. Selene stopped and I headed down the hill and onto the sand. The black sand was almost entrancing, with various shades of dark grey to the purest of black. The sand was fine and pounded down by the water to be so flat it looked like a silk blanket laid over the coast. The water continued to rush up on it and quickly recede. Because of surgery I wasn't allowed to



get in, but I crept up to the water and watched the soaking and drain of water with every wave hitting the shore. A lot of drift wood remained on the coast and the shells and pebbles were scattered somewhat haphazardly over the place. Selene and I decided to collect some shells and place them in a bag with some sand. We will apparently be able to keep them going through customs as long as we remember to claim them so that is good and nice.

We also stopped through several very small towns that were honestly very depressed and from what I see they didn't have economies aside from farming and industries to support them. Business seems to have greatly concentrated in the Auckland area and what I presume to be the Wellington area. This worries me because the country hasn't diversified their incomes in enough areas and the farmers are obviously hurting. Tin roofs look to have been battered from rain and the woods are covered in mosses and look rotted. It worries me that many in the rural area might not have the incomes often praised for in New Zealand and the country is expensive as it is. I worry these towns will be forced to aggregate in the big cities as well if the industry changes and farming begins to dwindle. There may be a rise in the competition for jobs, a corresponding increase in the population density of the cities and much of New Zealand will completely lose out. I plan to ask some of our home stays on this topic but I don't think the one we're with would know to be honest.



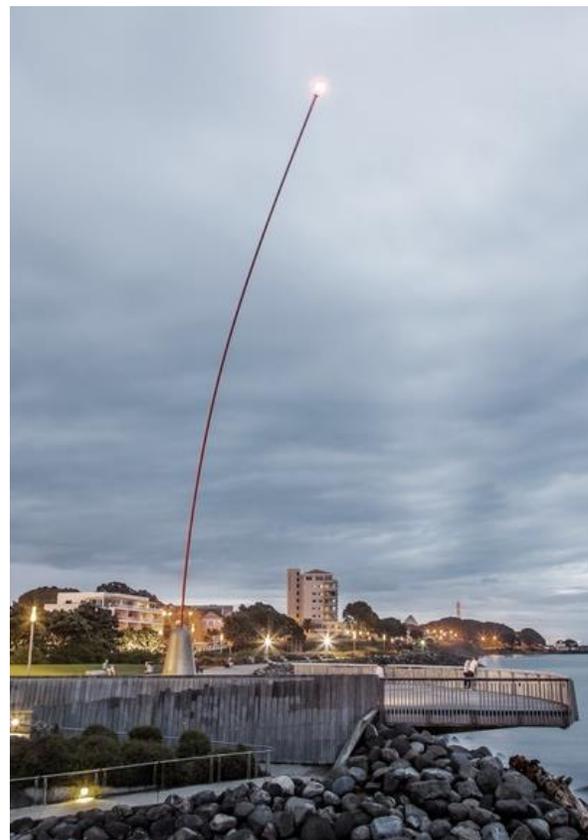
By the end of the day we had traveled for about 4 and a half hours. We drove into new Plymouth at night time and as we did so much of what we saw looked like tourist trap coast town that we have seen in the movie. The buildings were largely in a pier like 1940's feel despite the town being a little older than that. The people seemed like they weren't resident's so much as rich tourists and retirees. The restaurants were all relatively nice and the space in new Plymouth compared to Auckland was insane. We had dinner in an Indian paneer restaurant on the sidewalk. While Selene was in the bathroom I got to speak with the waiter for a while.

His name was Simmon and he grew up in New Zealand to a family of Indian immigrants. He had been able to travel to India and all over the Thai peninsula due to his family being rather large and having a lot of weddings somewhat often, but he had never been to the U.S. He has a large number of family that moved to San Francisco so he was picking my brain about it since he may go over the next few years. I had just finished last semester reading the gift of a bride which details a lot of the common issues that ensue with arranged marriage in traditional Indian cultures and many of his siblings had gone through it. It has gotten me thinking about Indian immigrant receptivity in the U.S versus here in New Zealand since the entire country has a huge amount of successful, career ready, and eligible people immigrating to various countries. I noted it down to write here in my journal tonight and I might continue to research it when I get home. Anyway he seemed very interesting in regards to my trip to New Zealand and my communication job, but it could also have simply been him waiting to take our order while we were waiting for Selene to return from the bathroom so I would hardly call him the most reliable informant.

After dinner and a little finagling with technology and communication we found a woman willing to put us up for the night in New Plymouth over AirBNB, but we had to be out by 8 AM the next morning. We agreed and headed to their house. The house was in a higher section of the city just north of the pier in New Plymouth but I was astonished with the view I saw. We had a view of the old lighthouse tower, the wind wand, and the beach. On one side there was a massive rock jutting out of the area called Plymouth Rock and a mountain range on the other. Allegedly you could also see Mt. Taranaki on the other side but it was too dark to see it really.

Still I could tell this was a high income area and the houses were very impressive with architecture that was modern, and likely built within the last 20 years at most. The woman we met (Judy) was incredibly nice and her husband was quiet, but hospitable. We talked with them about what we could do in New Zealand and we also discussed a few cultural mores in New Zealand revolving around strangers on sidewalks. Apparently you don't say high, smile or make eye contact like you do in cities in America. We spoke about how peaceful and open many of the residents are to their neighborhoods and small talk is a huge deal here.

She told us a few tidbits about the town and about their resident international artist, Len Lye and his [art gallery](#). He was the one who made the [wind wand](#) that hangs out on the pier in new Plymouth. Apparently he is a big deal here. Simultaneously however the "Christmas lights" festival was going on in a local park and many of the neighborhoods including her own were lifting up their houses tonight. The celebration of Christmas in their area seemed a little odd as all of the shops were covered



Len Lye coastal wand

Source: <http://govettbrewster.com/visit/new-plymouth>

in snowmen and snowflakes decorations but the snow was non-existent. The weather was quite nice in all reality. We decided to venture out and see the lights in the neighborhood anyway.

The lights were insane. I am assuming that the traditions in the area are a lot more rigorous because they don't have to deal with snow galore during the fall months (spring for them) and even though rain and cold temperatures existed over the holidays the lights probably got a lot more attention. We are also in an affluent area here so it might be expected that light competitions exist. The status symbol of how much you celebrate Christmas is alive and well here. That said however the lights were dazzling. One of the houses opened his gates to us and allowed us to walk in and view them all. One of them had an animatronic baby manger that seemed custom made and it rocked. It had lights all over reading out merry Christmas and happy New Year. It had an entire snow man built out of the scant branches of the trees. And more lights were found all around the neighborhood in what Selene and I thought was severe excess.



If that isn't enough however they had hired a gelato, crepes, and coffee truck for the event where you could get hot chocolate and enjoy the lights. The kids were immense fans and the whole neighborhood was out and about. We got to speak to several of them and they all smiled happy about the event. Many of them were immigrants coming largely from England and European countries but others were considering themselves long held natives with their relatives coming to these shores with the first immigrations. No one from America though. It seemed odd that they were primarily white and immigrants given the prevalence of Indian culture but having looked it up apparently only 1/5 New Zealanders are actually "native pakeha" or native European descendants. I have noticed overwhelmingly though that the Polynesian and Pacifica cultures continue to concentrate in the northern cities.

Having had our fun we headed back to our bed and laid down for the night. Tomorrow we will be heading in to Wellington. It seems like we're going a little fast to be honest but hey, we only have about 10 days before class starts right?



December 20 – Mt. Taranaki and New Plymouth to Wellington

The morning in New Plymouth we had to be out of the house for our homestay by 8. We talked pretty in depth with them before leaving though. They requested we stay another night which I'm actually pretty happy about but we opted to just simply get to Wellington after the day was out. Our day in New Plymouth was largely going through suburbs to determine if it would be a good place to settle down but we decided it wasn't a good place to stay and got breakfast on the wharf before moving on.

We started with a walk along the wharf and over the museum and more, but we didn't go to the city park where apparently there was a massive light display to look at the lights. We didn't much see the point as it was day light and the lights in the neighborhoods said so much more about New Zealand's coverage of the holiday. The coast gorgeous and some individuals had come by and balanced rocks on top of one another in stunning manners. Rock stacking is apparently a global event and that is honestly pretty cool.



Afterward we proceeded to our next destination....that massive pimple of the earth - Mount Taranaki for the day to see the lonely mountain as it is presented in the Hobbit.

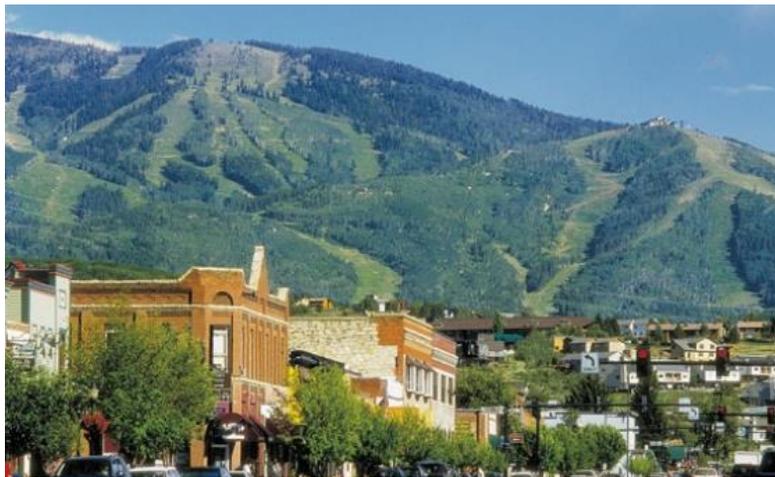
When we got started on the road the surroundings were actually quite interesting with the coastal rocks and areas of forestry clashing along the waves. The roads were windy and difficult to travel in. When we came off of the northern portion of the horn however the landscape surrounding Taranaki became shockingly flat and beautiful with farms littered under the shadow of the mountain. The majestic



mountain jutted up from the landscape with immense grandeur. The snow still existed on the top of the mountain and people were still wearing heavy jackets to climb it. The wind was insane and the forestry was dense so we opted not to hike it since my surgery prevented me from staying warm (shivering sucks when your pecs are out). We fully intend to do it when we move here though I think.

After a few hours on the mountain we climbed back down and started on our way to Wellington which was largely uneventful. The land was flat and honestly kind of brown for the first time. It was like we were in South Dakota or Wyoming for the most part. The sheep and the stratification of the hills was the only interesting thing for some time. About 2 hours out of Wellington though the wineries began to crop up and then the forestry farms, and then the hills began to get higher. The mountain tops to the west began to meet us at the horn of the south peninsula on the north island and the ocean peaked out briefly. It began to look a lot like Fort Collins and then like Colorado Springs, and then the last hour in to Wellington was basically like Durango. The views were brilliant and fantastic by the time we got here and wellington probably has the most affluent architects ever.

Honestly speaking if I can take a break from the amazing descriptions of scenery though, it took a ride in to Wellington to really see how privileged Selene and I were geographically to be in Fort Collins and the rest of Colorado over the rest of the United States. We live in the most beautiful place in Colorado to my opinion and this entire country's world renowned beauty compared only a little better than what we have in our back yard. That says a lot about New Zealand but it also says a lot about the northern Colorado region along the eastern mountains.



Pop Quiz! Is this image of New Zealand, or Colorado?

Photo Credit: <http://www.destinationcolorado.com/destinations/detail/steamboat-springs>

By the time we made it to Wellington we had already set up an Airbnb with another man living in Johnsonville about 20 minutes north of Wellington. His place was on the top of a hill built into the hill sides of wellington. They honestly looked a lot like the creative housing units I have seen in Manitou Springs where they were built into a hill side almost haphazardly like blocks. We were scared the car was going to stall heading up the last hill to his place to be honest. We got up to the top of the hill and parked in the reserved parking to meet Brian, our homestay for the evening.

Brian was a very reserved man and was rather introverted but still very pleasant to speak with. He was a Buddhist with a shrine and several statues of Buddha, bodhisattvas, and Hindu statues around his home. The two layer floor plan of his house was a really nice design that was similar to the one we

had in the U.S., but it was very small and modest. After speaking to him for a while about Wellington and Colorado he informed us he was quite tired and would like to spend the evening alone so we obliged him and headed upstairs to fall asleep early since we had gotten up so early at July's house just that morning.



December 21 – Meeting up with friends for the 1st day in Wellington

The morning we woke up in Brains he had already left for work. I really appreciated the time and the respect and the trust he put in his Airbnb participants. It seems that Airbnb takes rather good care of their people by enticing adventurous people okay with others to the platform so I don't think there would be much incentive for trouble right? We took showers and cleaned his shower out of hair since he is bald and obviously doesn't check for hair situations in his shower. We turned the bed over and started sheets washing for him and then took off ourselves.

We were planning to meet a friend that Selene knows from online at the flashlight forum named Kane, and his girlfriend was supposedly coming so we spent much of our day waiting for the meetup. Since it was happening in the evening though we had a while to kill.

We decided ultimately to drive around Wellington and look at Massey University since it was a likely candidate for my post graduate education. It turned out that today was the last day that the campus was open so we decided to take a look around. I met with the communication office and then they spoke with me about possibilities for transferring over for my post graduate degree if I opt to go for it. Apparently Massey has a post bachelors honors program that if done successfully enough I can get into the program and essentially skip the half of the masters that is super boring for most. Then I'll do the masters classes by the end of 2 years of study and the end thesis for the entire degree path would only take another year. Basically I'll be finishing school within 3 years if all goes well (I've been in college

for like 4 now so I hope it goes well). If I opt to do this plan though it will be more “applicable” to the rest of the world which apparently means a lot of the studies will be in the community around me rather than theory based. It would be really nice since I’ll be doing more activism and stuff that I feel matters and less studying existing works (don’t get me wrong that is really important, but it would drive me positively insane if I wasn’t DOING stuff).

After several hours on the campus and walking along the coasts we decided to meet Kane at the beach side for a brisk walk, get coffee, talk for a while. The topic of the conversation was mostly how insane American politics, economics, and culture was for our very odd systems and how we handled inequalities. Kane is actually 1/3rd Maori and went to school on scholarship for it but didn’t quite succeed. He is currently working at a grocery store and honestly doing alright by himself. He lives with his girlfriend and together they are able to afford a small house with a few animals. Regardless though he isn’t particularly interested in politics and spends most of his hobby time online communicating with the rest of the world.

After a few hours of talking with him over coffee on the beach we went to dinner just off of Cuba Street, a common and “hip” area in Wellington. It was a sight to see really as the area was a food court with hundreds of vendors stuck in a small alley way kind of place. I felt like I was in a burning man food court. After eating we met up with Kaitlyn, Kane’s partner. We talked for several hours and the flashlights came out (Selene and Kane met on a flashlight forum for which Kaitlyn and I have no interest so we essentially talked amongst ourselves). Kane and Kaitlyn spoke with us at length about a lot of the issues faced in New Zealand that are “behind the scenes” including its huge environmental issue. Apparently the Cows and Dairy are creating a lot of overgrazing issues in New Zealand while also contributing one hell of a carbon footprint but they are better for the farmers as they bring in more money. The sheep simply aren’t cutting it for farmers but many Asian conglomerates are moving in and doing more industrial farming which is taking money from the farmers making the small towns largely struggle and in the meantime it is causing a huge ethnic diversity issue for the European pakeha and the Pacifica. Most of Auckland was Asian but most of the south island is white. According to Kane there isn’t much for racial discrimination here but there is definite inequality in the system that he witnessed himself trying to go to college. That said though he does pass as white so he doesn’t face this much. That said however the economy and class issues are still widely apparent for them. The concentration of the wealth is getting higher and higher in class and the cities and feel it but they are still voting for higher class because they’re supposedly doing a good job. Their political parties are splitting up and splintering from each other as well.

We got off of the world based topics and began to focus on them personally – their life and such. They both work in retail and at grocery stores and the two of them have to work to maintain a home but they can live comfortably when they are working on it together so this is a helpful thing for them.

After a bit Kaitlyn and Kane suggested we take the dog for a walk so we took a night walk up and down the rose garden and talked about various things like flashlights, different cultural phrases used in countries, the prevalence of curse words in the area, and whatnot. We spoke of games in America vs. New Zealand, and how America tends to be much more overtly sarcastic. The gorgeous views of the garden were amazing. Regardless though I was not feeling very well. I felt like I needed to puke and I really needed to release my bowels as I have been having a lot of problems of late (you know, travel and

all). The garden was a bit cut short as a result. They kept us up for the night and will keep us up for tonight as well so that is very helpful.

December 22 - Staying with Kane, and Kaitlyn



When we woke up today Kaitlyn was the only one there and Kane had gone to work. Selene and I decided we would honestly like to try the public transit, but didn't get around to it today because I was still recovering and didn't want to be without a more comfortable ride home. I didn't feel so well in the morning regardless.

When I woke up Selene was still sleeping and Kane had already gone off to work. I got a cup of tea and some milk for myself while Katelyn spent her morning largely alone. Katelyn had lost both the cat and the rabbit so she spent her day off looking for them and cleaning around the house. When Selene woke up we decided then that we would go to the rose garden during the day.

We had an actual breakfast at the rose garden's main café along with an iced coffee that turned out to be more like a root beer caffeinated float. Coffee culture in New Zealand, I have noticed, is markedly different than that of America in that they don't rely at all on coffee that is immediately available on the go. Their Americana's are the equivalent to drip coffee and when you order anything iced it means less ice cubes and more....ice cream. When ordering a long black it is considered black coffee but it is really an Americana (a



shot of espresso plus water.) When you want to order a plain coffee with cream you have to specify you want a flat white but if you get that they steam and add the milk anyway. They don't use cream. If you want a basic coffee with cream and sugar you have to specify you want a long black with milk (because they don't have cream) and sugar. At that point they often look at you funny and ask how you want the milk. On the other hand they actually do have small shot drinks that are available in addition to any vanilla ice-cream assortment you could want. They have piccolos (one shot of espresso with a bit of milk) and they have espresso shots, they have affogatos (vanilla ice-cream with a shot poured over it), and they even allow you to add alcohol in a few areas so when you ask for an Irish cream cappuccino they will often inform you they don't sell liqueur. They don't use syrups like we do in the U.S and instead include fairly average powder like flavors.

Regardless in addition to the coffee I had an apple crumble with rhubarb and Selene had an overly buttery and overly cheesy roll. Afterward we headed into the rose gardens and walked around quite a bit.

After the rose gardens we then carried from the rose hill to the Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt area to look at the suburbs there. They were very large with really high costing rent and pay along the hills and most of the "modest" housing was found further in land along the Johnsonville area. Despite that the wharf area of the lower Hutt area seemed remarkably industrial and poor with apartments there. Once we had looked at the area though it was past 5 and I was a bit tired so we headed home and Kane was there.

We opted to head to dinner at a burger fuel around 7 and Kaitlyn joined us. We spoke a little more about American and new Zealand life, in front of a radiator as the temperature and weather there was quite terrible that night, and finally, we settled down to bed. It was largely an uneventful but fun "residential" experience. This was something we really needed for us to determine if we really wanted to live there or not.

December 23 – One last day in wellington

We woke up for the last day in Kane and Kaitlyn's house to experience real public transit in wellington before we headed to our next spot tomorrow. We both took showers, packed up everything and opted to go to the grocery store real quick, and park the car at a park and ride. We wanted to experience wellington in regards to public transit because driving in the city was abysmal and we wanted to see what that would mean for us to go to Massey University. It was stressful, you couldn't

find a place to park, the people were outrageously bad at driving and the concentration of people made maneuvering impossible. We parked at the park and ride in Johnsonville's countdown parking lot, hopped on the train and headed to the central station. From there we took a bus to the CBD and Massey University to see how it navigated. Although the map and all of the bus numbers were incredibly complicated ([seriously, view this PDF](#)) the actual transport was fairly easy.



We walked back from Massey to the old clock complex and visited a steampunk shop that we had been told about in America a while ago. It was a beautiful place with a lot of amazing corsets, modified devices, actual inventions and jewelry but we didn't stay as long as we would have liked. I couldn't try on any corsets or Victorian stuff due to surgery and the prices were expensive. I also didn't want to have to lug any of it home so I opted to come back when I came back to Wellington during the school portion of the trip. We continued to the shore of the city and spent the day essentially on the pier where the beautiful ocean lay a wonderful view for all of us. It was great overall. We made it back to the transit center for dinner, took the train back to Johnsonville, attained our car, and stopped at a hotel where we could do our physical therapy and relax for the night.

While I was at the hotel I turned on the TV to see what was on the various media and on the Maori channel there was a haka competition going on in what we think was Rotorua. The 7 tribes all came up and did haka, poi, and other ceremonial dances in very beautiful and authentic manners in my opinion. I was a bit entranced so we spent a good portion of the day watching it. Then we went out got fish and chips (way too many fish and chips for that businesses and my weights own good) and went to bed.



December 24 – Wellington, Palmerston North, and on to Napier



After waking up at the hotel the next morning it was time for us to leave Wellington for a bit and we were headed to Napier next through Palmerston North. The main goal of Palmerston North was primarily for the campus of Massey University, but as it was closed we wouldn't be able to meet anyone.

On the way through we headed up through the mountains in to the middle of the country a little bit and the way there was extremely similar to how it normally looks on our way to Vale or Steamboat country in Colorado. While the mountains were nowhere near as impressive there was a lot of rain runoff and the vegetation was green and covering the entire place. We came across a lot of fancy small towns that looked like they had come out of the early 60s and the majority of the buildings were restaurants, small markets or governmental towns, and especially farming equipment.

There was a markedly different look of the farming lands as they were very old, decrepit and had buildings who were falling apart on themselves. Sheep seemed to fair far better in this environment then did cows because we saw a lot more of them along the mountains and hills. It seemed the highways were in worse shape here suggesting more use then average, and when we stopped at the pinnacle of each mountain crest to do some sightseeing and look at the beautiful landscape it was always ruined by a do not litter sign and a ton of trash.



As we entered Palmerston North the campus was readily available so we decided to start there. As we came up to the campus it was covered in a thick line of trees and honestly, it didn't make too much sense to me that they would have a campus in the middle of nowhere. But when we came around the trees that were put up and turned onto the campus I was floored. We pulled up to the entrance's billboard sign the entire campus was as large as probably 2 Colorado State Universities. I was a bit overwhelmed just looking at the locations on the map – both in sheer quantity of them and the plots, I felt a little overwhelmed.



The majority of the campus is not accessible to cars and I was still feeling a little iffy so we opted to go around the loop. Drove around it for about 2 hours and the campus started to look significantly less dominating as the majority of the buildings were about 2-3 stories and they had simply put the campus across a large area then actually having a massive campus. The main area was rather hidden but it was easy to find the social sciences department where I would end up if I didn't go to the wellington campus where they host most of the communication courses.



Because of conversations with the professors and advisors in Wellington a few days prior I knew that I wouldn't get stationed in these buildings but it was entirely possible for me to end up on this campus. We took a brief car tour of the science towers, the lodging we clearly wouldn't be using, and the gym areas. The campus was hugely focused on Agriculture which isn't much different from CSU and UW which were my top choices in the states due to how cheap they were. Ultimately we decided we would have to come back if we made it to New Zealand again because I didn't know what we would want to do if we couldn't talk to anyone on the campus at this time.

Once we got to actual Palmerston we noted quite immediately that it was a bit deserted due to the lack of people. It seems this will be how Christmas looks in the majority of New Zealand. Regardless the town seemed frozen in the 50's or 60's by way of architecture, the event posters throughout the town, and the format of its downtown area which was centered on a traditional theater. It seemed much like the downtown area of Cheyenne Wyoming. As no one was really there we decided to take a walk around the main district and search for some shoes as I was having trouble with the shoes I was wearing. After noting the expensive costs of New Zealand shoes (the cheapest I found was 50 bucks) I spoke with the woman there and she said that the cost of shoes was usually quite large. She asked if I could stay until Boxing Day which would have significantly less cost. I told her yes, as I would likely be in Auckland or Tauranga at that point, but honestly I have never heard of Boxing Day. Apparently it starts on the 26th so I'll look at the prices then.

Boxing Day it turns out is a secondary holiday to Christmas in which several employers would bring their left over food and provide it to their less affluent employees in celebration of Christmas. This kind of disturbs me largely because it is suggesting that the more affluent should give food to the poor rather than uplift them given their financial situation and more so, it is only one day to do so. It also

pre-supposes that one should be coming to work on the 26th and it was like listening to a painfully bad excuse to bring a person in to work the day after Christmas in order to sell stuff. I need to look into it more but it sounds shady to me.

Anyway, because the town was virtually empty and eerily backward in time we decided to take off rather quickly after taking a quick drive through the suburbs to look at potential housing situations. The town didn't make any impressions and the only person who was actually willing to speak with us was the woman at the shoe store. I don't blame them as it was Christmas Eve, but the town looked very un-livable; kind of like Laramie in that respect.

On our way to Napier we went over a massive collection of mountains that caused both of us to gape almost constantly. I started feeling a tad car sick and an "overlook" showed up so we decided to stop. We first stopped at a hot spring half way between Palmerston and Napier which was closed for the holidays, but it was still very peaceful. Several of the more rare Kaori trees remained there still and the pines were taller than they normally are here. That is one thing I have particular noticed is the rarity of the domestic plants and the transplanting of timber and pines that clearly are not natural in the land. I guess it makes sense as the soil and the environment is perfect for farming the lumber and it worked out for New Zealand, obviously.

Once we stopped at the second overlook which looked over a gorge close to Napier we were struck by something I honestly did not expect of environment conscious New Zealand. Just as confirmed on the Maori channel with the non-profit "war" show I watched at the hotel, and with Kane's statement about New Zealand being lazy about cleaning up environments, I discovered trash poured out all over the hill. It is a real shame that the people here are not taking care of this country to be honest. It bothers me a lot that the hill is so covered in trash any time we stop in the country. I do find myself wondering if it is due to the disconnected country side and the lack of "adopt a highway" like communities. The cities seemed very clean and generally well kept with many trashcans and what I assume are a comprehensive set of programs. The cities were very environmentally conscious and sought to reduce their footprint but this seems very difficult when the farms are largely composed of livestock and there are no proper programs for towns in the sticks to grow.



We decided to spend a fair amount of time collecting as much trash as possible in the bags we had found there. The irony was that there was a sign that said you cannot drop any trash on the site and there it was right in front of the sign. We packed what we could pick up in the car and headed off.

Alas a trunk full of trash proved to make the last hour or so of our trip quite uncomfortable because of the smell. We had collected a lot of alcohol and soda cans so it reeked quite terribly. The windows remained open for our entire descent from the pinnacle of the mountains over Napier and we rolled into a small town 20 minutes from the outskirts of town to drop it all off.

While there I ended up having a long conversation with the 2 convenience store workers about it all and according to them, there is a 20,000 dollar fine if police catch you littering on the highway, and it ranges from a cigarette bud being about 700 dollars to cleaning your care out on the side of the highway costing about as much as your car. I was amazed by this and given that in all of our time driving along the highways we had only seen 2 police vehicles, it seemed impractical. Allegedly the country contracted with companies operating in various areas of the country to go around and pick them up but I feel that the responsibility needs to rest with the community. We discussed the “adopt a highway” system and the recycling systems we had in our area and they seemed somewhat interested but it’s not like they could do much.

Around 8 PM on Christmas Eve we rolled in to Napier and the only thing that was left once we got in to Napier was finding a place to stay. We didn’t want to inconvenience a person on Christmas Eve and 3 people had already refused our invite to stay on AirBNB so we settled down in a small hotel called the Albatross on the inner coast of Napier. It was led by a couple from the UK and they were tremendously nice. We didn’t want to intrude so we struck a conversation with the owners whose house was in the back of the hotel about the holidays and they said it was normal for them back where they come from. Apparently in the UK hotels were actually a really important part of holidays because many of the relatives were far less likely to room with their family and in New Zealand there was normally quite a bit of room with which to do so in houses so hotels were very empty. I feel like this was likely to do with cities and urban areas more than family matters, but I honestly don’t know. We got in our room and were pleasantly surprised by the felt blanket reading “welcome” on it and settled down for the night, finished an anime, slept for the holiday the next morning.



December 25 – Christmas in Napier and off to Gisborne

Christmas day started off very slowly. The town wasn’t just dead, but the only people on the streets were Asian minorities who were likely just not in to celebrating the holiday or would rather work. There are a lot of reasons for immigrants to be the only ones keeping shop open on the holidays but regardless they were still the only ones open. They had no customers in them, and they were open for half day hours. One was an Indian place and another was a gelato place. We got gelato and walked around Napier’s town square deserted and with only windows announcing their Boxing Day surprises for

the next day. The entire situation was surreal. There were snow men and flakes in the windows, everyone had Christmas dress on, the animatronic parts of the displays continued to sway and none of the shops were open.

Our stroll of Napier wasn't particularly impressive. We started at the beach walk which included some people enjoying the terrible (honestly it was really bad) pebble beach and we went into a center clock tower area and here we found a good amount of people walking around. All of the tourists, it seems, were out on the beach but it was too cold to be in the water, the pebbles were too large to go barefoot, and the wind was too great to spend a lot of time there. Many of the kids and adults spent very little time staying still on the benches and wharfs and higher areas.

For lunch we decided to stop by a "steak-house" in Napier fashioned after Charlie Chaplin that honestly is the best steak I had since I had left Wyoming. That was highly surprising. The steakhouse was American in its food, but cooked by a renowned and trained Chinese chef who opened the restaurant. The lunch went until 3 pm so we sat down for an hour. The meal was incredibly filling and my time with Selene was quaint and quiet. When I finished I heavily tipped the waiter knowing full well that this is not something you do in New Zealand and struck up conversation with him.

Apparently he had studied culinary arts starting in high school in a prefecture of central Hong Kong and went on to a local college. He then apprenticed and backpacked in Europe and got to learn and use his cooking skills for several years. He said that meat was a particular interest to him as the Chinese and greater Asian meat markets tend to be rather expensive and premiere products. He then went to an American eatery and worked as a professional chef in a steak house before settling in New Zealand with his wife as his opportunities were better, the life simpler, and the family closer. So a prime cut of meat at a rather expensive price cooked by a prime chef made the best Christmas present ever.

We got on the road from Napier to Gisborne next and it was quite uneventful. Once we got there the entire town was dead so we stayed with a woman who had accepted our request on Christmas day evening named Dawn. When we arrived the house was covered in doilies and Victorian dishes and it was just in almost every way and old grandmother's house. She used 2 rooms on Air BNB. One was a small sun cot that was not occupied while we were there and the other was a fairly nice room if a little aged and it was well kept. The smallness of it was a little awkward though.

Dawn was overall very nice to us that night. She was a huge fan of meeting and talking about her town, about New Zealand, and traveling. She herself used to be a teacher in Australia and New Zealand and she was a "snow bird" meaning she was in Australia for the winters and New Zealand for the summers where she kept this house. The house was owned by her parents before she inherited it and she kept it looking more or less the same. I got a pretty big impression that she was very past oriented as she continued to watch fairly old television and everything in her home was old. Her phone was analog and her cell phone was tremendously simple as a flip phone from like 2004. Her attitude was tremendously positive and she wanted nothing more than to sit down to dinner with us. I got the impression she was kind of lonely, but her family was in town and they had just gotten back just before we showed up for our AirBNB. She made a salad for us which I was very happy about (aside from the asparagus) and then we went to bed after watching a little anime on our own.

December 26 – An afternoon with racially ignorant people



The next morning at Dawn's proved to be very....interesting. As it was the day after Christmas her sister (Sarah) had flown in yesterday from California and came over to visit. Her other sister (Christy) of course followed and they were all fairly old, minimum age of 50. We had all gotten to talking over various things about New Zealand over a very perish breakfast; most notably, history, politics, the Maori, and global warming issues. It should be noted that this is a personal account of what happened but I have written this with thorough conversation with Selene who was also there. It was a very "enlightening" interview with this family as they have considered themselves very long time kiwi. They all grew up in the house we have been staying in and Gisborne has for a long time been seen as a white high class area due to its surfing beaches and wineries.

At first it started simply with breakfast on my own while I watched some anime to catch up and wrote up the last 5 days of this journal. Around 9:30 or so Dawn came in having taken a walk on the beach with her sister. She said that she and the other sister would be coming over to have breakfast and since not much was going on in Gisborne right now we were welcome to join in just enjoying the day. We began talking in the kitchen and eventually moved out to the patio where conversation went from rather light to rather.....harsh.

Initially we began by talking about American media. Donald trump was on all three of the sister's minds because they were very worried and very opinionated about him given his pseudo-fascist statements. They had the view that he was xenophobic, racist, fascist, and [expletive]. They wanted to know why American's were so stupid as to vote for him. I of course being the person that I am was happy to oblige in answering this question from my point of view as a minority advocate in the LGBT+ community and staunch independent centrist liberal.

After a good 7 or 8 minutes of getting them caught up they started making statements that were initially troubling, but nothing I hadn't heard before. They agreed largely with the nationalist party in New Zealand which is basically a very central right wing for us. They seemed to secure in

understanding native New Zealander's economic needs in this party over the rest of them and they compared the national party more toward bush. I brushed off the inconsistency in their economic superiority complex thinking it was them simply having only bush as the most recent republican to compare the issues to. They then went on to say that the liberal parties being the green party and the labor party were so concerned with "small" problems that the big ones got worse when in power. I don't know about NZ politics so this was a fantastic learning opportunity. I had them describe each party for me to ensure I was aware where they stand. They went through 5 rather than the 3 I had heard; national, labor, green, Maori, and the "young" party.

After describing each one to a rather objectively defined manner I asked where they stood politically. The split was 2 nationalists and more conservative 1 labor person (the labor person was Sarah from California...). They also said that New Zealand isn't very politically active. This is something I have heard multiple times before and they said there isn't really much need as things are "pretty okay as they are", but they did freely admit that the government was largely run by the rich and, "they were okay with that." Here I noted that I was speaking to largely older, white women who had inherited the house we sit in.

I asked them if they thought the American system was unfair and they said yeah absolutely. To confirm things regarding their economic opinions I brought up stats on New Zealand which showed the same growing trend in concentration of wealth in upper class as we had in the U.S happening now. Wealth concentration was getting higher and higher among the communities, but they said that politically speaking this wasn't really a huge issue since the lower classes still had a relatively okay standard of living and the people at the top knew what they were doing better. They all responded that the farming communities' in the country subsisted quite well, but having been around the country and seeing the near "shanti town" feel of many of the buildings who had literally collapsed on the farms and the economic downturn in the southern portions had me obviously confused.

They couldn't really elaborate on the urban vs. rural argument they had going but I did push on and ask if there was any political issue with the fact that Maori and pacific islanders had very little stake in any of the country at all. They interrupted and informed me that the Asian communities were "inundating wellington and Auckland". I noted that the signs in Auckland were dual printed in English and Asian languages of varying sort and there was a large percentage of them. I asked them to tell me what they thought and the answers were almost directly synonymous with what we think of the Mexicans. They are bringing larger institutions and businesses and fashion and they are crowding the cities with their ways of life. They are choking the people who are here and the natives (who they define as European and Maori both), and they are stealing jobs. They went on to say whatever issues the farms in the country did have was because the Asian companies were buying up land and industrializing the farming in the country. (A scape goat often used to simplify a complex economic problem is to blame it on those coming in to the country.)

Here I started getting careful how I phrased things asking what they thought of job security in the southern portions of the country and if they see the Asian prominence creeping any further south. They told me it had already happened (I had seen none of this in the smaller towns on the north island and highly doubt it is different on the south island). Regardless they had a very xenophobic opinion toward the whole ordeal saying that the Asian population should not have been spilling over our borders. Internally I rectified my opinion considering the fact that New Zealand had a low population,

high standard of living, and minimal immigration requirements. They were subsidizing immigration into areas that weren't Auckland, and they were welcoming technological and STEM job positions due to the lowering international cost of farming. As a result of course more Asian and Pasifika would be coming into the borders and it is likely a good thing globally. That said however, there would obviously be some contention within the nation.

After the economics and Pasifika conversation I switched to the Maori and here we begin to get into the meat of it all. I started with Maori culture and politics where they said that the reason for their job issues was largely cultural for the Maori as they don't prefer their underlings to succeed (this is false, and it is largely just that generations are expected to maintain the same job positions and assist in the same manners as prior ancestors.) and in so doing they blamed the economic and socio-ecological shortcomings of the Maori people on the Maori culture instead of discussing ways to equal the playing field while remaining sensitive to that heritage.

This was odd as it seemed so simple a statement and they didn't understand the problem with what they said so I asked where that was based. They quoted Kaopapa (the Maori philosophy of familial teaching and being one with one's self) which I had already done plenty papers on. The notion of Kaopapa is a collectivistic one where relationships are open and even as possible between tribal leaders. This means that should a decision be reached in Maori culture the leaders have to make sure everyone was okay with decisions and that the mana was free flowing and relationships solid. Many westerners viewed this as lack of ambition or slow going meetings that are inefficient and therefore unsuccessful.

I asked them how they would go about fixing the gross inequality in Maori business ownership, the cheapening of their culture through tourism, and educational deficit while remaining respectful of Maori Kaopapa. They told me that at some point if they needed to own a business they would have to learn how to run one as if the Maori Kaopapa was the "wrong way." It seems they didn't quite mean it that way, but continued speaking to the Maori culture as lesser none-the-less. As they continued talking Christy said that the Maori were at the heart of themselves a very "warring" culture and barbarous in nature citing their Hakas. As a result she felt hesitant to allow them any more sway in what lands they could hold, how much governmental power they had, and whether they could remain 100% "free" and equal. "If we let them have their lands, and have free control without our government's involvement their way of life might cause war again because that is just the way they work. They warred often between tribes and that will likely re-surge."

Here a few things came to mind as you might think.

1. They had an impression that Maori culture – something that is very peaceful and so docile as to have a history of a dance preventing war – was akin to sharia law and American islamophobia ideals.
2. The idea that Maori would "de-volve" reminded me of the black man's Sammi, Bambo, and Mammie symbols where black people were viewed as "domesticated" for their better sake and would go wild if not checked.
3. And the idea that providing more land and rights to a native people would cause them to return to a way of life they originally had. This was ridiculous but something we would do quite often in America toward Native Indians at the turn of the century.

By this time Selene had joined us outside and was hearing this all for some time. She had the same general impressions as I did in that this was backward and racist in a way that people would say things without knowing what it really means or says. The conversation about ethnic diversity with the Maori and Pasifika needs to be had in New Zealand but from this conversation at least, we got the impression that it wasn't.

Given this very small nation and the open Maori culture which wished to share their world with everyone, as opposed to the closed cultures of American Indians who sought to maintain tribe continuity and had complex political relationships in junction with rituals, I could not believe I was witnessing this conversation. Several days prior Kane had warned me of such obtuse ethnic issues hidden in the country but I didn't think it would be so easy to tease out. I had previously researched it but to see it happen was a whole different situation.

After a few more topics, quiche, and internal judgements later, we decided to wrap up and Selene and I packed and got ready to go. By this time it was about 2 or 3 in the afternoon so we chose to spend Boxing Day in Gisborne looking at it as a potential place to settle. A fruitless effort honestly but we spent time drinking ginger beer along the beach and watching people surf the low tide. We walked around town which didn't go well and I looked at shoes. I couldn't find any my size nor ones that were adequately priced on boxing day, so frustrated I gave up and we began our drive to our last location; Tauranga.

The drive was uneventful and we managed to get an AirBNB with a woman named Brenda along the coast of the bay of plenty. The town seemed very like Florida however and although it was a much bigger town and likely the 3rd largest on the north island, the woman that we stayed with had a whiff of odd around her. She had spent time living in California in addition to Tauranga and all she could ever do was complain. She complained about the honestly fantastic weather, and about her house having walls too thin, and about the awning outside her porch hitting the window and about the location of her house being too close to the water, and about the weather being too warm in the summer and hot in the winter. I happen to be fairly nihilistic and complain fairly often but this woman dwarfed my problems.

Regardless we opted to stay and we had some Indian for dinner. We wanted to go to one of the mountains famous in the area but opted not to and just go to bed since the woman had very strict showering hours the next day, wanted us out by 8 AM and had a strict 10 PM curfew. I could tell that she likely wasn't all there which is fine, but after such an exhausting day and trip, we just wanted to go to bed. The place was terrible, I must confess.

December 27 – Tauranga and Auckland



That morning we didn't really want to stick around Tauranga because it had given us a bad taste in our mouths from what we experienced of the Florida like retirement home neighborhoods and the massive houses. We had parked to have breakfast for a bit and watched several frat boys park on someone else's lot to go to the beach, 4 girls litter right in front of us and not care, the entire town was going to a festival at the beach front and it was worse than driving in a Denver traffic jam, and the entire community seemed pretty.....stuck up. So we just....left.

We got into Auckland around noon today and it was honestly fairly normal. We got a hotel right next to the Amora in preparation for the class and we went out for lunch on Queen Street. We took a trip along the wharf and walked up and down it for a while finding a cloud like building that was developed for the tourists to have events, and for the communities to have as a rec room during off periods. It was interesting because half of the building was for public use and the other half reserved for the day so one half was playing ping pong or chess or other games and the other was setting up for some elaborate banquet.



Later this evening (I just got back) we opted to return the car instead of tomorrow because we didn't want to deal with it at 9 in the morning. We cleaned it out and then it took about 2 hours to get it there, check it out, and take the bus back home. Taking a bus from the suburbs was literally the worst thing I have ever had to do. It was terrible. We waited for an hour for a bus to arrive and it took an hour

to get on the stop that we needed. We got to see the city but transit is a definite bummer in Auckland from what I can see so far.

We got into the hotel, I spent some time updating the journal up to now and now tomorrow will be a day off for me before the class begins!

December 28 – Finally, a day to rest

Today we watched anime. We also went to the east suburbs by bus to check it out and see if it was an option to live in but without the car we weren't able to do much. We relaxed basically because class is starting and I caught up the journal up to now. We watched Return of the king which was a 4 hour film, got dinner which was hells pizza and talked for a bit. I'm excited for tomorrow but also very nervous. I'm also not excited to get up at 7:00 in the morning as well so there is also that. Selene found a cool spoon trick in the sink at the hotel though. I don't expect you to know what that means.

December 29 – First day of the study abroad!



Today was pretty lax but odd. I met up with my class after all of the time I have spent basically walking around New Zealand alone with Selene. It felt weird as if I was required to “stay with the group” instead of freely explore the country as I wished while at the same time not welcomed as part of the group. I'm sure this was never any of their intentions but the trip started with a quick “tour” of Auckland going from Ponsonby road to Queen Street and then back up and around. I had already been here before so I felt like a hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy as many of the questions the other students asked about New Zealand or experiences or history were things I already knew – either because I had experienced it myself or researched and read about it prior to the trip (I had to do extensive research on the problems and politics of new Zealand in my prior cultural research class with Dr. Aoki). They didn't really have too much to say and I'm sure that was because of jet lag and being in a new place.

Communicating and being a part of the group was a little weird. Almost right off of the bat my communication styles and the way that I speak didn't fit in. Normally in the geek and LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other) community informational tidbits offered to my friends will start a conversation and we can discuss from there, but doing so was kind of a "shot into the dark" with this group. There was far more small talk and the pace went so quickly from one topic to another. Many of the subjects they spoke of were things I had no idea about and I felt odd whenever they would talk about their boyfriends. While one of the girls is in a non-traditional relationship most of the attention was focused on missing their partners and mine was still in the same city.

I eventually noticed that they were getting a little annoyed and I started feeling the kind of "know-it-all" vibe coming from them whenever I offered a handy fact or some form of conversation starter I was used to. I felt introverted for the first time in a while and I didn't really know how to talk to them. I found some anxiety in interacting with them and over-reacted by trying to be more involved and gear the conversations more toward what I felt comfortable: a mistake I recognize now. I also noticed that everyone had a focus on 2 or three others and asking questions. While this is the default for communication I have never been very good at it since it makes me feel very uncomfortable asking questions about other people out of the blue.

In the LGBT+ community this is actually rude because you could touch on a trigger. Normally you are supposed to offer something about yourself and then the other person offers something about themselves on that topic if they can or want. This normally sounds like you're talking about yourself a lot though so obviously in this group that will have the opposite effect. But I couldn't bring myself to adapt to the conversational tones today. I really hope this doesn't become a problem in the future...

We had dinner at a dining place and Selene was very shy. I tried not to push her, but it became very awkward for the both of us being placed into a situation like this where all of the individuals are cis-hetero and all but Pete are at least very feminine and in some cases high fem. Selene didn't want to talk much at all and I didn't really want to speak about my private stuff but just surface level things. I was feeling tremendously dysphoric being in this environment and feeling like I wasn't "girly" enough, or "young enough" or "interesting" enough while at the same time knowing that if I could just adapt and not sweat it they would be fine with me.

I felt better later on tonight though as Pete, Sarah, myself, and Selene went to the docks for a drink and we had one of the best mixed drinks Sarah has ever had. I didn't think it was very good, but when we talked about nerd stuff it made me feel included knowledgeable and happy. We spoke about the force awakens and although I don't think I was very articulate discussing how the arc is supposed to go and how excited I am about it, I appreciated that conversation today. It made me feel included, however overbearing and full I was in the conversation.



December 30 - My birthday, and we didn't really do much for it honestly



The day wasn't particularly special to be honest and that worked against Selene and I. The day started with TVNZ with Will Hine and another kind manager woman who gave us the general tour. The conversations were more cursory than I hoped on the tour and the girls were asking questions that were not relevant to my personal learning really which is fine. One important factor was the social media was still in a one way broadcast model with not much work being spent to get their stories responding rather than just increasing their ratings. This surprised me given the large amount of social increase that has to happen in the next several years for most entities to really survive and maintain trustworthiness. That said it is traditional TV so maybe they are just trying to keep their market on and they are catering to a larger market. They seem to think it's all fine so I'm not going to claim to know much on it. During the time we were there the entire newsroom was basically on break so the cultural and community aspect of it all just didn't seem to work out. Still I had fun touring the location though and I got to dip into my artistic side and nerd out about the cameras they were using and the interior design with the set.

We then went to Radio New Zealand and met Noelle McCarthy who is a radio host. She was working, but it was a much more laid back thing. Seeing RNZ was really cool, but once again it didn't offer much to me about my area of study. Noelle did use Instagram and twitter often personally, but the entire station as a whole didn't spend much time on internet. They did say they were going to expand into the YouTube TV podcast thing so that people could see the background and feel more included in their favorite shows. Of course there is also the 2 way conversation with the radio programs as well so I certainly hope that that will be successful. It seems though that the future of radio is still amiable and capable of changing to fit the times. Their interactions were from a small niche community and they are certainly no NPR but you could tell they were savvy.

Upon leaving RNZ the girls decided to go shopping and I basically tagged along with them and didn't do much at all. I had already seen all of Queen Street. I opted to do some life drawing instead while I waited for them to leave the 2 shops they were in. I successfully managed to life draw 2 people and then enter a text set before they came out. I got the feeling I would be more of an extra so I headed to burger fuel to eat and then I heard about a night club called the Ding Dong Lounge that might be to my liking.

Later that evening though the class met Pansy Duncan with the rest of the class and this became really important for my night. Pansy is a media scholar and she specializes in analyzing kiwi media and communication models. We primarily focused on the academic side of the media field as it pertains to Kiwi comedy this was certainly relevant. She spoke a lot of industry economics and how it had an effect on New Zealand's media in general because the American market was so overwhelming. I spoke with her a lot personally about bringing business into the country, but I felt that that portion was monopolizing conversation and everyone was looking to be quite annoyed with me as it is. I didn't have the best vibe going with the group and this wasn't helping so I tried to get her to stop talking about the aspect of bringing business into New Zealand. When we stopped talking about it she started discussing academic jobs in New Zealand and apparently getting an academic job is hard enough that you just don't want to count on it basically at all.

As soon as Pansy left the group decided they would like to go out drinking and I had been repeatedly telling individuals that I would like to go to a wine place for my birthday to celebrate. They gave surface answers all day like yeah that sounds like a great idea it's your birthday! But then they ultimately ended up choosing a bar themselves with me removed from the group almost entirely. Selene was dragged along because it was my birthday and I wanted to be with a large group of people for it and I was feeling lonely but she wasn't fond of the whole situation all together.

We initially went with Pete to Ponsonby and chose a restaurant that was more of a bear bar with pizza on the menu because it was "cheaper". I got a cider which was really good and reminded me of woodchuck cider, but overall it didn't help my feelings of being alone. Selene could obviously see that I was hurting and I was having a lot of trouble just letting the fact that I don't fit in go. She asked if we should just break off the group and do our own thing and I really wanted to, but the thing was we didn't have an "own thing" and I had no friends to celebrate with. We are in a completely new country in Auckland and the things I want to do aren't really available at this point in time. We tagged along with them for about an hour which honestly did not go so well....at which point I will regale you a tale of the chapel:

The chapel – the experience of the chapel was terrible. It was horrible. Forced Masculinization is still so very big here and genderfication is a problem. New Zealand has an equally high rate of rape of women and Male entitlement is still a big issue here. With this in mind the Chapel was a men's dive bar full of men who wear terrible shirts, fueled by an anti-establishment environment made to look macho and manly.



Unfortunately this had much too much to do with my studies. I began to understand this bar by understanding how an environment sets the mood, identity it attracts, and the culture it develops. In this case the bar had as the main centerpiece behind the bar, Jesus with 2 neon light guns in his hands and menacing red light.



The place was regardless very packed. We had trouble walking in to the bar in the first place. The men were also highly misogynistic and Selene and I, while holding hands with each other, got hit on in rapid succession by 2 guys. One of them was actually wearing a shirt that read, "Paris slept here." Referring to the celebrity t-shirt by Katy Perry except its playing on the phrase suggesting him boinking Paris Hilton. They wouldn't let us go at all and the bar was immediately off putting and difficult for me to stay in. We found a table as far away from people as possible and several of the girls started getting drinks galore for like free. The 3 that walked in and went straight to the bar started with shots almost immediately. Shortly after this they were quite buzzed and they got their drinks. I sat down with a beer with Selene and we depicted very little confidence in the situation.

As we continued to observe masculine misogynistic culture interact with the college girl pedagogy I began to get more and more uncomfortable. Despite understanding that this was a cultural thing at play I couldn't help but wonder why these girls continued to accept drink and interact with these men. At a certain point Selene and I just had to leave because we weren't comfortable. I was torn though because I didn't want to leave the girls. I was worried about everyone getting home safely, but 2 of the other girls said they were going to bounce and meet us at "father teds" they were walking and we didn't want to so we took a bus.

We arrived at father teds, waited for 45 minutes and then decided to bail around 9. I was not happy to say the least because I hadn't gotten to dress up like I wanted to on my birthday, I hadn't gotten to have some wine and an upscale drink, I was missing the complex conversations I have with my friends, I was missing the LGBT+ culture I was so comfortable being in, I was missing home, and I just wanted a night of drinking that was safe and okay for me to be in. We decided that we would try the Ding Dong which was earlier in the day recommended to me as an alternative Goth bar, but that didn't really end well as it turned out to be closed.

Very bummed Selene and I went home and started watching anime until Sarah came in around 2 saying they had a great time. And it was here that I got to hear several of the antics that made the church even worse. I'll type those tomorrow though as this has been a long entry. G'Night!

December 31 – New Year’s Eve on Waiheke Island, the Sky Tower, and Ding Dong Lounge



Today was a very mixed day to be honest. I had a lot of great things happen and a lot of terrible things. But before I get into that lets chronicle some of the experiences I heard from the girl’s time at the chapel yesterday. I would like to preface this with the fact that I was not there and there is a bit of armchair anthropology going on here but we begin!

In addition to Sarah’s description of the Chapel, the next morning as people came down the first thing I heard was that one of the girls had snogged 3 guys there. 2 pints had been bought for the girls just when they were going to leave, and many of the guys there were very all over them. Several more shots had been bought past the already too many I saw, and allegedly a few of the girls left in advance and the others got notes and numbers and were seemingly competing with the attention stories they had received. They joked about finding a New Zealand man so they could stay and Pete continued to laugh and joke about the situation that had happened. Every time I heard stories about men trying to get girls drunk as a function of keeping them at the bar was a severe problem for me personally because I am of the firm belief that the drinking culture is to the advantage of these men and it makes things very easy to go wrong. The fact that the guys didn’t care about the girl snogging another guy worried me a lot as that didn’t mean they were doing it for the person, but for the pure act of the attention and getting a girl to kiss and make out with them. The amount of alcohol and hangovers the group had that day was worrisome because they seemed to be highly involved in this beer culture and it was like watching Stockholm syndrome happen, but they were more than happy and excited to do it. This culture was just so weird and foreign to me to hear because if I as a trans person were in that position I likely would have lost my life. They were talking about boy’s, competing for the attention they get and a lot of these female tropes that I know they do not personally identify with are in full swing here. Cis-hetero-female culture is mystifying because its making them collectively give up some of their individualism for the glory stories that many accuse females of as stereotypes. Let alone the fact that

we are indeed American female college students studying abroad. The common phrase, “where there is smoke there is fire” came to mind but I just can’t reconcile the fact that that is a terrible stereotype but I watched it happen.

On to the Actual day that we had, the rest of the day was cancelled because the person we were supposed to meet didn’t do anything to respond or come at the appointed time so the day was off unexpectedly. Everyone decided to head to Waiheke Island and I didn’t want to as it didn’t sound that great, but since everyone was going and Selene was still asleep most the time Pete basically convinced me to go promising a trip to a winery to do a wine tasting. Kind of internally dreading it I got on the ferry with them all and treated myself to an Affogato to keep myself awake while also ensuring I would be positive things during the sugar binge. We boarded the boat and during the time I did some life drawings of some couples and Molly was leaning against the boat in the first place so I drew her as well. I gave her the document and I don’t know what she did with it. It seemed to score karma with the group and promote a little friendship. I hope a gift was helpful.

When we landed on the island we got a bus pass and then headed to the beach where we remained for about 3 hours. Before I spent time drawing though I decided to speak to a woman who had some property on the island. Her name was June and she was a smaller person who was about 60-70 years of age. When I spoke to her initially she seemed put off, but apparently she had just broken up with an American man yesterday because all he wanted to talk about dumb American shows and she was “more of a sophisticated UK type”. I sensed a little ableism but honestly, after my trip I can kind of understand and empathize with her. Barring the obvious xenophobia and stereotyping it was interesting that she said I had changed her view of Americans from that of the dumb ones who care about celebrities to saying that a small portion of the U.S Americans are smart and quite intelligent. We started a conversation on how education in America worked and she seemed to reflect the same sentiments as I did in the America was spending a lot of time testing, and not enough time catering to the diversity and grounded internationalism that is taking over our world. This was ironic considering I’m on a study abroad from America. We spoke about the corporatization of the system and how it was becoming a massive problem that reduced our access to knowledge because texts were coming out of only 4 companies and all based in Texas. Eventually we got to the topic of Colorado and she said she had a friend working as a ski instructor in Avon and this surprised me as I have a physics teacher who works in Avon now as a ski instructor and they know each other. We opted to exchange numbers and I’ve talked to her a few times in the past few days since. She’s really cool.

I spent 3 hours of my time at the Waiheke beach trying very hard not to fry and life drawing on my own since I wasn’t allowed in the water and don’t really want to leave my mid-riff bare like what the other girls were doing. I really pride myself on being pale and I have been having a lot of eating disorder issues lately due to my feelings of inadequacy in the group. I’m really nervous to get my body visually to be honest. I would love to have a meeting with my therapist right now but I know it’s not really an option.

About half way through the day Pete told me we were going to go to the wine tour which is what I opted to come to the island for in the first place and then told me he would pick me up in about half an hour at the bench I was planning to draw at. About an hour later I came back wondering what was going on and he had gone to lunch. Apparently through the grape vine we were meet at the “bee statue” which made no sense to me as I had never seen any statues of a bee. I went up and down the

coast and after everyone had left I discovered it was on the top of the hill and we had passed it but I never noticed. I was a little miffed by the vague discussions and spending the day in the accursed sun alone. I am already far more sunburnt and tan than I have ever wanted to be and they haven't helped at all.

At the top of the hill I was informed that Pete just opted to skip the wine tasting which got me again and in exchange we bought some wine and cups and broke the law at the top of the hill in the wineries front yard (which in retrospect is pretty awesome). We hiked up there and all of the girls were pissed that we weren't using the bus passes and walking so much which I thought was funny. It reminds me a lot of the people who complained a lot while we were in France in high school because Mrs. Egan-Wright would have us walk about 4 miles a day and none of the people were used to it.

While we were up at the top of the hill some conversation landed me in the Hitchhiker's guide position again and suddenly Courtney kind of confronted me about it asking, "Why do you know so much samantha?" It was said as if I should take offense to it and it was really just saying "why are you butting in with so many things and being such a know-it-all?" The whole "know-it-all" thing really pisses me off because it basically says that my knowing things is to the detriment of group continuity and I should dumb



myself down for other people. While I know this is a thing that is often done, especially with female communication, I really won't stand for it because it silences things. My response, as I was kind of miffed over the course of the day anyway was kind of sarcastic and it just made things worse. Pete quickly changed the subject to focus on the rest of the group. (Editing this document, this happens quite a lot and he's not wrong to do it...).

Despite the bad day after this we headed home from Waiheke back to Auckland where the most amazing thing happened to me. I met the cutest little girl! While I was on the ferry a little girl was climbing the pole that was holding up the second deck on the ferry. She was tremendously proud of her achievement hanging out on the post and everyone was looking at her rather adorably. She was accompanied by what seemed to be an adopted mother and two grandparents that she was very close to. I was smiling and when I pulled out my phone to check it when she yelled, "I know what you're doing?!" I responded by asking what she thought I was doing and she said, "You're going to take my picture!" Kind of taken aback I asked if she wanted me to and turned to her parents and grandparents inquiring. They all nodded me on saying yes yes please do.



I took her picture and then in order to record it in my written journal I am doing along with this I drew it from the picture. About half way through the drawing she then told me I was a great “drawer” I said thank you and then she kept asking if I was going to draw something else, how I learned how to draw and more. She asked if I was an adult or a child and unsure what her distinction I was told her I was the most childish adult she would know. To which she used as an argument to say I was not an “artist” because you can’t be an artist until you’re an adult. She asked me if I could draw something else and I flipped over to the other side of the paper. She told me to draw my phone and I did. I added my hand to make it hard, she gasped, and then I taught her how to draw. We drew a flip-flop, my hand with a phone, and she had me draw her in more detail. I then turned it over to her and asked her to draw her phone; and this is where it got interesting.

She drew, not the box on her phone first, but the apple logo first. Before drawing the box for the phone she drew the apple logo. When I drew the flip-flop the first thing I drew was the iconic V-shape straps, but for her it was the rippling on the flip flop’s base complete with a childish “squish” logo. She as a child has been inundated with this branding so much that she has drawn the logo for the phone and flip flop before anything else. This reminded me of the child psychology for drawing in that children often draw the noses and eyes of those important to them before they draw the other facial features because it is the primary way they differentiate things in their world.

After the boat came into the dock I left a small note on the paper for her and her parents and a way to contact me further. I said good bye and I boarded off of the boat. The entire group other than me got off way ahead and I was rushing to catch up, but a hand hit my shoulder a few minutes after boarding. It was the little girl’s grandfather.

The family pulled me aside wanting to thank me. The little girl clung to my leg during the time. I told them I really enjoyed the experience and they had a great daughter. They then said that when something of potential impact to the child happens they want to ensure that contacting the person responsible would happen in the future. They asked me for contact information and I wish I had my card but I didn’t. I quickly jotted the information down and through a few more pleasantries I bid them adieu.

When I got to the entrance I knew I was very late to meet up with the group, but hoped they were there. They weren’t. I frantically searched and waited for the entire boat to disembark. They weren’t there. I didn’t have a phone number or other contact information so I hurriedly made it to the sky tower which was our next location. They weren’t there. I finally got a hold of Sarah after an hour and she said they were all at the hotel and would return to the tower around 7PM.

While looking for everyone though I had already called Selene so she met me at sky tower. Selene and I decided to strike it out on our own and this new year’s eve would be concluded with Mexican dinner, a very lonely experience on top of the sky tower that was not nearly as impressive for me as it was others, and then doing new year’s eve with others.

After the dinner we were to meet at sky tower and I told Sarah I was in the courtyard to meet up with everyone when they got here. They were a full 45 minutes late and had gone ahead into the sky tower without me. Pete met me in the gift shop and being very, very annoyed about the group just moving on over and over again I spent most my time in the sky tower really wanting to be alone. Why was this exciting to people? Sure it was beautiful but yay we’re high up. It wasn’t of consequence to me.

Everyone else freaked out about the windows and the view. I just tried to enjoy the scenery. I am so very different from these people.



We spent our new year's eve going to the Ding Dong lounge that was previously closed the night before and Selene did not appreciate the evening in the least because of my day going so badly. I did however appreciate spending the night with new friends and new people. I met an entire group of very nice and well thought and well minded musicians and counter-culture people that I normally hang out with including Natural and Simon.

We attended the Ding Dong because it is a rock bar that has attracted a very Goth audience. This was important for me due to the contrast I have been needing with all of the girls. I needed to be in an environment I felt included in. The first several people we had met were men and Simon, Natural, and Cameron were the most notable. Simon had several piercings and hot topic clothing he had obviously bought online rather than locally. He told me that it was a relatively lonely life for this counter-culture where everyone knew everyone and yet the community was so very small. It was also his birthday and natural was there to celebrate with him.

The club saw a lot of bands that I didn't expect playing. Most notably they played the black parade by my chemical romance who has been a contested band for a while in the U.S. The DJ played 3 mansions in a row and we heard offspring, ac/dc and a few others. We head-banged and it was a great experience. Selene on the other hand felt profoundly alone in the experience as she normally does if I'm being honest.

Regardless I definitely needed the night. I turned in happy and recharged after what I have to say was a really shitty day and I was prepared to deal with the profound otherness I have been and will be feeling with the rest of the girls tomorrow and in the next few days.

January 1 – Went to the art museum, and day with Selene and sleeping

The following morning we got up around 8:30 and had to be ready by 9:30 to go to a local art museum. Almost right off of the bat we saw something very different from what was normally seen in NZ. The signs, posts, murals and art were satirical, political, and contrasted sharply with the happy go lucky blind senses of New Zealand. There were a lot of amazing installations that depicted the beauty of New Zealand almost as much as driving around the country. What's more is that many of them were from the perspective of the Maori and their traditional sense of Kaopapa. The natural ebb and flow of tides, wind, and other connections were clearly seen in the collection. Their patterns and their Maori



totems were seen in stark contrast to the westernization of the world. When I looked at the artists though many were from Porto Rico, the Middle East, Africa, and the U.S where many of us had seen world conflict. This worried me a lot as it seemed the cultural reflexed necessary to understand the problems of your own New Zealand culture were being ignored by New Zealanders and the conversations were being started by foreigners, not residents.

My explorations in the gallery were unfortunately cut short however when the PA system announced that several student films were being exhibited in the museum. We went to see them with the rest of the class and I sat next to Pete who is a photography teacher so I got to nerd out with him about the artistic capabilities of the students. Most of the videos that were done were using sensors and real motion sets seeming as that is what is leading the area (thanks Peter Jackson). You could see the huge influence of visual effects and editing on the films as that is what dominates this hemisphere. Peter Jackson's studios and the need to have CGI characters has become a huge deal. Regardless all of the films were creative and powerful for me personally.

One was a stop motion about a stop motion character who has realized he is a stop motion character. It was mixed with the real videography of the girl that was making the film as well. Another one was a 2-D animation depicting a role reversal of a woman saving a man from a bear when the precarious situation the man was placed in was because he wanted to save the woman in the first place. It was done as a cave man kind of thing and it seemed to "reset" the narrative. This reminded me of Moana, the current Disney epic that is in production and set to release next year.

One major issue with this day was that my bras had recently been washed but I was having severe issues with the washer since it never dried in the first place. This caused the bras I was wearing to shrink and since I require them due to surgery I was in pain most of last night. That combined with the snoring and washing machine, the outside sounds, and the air conditioner I couldn't sleep at all the prior night. I opted to go get myself new bras and then I went to Selene's and zonked out for what was apparently 4 hours. When I woke up we were quite refreshed and had an important intimate conversation with Selene about the issues I've been having fitting in with the other girls and the likelihood that I would make it through this trip. We then watched a bunch of anime, ate some ice-cream and pizza and moved on from there. All in all it was a very good night.



Moana from Disney Production

Photo Credit:

<http://www.people.com/article/disney-princess-moana-aalii-cravalho>

January 2 - Kirsti, the Auckland Memorial Museum,

The morning started very warmly in the lobby of the hotel Amora with Kristi, who was an educational / investigative journalist who was honestly border line activism journalism. Her conversations and insights into the world of education in New Zealand was in direct contrast to all of the prior conversations I had had regarding politics in that she spoke at length about the severe ethnic inequalities between the Maori, Pacifica, and pakeha (European settlers).

Notes for the meeting with Kristi:

Kirsti was very light hearted. Despite her leading with “my career is kind of boring” she proceeded to tell us she covered earthquakes, shootings, and oil spills, dying penguins, and more.

“If you’re a crime reporter in New Zealand you’re kind of hoping crime will happen.” She ended up covering more social justice work than anything else. “When you work for a Sunday paper you’re basically just reviewing a week or two.” “You learn a lot about stalking people”. It took the editor a while to do a big 6 week article on rape because of international scandals with people but it went very well.

“In order to research doing articles, she specifically mentioned “seeing how America covers articles.”

New Zealand’s education system:

Maori and Pacific Islanders are in all areas far below the educational capabilities of the nation. People are passing tests at around 60% while others are 90 to 85. It is a racial divide and the government says “we will work on this”. As a result she got the Labor Party to compile a massive list that proved they hadn’t done anything. (She continues to use the term “ethnic” over “racial”, which should easily reflect the issues the people have with the Maori and ensure people know this isn’t a “skin” problem.

- “Principals are the bitchiest people. They will dig at another principal for eeevar.” Schools have to compete for students to attain funding and there is so much stabbing others in the back.
- There are billions of dollars in pre-school with variable quality. The academics jumped at the chance and they were sending her tons of stuff constantly. Basically some of the providers giving us education are putting them in a room and then charging for classes. The ratio is like right on the margin for what they can and cannot do. The richer the class area the less likely this is to happen.
- Special needs is terrible in New Zealand as well. All the people live in South Auckland and the principals have had a really hard time. The schools look like crap. The kids are starting high school with the reading level of an 8 year old. She gave the schools in the South area some slack as a result and because they had been slapped around so long they are like perfect informants.

“The people were stoked that someone was listening.” Seems to me like people aren’t paying attention. Apparently there is a statement for how people should handle government reform in that they put a target on something and request higher numbers and say they work because the statistics are bigger.”

The areas are largely older on physical paper and around 30-40 for online work. Granny Herald at the paper because a lot of the editors don’t really keep up. She doesn’t get much flack for being highly liberal. She quotes Green Party a lot. She’s getting data as she sees it from the underdog.

“Insights.co.nz” is more of a social media implementation and they do really well but they require content and if the content management system is bad then it shouldn’t really matter.

Example article from her: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/education/news/article.cfm?c_id=35

After we had finished speaking with her we headed off to a memorial war museum where they had a ton of exhibits about the Maori, world wars 1 and 2, and several others. The museum itself was amazing and the WW1 and 2 exhibits brought tears to my eyes because of how many lives were lost and we are still having so many issues. It really does feel like New Zealand is a smaller America and the issues that we face in our own country are being faced 10 fold in this one.

The trip to the museum ended with an amazing cultural fair that happened at the end by the Maori where we got to see the history, several of the cultural artifacts, their history, and a haka performed by the crew.

I spent the rest of the day with Selene and we headed off of to Hobbiton and matamata the next day.

January 3 - Off to middle earth we go! I'm a child and politics is a bitch



Taking off from Auckland happened to be somewhat nice because we were expected to spend some time on the bus alone I welcomed the reprieve but I was hugely irritated about needing help with my luggage. Others seemed not to mind though. I spent time catching the journal up to today which worked out fairly well but I still need to go back and get the images I took embedded. This journal is proving to be quite a lot of work really. I am still not sure how I'm going to display it. Either way this is about all I can write so the rest of this entry will be caught up at some point in the next few days.

The majority of the bus trip was quite unremarkable after spending so long going around the rest of the coastal roads prior. The weather was really bad and rainy but honestly this is my favorite weather and it was a good change from that of Waiheke Island a few days ago.



When we arrived in Hobbiton the tour person was actually from Colorado and they were talking about the Sherlock Christmas special, doctor who, and just general nerd-ness that I got along with quite quickly. It was a good day. I spent the day talking about the hobbit, Lord of the Rings, and I got to have an actual Ale in the Green Dragon! The gift shop was a tad disappointing because it didn't have much in the way of affordable tourist like stuff jewelry for nerds. Oh well though, I bought myself a South Farthing

Cider and I'm going to build the homecoming party we make around it I think.

A little earlier that evening we got into Taupo and didn't have much else going on. Stew who is apparently our bus guide over the next two days was really cool and go along with most of the girls but I didn't make the greatest of attempts to talk to him. We got into our rooms and prepared to go out for dinner. I made an honest effort to talk to and be a part of all of our group conversations but I got pushed out again just as with the first day. They kept looking for a place to eat and through my hitchhiker's guide position we ended up going to burger fuel....again. I was just happy to have a place though to be honest. It's a major pet peeve of mine to spend time looking for a place that people can't decide on.

While there it was amusing because Pete noticed I wasn't getting along and tried as much as he could to help. His advice was to ask others questions regarding themselves because people love to talk about themselves and I had to laugh internally because the issue here wasn't getting them to talk to me, it was getting them to include me as they talked to everyone else. It was having a topic of conversation that I was interested in. I could probably get them to talk for hours sure but it doesn't help if I feel like the conversation is empty. Different Strokes for different folks and I happen to be on an entirely different painting.

Well that night Pete invited a few people to go to a sunset and while I was walking I decided to catch up on the news in which I discovered one of the most horrific things. Apparently the Bundy family had taken over a reservation wild park during the New Year and was building up their own little militia camp. The federal government instead of treating them as insurgents like all the times minority have tried to do this, said they would starve them out. I mean sure I guess no blood spilled but it was tremendously annoying. I kept wanting to bring it up and talk about wit with 300 people but no matter how I tried I could not get even one word out. None of my jokes worked, I was just background annoyance for others and I basically just decided to shut up.

Well this didn't last long because silly old advocate me had to respond to one of the girls. Apparently one of Samantha's friends had just posted to Facebook that her Hooters store was just held up in the neighborhood and she was scared for her life. Samantha, in all her rights decided to tell the group and I could clearly tell she was looking for empathetic support and concern for her friend, but immediately I connected it to the fact that it was a man, holding up a hooters store in the middle of Colorado, versus 300 men taking over a native American reservation and wildlife land in Oregon. This was systematic and it was connected. I didn't give her what she needed, I gave her what I needed; the need to be heard, to have a conversation I care about, to feel productive and important, and in all of this

forest of problem, I blew over and burned Samantha, a tree in the forest wanting a little empathy. And I did this all publically. Pete sensing it again turned the subject on to something else saying we can't do anything about the world right now so let's go get a beer (which was the worst possible thing to say to me ever but the best for group dynamics.)

I caught on to what I was doing and then said never mind and gave it to everyone else to offer her support and moved on. I was pissed but I had no one to talk to. I was mad at myself for not taking the time to be empathetic or care about the trees in the forest and at that moment it dawned on me. I have been an advocate for so long that I couldn't be a friend anymore. I took to Facebook to let the emotions out while I was with people because I didn't think they would care or pay attention. I posted and felt a little better and then the next block fell.

Courtney challenged me in public about hurting Samantha's feelings and then going straight to Facebook to rant about the problems to hurt her feelings even more. I told her she was right. Courtney continued to berate me and as well she should have because it was indeed rude, but I just leaving the group was even ruder and this was my catharsis. After she berated me I decided that it was time to leave. I needed time to shout and scream and yell and be alone. I went back to the Taupo lake side and yelled my heart out, watched the sun set, and cried.

After about 45 minutes of tears flowing freely a young man sporting a burger and a skateboard came and sat next to me. He waited patiently eating his sandwich and then when he felt ready he asked me if I was okay.

His name was Jason and he had a camper van and was traveling the country for his 2-3 weeks off (I can't remember how long) from a construction job. He was very artistic and loved nature so he would just travel around. He listened to my entire story and what I do for a living and then we just talked for about 4-5 hours about New Zealand's problems, America's problems, and the beauty of the world, our like and dislikes, and more. He was a great and supportive friend. I friended him on Facebook and around midnight I had already been gone for 5 hours so I headed home. When I got there I discovered that everyone was worried about me and waiting for me which was far more annoying to me than it should have been. I just started feeling like the time they care is when it affects group dynamics and they feel bad but they not once noticed how outcast I was this whole time? Seriously? I went to bed angry and woke up angry the next day.

In summary it was a fantastic morning, okay afternoon, shitty evening, terrible dinner and a fantastic night. Thanks Jason. ☺ Ran the whole gamut there didn't I.



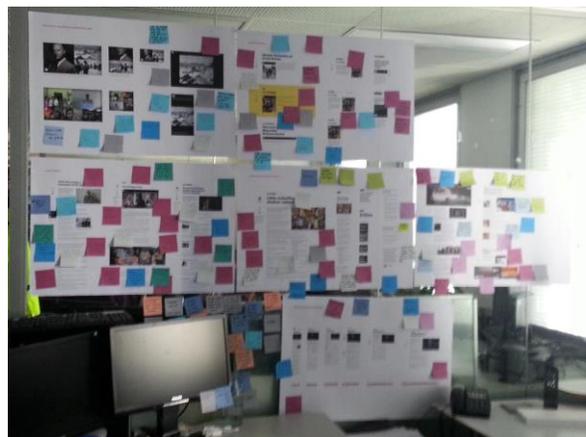
January 4 – Arrival in wellington and RNZ wellington branch

Before I start this day's entry I want to get something through regarding me. After the blow up in Taupo I have come to the point where my [lacking] emotional intelligence has caught up with what I have known I need to do logically for a while. I don't fit in here and instead of forcing myself into a round hole I need to embrace that. I'm spending a lot of time alone and I'm talking to strangers and it's great. Prior to the start of the class Selene and I were very happy being independent and alone on our trip to New Zealand, meeting people along the way. I spent a lot of it me in my room working on this journal and just packing and stuff earlier. I got a bottle of wine and I made a sandwich from the stuff in the food court. Everyone else went out and I feel happy here. I was invited to go out with them but I did just need a day to recoup, and the rest of the trip to be academic; I don't want to worry about the social. I'm feeling better but I won't be pushing it from now on. I'll make sure I'm mentally healthy from now on when participating with the group and I'll be more introverted. I think for future context it may not be the best idea to go out on group or class trips abroad for me unless it involves a bunch of geeks and artists who communicate in the same manner. At this point, I can't assimilate and there isn't any negotiating this so I will just differentiate. Selene seems to agree, and Pete although he doesn't like it, has acknowledged it.

Being honest, speaking on that factor I have to say that my introversion I used to have prior to transition hasn't gone away. I guess it seems to be a part of my personality I have greatly ignored. Maybe this is a large reason for my inability to make friends. I'm not paying attention to what I need and I am treating social life like work. Looking back this makes sense.

On to the day though! The day started out very sour as I just wanted to be alone, and I woke up in a shitty mood, I was late, I had a hangover from crying so much, I didn't want group consistency and I just boarded the bus and blocked out the rest of the day as a recovery day. I committed to be inside myself starting from the second the ear buds went into my ears. Selene was also headed to the airport today and traveling so I spent a lot of time talking with her a lot in preparation and during her trip. She was quite tired by the end of the day though and slept quite soundly.

We got into wellington and my mood immediately improved. This entire city is just soooo gorgeous and it pains me we won't spend much time here. We had an immediate trip to the hotel, dropped off our stuff, and went straight to the wellington branch of radio New Zealand. Because I knew mostly what this would entail and that it didn't pertain to my interests I just counted it as a random tour activity. The museums and academic ventures have been far more applicable. I drew several of the people we met in my sketchbook journal along with this. The majority of the content was about social media, moving the organization from wellington to Auckland and the expansion of the media. They didn't have much about social community management but what they did have was interesting. I got to see their website development wall (pictured right), which was



mind blowing how big it was and how many post-its were included on the design.

That evening after a dinner which I did on my own we met Dr. Brian Pauling in the back room of the WHA who was one of the coolest people I had ever met. He is a founder of the broadcasting school in Christchurch New Zealand and lives here. It was really cool listening to his opinions on political ownership of the media and how that manages to stay neutral. I have copied my notes of him here from my sketchbook but I drew him too. I think I'll do this with everyone:

Notes on Brian's conversation:

Noted a particular power in radio for New Zealand politics as it has a severe hand in influence above that of TV (this is interesting.) He blames it on the late onset of TV and the earlier 20 years leg radio has on the country.

The New Zealand government has no checks/balances set in their government but this government actually supports the news. In the early days the New Zealand news was literally political propaganda because it was written by the prime ministers government.

Roger-nomics – much like Reagan-nomics this was a time where social parties implemented a ton of highly conservative processes and did a complete 180 on the government. This caused the PM control over media to explode into a huge issue. The media was sent open source and a bunch of overseas companies just pranced on in. In the 80s Murdoch under sky TV from Australia walked in and currently remains the dominant broadcaster.

TVNZ can't sell now because of possible issues with this happening again so our TV is government owned and corporately functional (it is run as a corporation but supported by government).

Because of government's ebb and flow (their system change a lot and very quickly) the funding of the media does as well and we see incredibly fast change in the media and policies coming through the government that far exceeds the time it takes to pass a bill through congress or even the free market. Exceptions being open source content or pirating issues. So the problem with politics and the media is not in reporters afraid to speak, but in too many reporters knowing each other and having too much impact.

Shortly after finishing the conversation with Brian we retired to our rooms, I got dinner, sat down and wrote all of this over a glass of wine. Tomorrow will be a stocked day with a lot of stuff going on so I'm not sure how much I'll be able to do honestly. I'm worried about getting up on time as we have to be up at like 3 in the morning the morning afterward to leave for Melbourne.

January 5 – Weta Cave, Te Papa museum and Selene is boarding her flight and I'm in wellington



This day started out with the Weta Caves which I was really excited to do. This is actually the prop production company for the Lord of the Rings and Hobbit films, most of the Narnia films, the Adventures of Tin-Tin, and so many other amazing movies. This was something I was immensely excited to participate in but because I was with the group I was I hung back and let them enjoy the majority of the trip as it really had nothing to do with my work. It was just a huge hobby of mine having to do with art.

Pictures weren't allowed throughout the trip but I did manage to sneak the first few pieces of armor in the lobby of the trip and I got to see the 3 cave trolls from the hobbit films when Radagast and Gandalf assisted the dwarves in the attack of the cave trolls in the forest.

After having gone we went on to Te papa which I was very excited about but we were supposedly meeting someone there and were early so from what I understood we would have lunch before and then meet with the man after lunch. I decided lunch on my own in a warm corner nook of the cafeteria right in front of the window and some music was in order. Much to my chagrin however, I was wrong. No one even came to get me at all and Pete just kind of carried it on without me. Luckily the man was late and I only missed about 5 minutes of the conversation and no one could hear him anyway. His name was Nick.

Notes for Nick Jones:

Having trouble hearing him with the sound of the cafeteria, and no one at the circle opened up a spot for me. Quite the non-inclusive space. Everyone was enamored with his looks and most of the girls were calling him very attractive which I thought was amusing.

I couldn't hear any of his answers but what I got was that the herald in Wellington happens to have liberal writers but conservative editors so it is a rather neutral leaning organizations. I surrendered to just listen rather than taking notes but I did catch onto a few terms I have no idea after the fact how this was relevant but may have come from when I spoke with the person at Te Papa:



Tengata whenua = people of the land (Maori natives)

Pakeha = foreign non-Maori (refers to the European settlers)

Pasifika = the Pacific islanders and spelled with a K so respectively spelling it this way.

Mana = spirit, prestige, and honor that makes up a human soul.



After lunch with Nick we headed off into the museum and we got an amazing guide. I checked my sketchbook but I got a picture of him. He is Native Maori born and grew up in a Maori household in the eastern portions of the North Island. He spent about an hour and a half walking through the museum showing us the older Mōa birds, earthquakes, the animals that existed here, and then we got to the Maori Exhibits where he spoke of the history and legends of his people.

After the amazing afternoon at the shrine of the Maori People recreated in the museum we headed off to the 1st place I was most anticipating on the 5th; Massey University. Prior to the course starting I attended Massey and spoke with a lot of the teachers about possibly getting in. Erika was still supposed to contact me regarding my getting in to the organization and since then I have been very excited to meet the actual head for the department. Grant Hannis is the chair of journalism but he would also be the person for me to talk to about graduate studies and that is the exact topic we discussed.

Notes for Grant Hannis – Chair of Journalism at Massey University, Wellington

Taught us a lot of shorthand for journalism as this is still in the curriculum here and it allowed for a lot of faster communications. It made very little sense to me though and it wasn't really relevant.

He also taught a little about the different linguistic styles between papers in different countries and called this "host style" This is really interesting because it suggests that the local papers of various places may change their linguistics to match the surrounding environments dialogue. While this is a given it also lends a lot of support to the idea that one could easily analyze these texts to learn more about the undertones of a place before going there or for academic purposes.

After we spoke with Grant much of the class was antsy to get out into Wellington and enjoy our brief time here. I chose not to and instead I went to Grant and asked him about enrolling here. He spoke at length with me and Courtney (she was pretty straightforward as her area was established) and he spoke with me about what I wanted to study, who would be best, and he said I have a high probability of getting in because they are looking for study abroad candidates at Massey all of the time and my area is pretty different. This was very good. He said I should speak to Erika first and then make sure I want to come. After that I am to apply by this upcoming summer for the post graduate courses that are available and I will be going apparently in spring of 2018 which will be their fall semester.

I'm pretty excited about these prospects but I still have a few days to catch up on so I'm headed to bed after this day.

January 6 – Off to Melbourne



Stew picked us up at the hotel earlier than any roman army would lay siege (sorry I seem to be in a mood for simile) being around 3 in the morning for a plane flight to Melbourne through the Wellington airport at around 6 in the morning. I was hurting quite a lot through that night because the bed was not particularly comfortable at the YHA. I'm also very bad at mornings though and things were still awkward with the troupe at Taupo.

When we got to the airport I was pleasantly surprised and equally impressed at the statutes that had obviously put the Weta cave to work for several years after the Lord of the Rings. Smeagle was fishing in the lobby of the airport and Smaug was stuck through the north wall of the building with a bunch of tourists taking pictures with him. This reminded me of the large stone dwarf we saw as we entered the country in the Auckland airport as well. I'm happy to see the Lord of the Rings is a part of the national identity however annoyed many of the pakeha and Maori might be about it.



The plane ride was uneventful and the landing in Sydney airport was primarily just me going through the airport on my own since people were taking too much time, didn't know how to navigate an airport, and large group dynamics seemed more or less fruitless, but we got out.

After we had gotten out of customs we met our next tour guide, (first we had Fred in Auckland, then stew drove us, Fred left us at the wellington airport and now we had a rather boisterous, loud, and

talkative one whose name Andy.) He drove us off to our hotel in Melbourne downtown area and the hotel was actually dorm rooms next to Melbourne University.

We dropped our stuff off and immediately started the tour of the Melbourne downtown area and came across this wicked awesome alleyway where the youth are allowed to tag and do graffiti freely. It reminded me of the graffiti movement way in Denver. Many of the cities are providing these areas as a place to do this now and I'm happy to see that Melbourne is progressive enough to do so!

The work was actually quite impressive but I'm assuming that the nature of the matter is that the less impressive stuff is covered up first and commissions are likely done all the time in the alleyway as well. I decided at this point that I am nicknaming Melbourne the "tagged city" because it really does have tons of graffiti around it. It felt a lot like I think Chicago would feel with its culture written on its sleeve.



As this was the only thing planned for the itinerary we got released from that alley way and I opted to go get Pho for dinner as I saw a really nice one, I had to get a SIM card for Australia and I wanted to see a little more of the city's underbelly so I walked along the side streets we didn't walk for a while. When I decided to get to the place for Pho thought I was interrupted by a man begging for coins on the streets and concerned I told him I still had a bunch of NZ coins that he was more than welcome to have but I hadn't stopped by an ATM. I apologized and handed him several coins for his use. We walked away and then a man that had passed by just said allowed, "You don't have to apologize for not having cash for a beggar you know."

Taken aback I tried to catch the accent but it didn't sound American or Australian or European in any way. I replied, "Yeah I know but it's kind of customary when you can't help where I come from". He asked where I come from and we struck up a conversation. I was about a mile from my destination and he was headed up the street as well so we just kind of continued talking

He was an actor who had just returned from Australia after a fairly long role being filmed for a few things in L.A and had just got off of the plane. He had a dual citizenship and was here in Australia for a vacation. He missed the holidays as he had to work during it but now he was here to see family.

I asked him if he liked Melbourne and if there were any cultural centers he felt weren't viewed a lot and he said everywhere you look is culture, just literally everywhere. This town is very different from

Sydney where the cultures are placed into small pockets. Here it is free flowing. I wished I could have talked to him a little more and picked his brain about it but he had to go and I had reached my place for photo.

After I finished eating the sun was beginning to set and I wanted to scrounge around a little more and the man's words were hanging in my head the whole time. Instead of hitching a ride on the train I opted to take some of the side streets and discovered his statements were very very true. There was a 2 story comics shop (I have never seen one so large before), 3 alternative stores I would definitely have to go in, several high end Gucci-like stores, and then the food was all over the place in as much variety as in Auckland. About 5 blocks from the main road going west the night clubs were getting smaller and smaller and then there was a 1960's style bar whose only thing it sold was "old world vintage libation". I laughed and decided I would have to check it out. (Writing this in Sydney though, I unfortunately didn't get the chance to check it out...)

January 7 – ACMI and the Victoria Art Gallery



Fountains at the Victoria Art Gallery

Image credit: <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/video/fountains-in-front-of-national-gallery-of-victoria-stock-video-footage/142896434>

The day started off a little odd as Pete took us to ACMI and only gave us an hour to view the museum portion, we didn't get to see any portion of the gallery and we were asked as we went through the museum to find 4 specific questions or things in the museum (one of which was a trick question). The exhibit was far too large and I only got to see half of it but it was brilliantly set up. The questions were:

1. When the first time radio was came to Australia.

- a. Trick question, the museum is about visual communication.
2. When was the first time TV came to Australia and why?
 - a. 1969 and because they wanted to televise the Olympics
3. What was the name of the main actor for the first 2 mad max movies
 - a. I didn't get far enough but it was Mel Gibson.
4. What was the name of the director who did the first 2 mad max movies
 - a. Once again I didn't get far enough but it was George Miller

I don't know what importance that was but the rest of the exhibit was incredibly interesting. It went through the history of TV, film, and games in Australia and discussed at length the problems faced by Australia when it comes to copyright and pirating in their industry. That was interesting.

Of particular note they had several kids playing the games when it got to the older games for the systems and there was a tomb raider game, super Mario on the super Nintendo, Mario kart 64, and Halo. The kids were all ignoring the 64 games and were playing either the 2-d or the 3-d and the boy was hogging halo saying it was his to play. I don't want to read much further into that but it was amusing to see it.

After that portion Pete led us to the second floor where a government, private company co-op archive allowed public access to a ton of the material that they were archiving. We had a lecture done by the people there and then we were allowed to view some of the materials. I was incredibly tired on this day though so I unfortunately didn't pay too much attention to the content after the lecture. The notes for the lecture are detailed in my sketchbook and I pulled the jewels out for here:

Notes from ACMI film archive

The difficulty of access and archiving media is that often rights holders are not contactable and as a result many have been hidden as the government wants to be conservative about the data. Now they are getting more liberal about it and just handling the issues as they come.

Interaction between state and feds are unified now which is amazing but not often. There was a lot of innovation by necessity in the country to contain this information because Australia was isolated and very far away. We needed media to go quickly and we have a lot of innovations.

Australia was the first country to get Wi-Fi – which sucks because we are super bad at it.

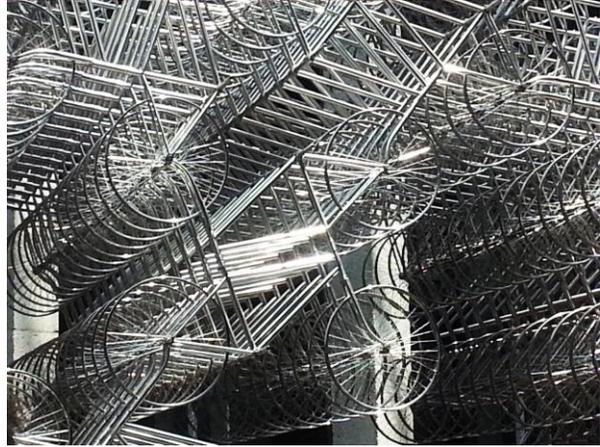
We choose what content we retain via our content partners. There is a lot of politics in it and other institutions keep contracts to save specific things over other things. This increases the warehouses diversity and sheer number so to speak.

Once we played around a bit with the videos and such we jumped over to the art museum of Victoria which holds an incurable and impressive collection (I got to see it today for my Melbourne day off as I'm writing this and I have to say, one of the better galleries I've been in at all.)

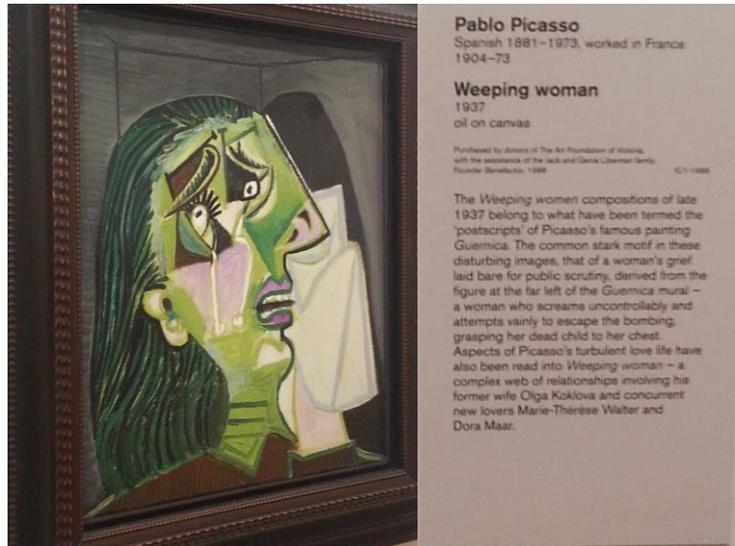
On the first trip we were basically given the free pass to go wherever we wanted and as I was way too tired I opted first for coffee. As I waited for it to kick in I headed in to the gift shop and got a wicked awesome brush towel about female artists. Then I headed up to the 3rd floor to see contemporary works and then worked my way down to the European wing. I knew I would have to

come back on my day off as the museum has notable artists from all over the world over all of the different eras.

In the contemporary wing I saw an amazing video piece about rebellion in which a person in a red hoodie continued trying to walk along a sidewalk and the shadows kept picking him up. He would continue to fight as if to change the system and would lose his hoodie (he lost) and it would start over. It went through 5 hoodies and he fought harder and harder and then the video ended. It was a perfect allegory for how I felt about activism and the way that things worked to change countries and it made me feel a little bad about the fact that I watched it here in Australia. Another piece included a series of Guatemalan workers in the home depot parking lot in California that were basically reenacting a trench battle fought on their shores in the parking lot of the largest employer of their ethnic group. It was a metaphor of the war they are fighting still going on even though their diaspora has caused them to leave their own lands. It was quite powerful.



After some time looking in the sections all the way to the European collection (of which as usual and of course there were tons) I had to rush my way through it and get back to the team and I was incredibly tired and really just needed to tank. I wanted at least to see the bigger pieces before I had to leave so I went to the impressionist period to see a Monet, Claude, Picasso, Cezanne, and Klimt together. I went through the Asian exhibit quickly to see the Tokugawa period pieces, bodhisattva sculptures recovered from India, and there was a huge exhibit on Shinto in one room. The works were amazing and I knew a good amount of my time in Melbourne would have to be spent here.



When I got back I went to dinner with the group at around 5 to a Chinese eatery which honestly ended up being kind of terrible. We walked around for a few hours not finding a place and then went to a place that looked questionable and served food I would give about a 7/10 for. Not a huge deal though, still enjoyable.



January 8 – The age newspaper and social media, plus time alone working on the journal

The first thing we did was go to the Age, Melbourne's local newspaper / basically everything else media to discuss social media and online work in the newspaper with Sebastian Vasta. He is kind of a big thing actually as he kicked off one of the biggest music things out there called in the mix and then he ended up at the age a while afterward. He is the social media editor for the age and while the other papers weren't useful this interview definitely was.

Notes from Sebastian's talk:

Sebastian's job is to get people to consume the Age's online content. He wants to "suck them in" The audience doesn't see the age as a publication, they see it only as a collection of content for various different audiences. His job is to get people working here to see the age in the same way.

Mobile is the majority of content ads now and video is even more important. The paper company now has their own audio and video recording rooms in the building so that they can get that covered.

"Facebook instant articles is a move toward platforms publishing on behalf of content creators and this is bad news. But who are we to go against it." This is Facebook's ability to have an article published that SEO's with them and sends it out as if it is a Facebook post and they increased the priority in their algorithm. Now content published to the Age and put elsewhere is directly competing with the Facebook content and Facebook will win over.

Bringing this up I asked about free-booting content in which he said he doesn't really have an answer for handling it. "Our crisis is what happens when we don't even have a website? Freebooting at least will get content out." The age's website has therefore gone from being a community to being a jumping off point and a washboard.

"The companies that are winning in SM all understand analytics. It's not just FB, it's putting things around the customer."

Images are pristine and they are the future of journalism. BuzzFeed has proven this and is a content leader as a result. They get online content very, very well. Twitter reactions and listicles have become news themselves and you can build an entire site off of the content published to the web (look at Florida's thing where they have to publish and then people use it as a wellspring of content).

Sebastian on hashtags - "audiences make hashtags and they are set by the people on a large scale. The settings for "#theemptychair" we did not predict at all. That was simply a side effect of the hashtag we used. The discourse took over and the challenge went from making a wave to riding it successfully"

In addition to all of this we talked about what he thought of In The Mix failing and what identity tourism means for publications and social media. He spoke about the freedom of expressing oneself becoming more and more limited by the platforms and the media you take in.

As the age and Sebastian's work was really the only thing we had going for us on that day in Melbourne I spent a lot of time trying to meet up with a friend and the rest of the day was spent meandering around and visiting the shops I came across prior. I found a bag that I really liked in one of the shops and I found a lot of really interesting clothes at a second hand goth store with what seemed to be a drunk patron (which means it's one of the best gothic stores) and he also ran a tattoo parlor which had closed several hours prior (which means it's probably one of the most questionable tattoo parlors.) While there he talked to me a lot about the scene here and his customers which were all very nice and knew each other well. He was extremely polite, laid back, and drained it seemed but I didn't mind at all.

I then headed home, grabbed some stuff for working on this journal and then headed across the street to one of the best coffee shops in Melbourne, the Seven Seeds which was structured a lot like a restaurant, included 4 industrial espresso machines and was overall just really very impressive. They didn't agree with syrups and stuff like that in the coffees and any "flavors" they had they used powders for. I thought this was really cool. Either way I got somewhat caught up with my journal just adding small 2 paragraph texts and then most of my stuff was written into my sketchbook, taping everything from the start of the journey in Auckland to the beginning of Melbourne into the journal. I got some dates confused though which was a little weird.



January 9 - day off, bike riding, art museum, life drawing, and super smash bros.

For my day off I don't really want to regale you the tail of my trip as that defeats the point of a day off but I would like to briefly summarize what I did do and then include a lot of awesome pictures from what I did.

To start my day we all took a bike ride down the river of the Melbourne central area and it seemed I was among the fit which I thought was really weird. I maintained a steady lead ahead of everyone else and really enjoyed the travel. On the way back though Pete asked me to make sure others were kept around so I did and Catrina and I got stuck behind a bridge. We were obviously significantly late and Pete came back to get us. It was one of the really fun highlights of group activity I have had over the course of the trip and it was great. After that we were set free and Pete and I did the thing we both enjoy doing and had a beautiful lunch along the river side complete with a glass of wine. We both talked about the prospects of living in the area and discussed my future schooling. We discussed his love of photography and we talked about the towns and what we loved best. We talked about what changes should be offered to the program in the future and we talked about Selene. I think this was really a good opportunity for us to smooth out the contention we have both had with each other but it does concern me that we didn't much talk about him and the teacher student power distance although not a big deal was ever present. Regardless Pete is an awesome guy. I would love to have the opportunity to travel with him outside of class some day because he seems to love and have a knack for it.

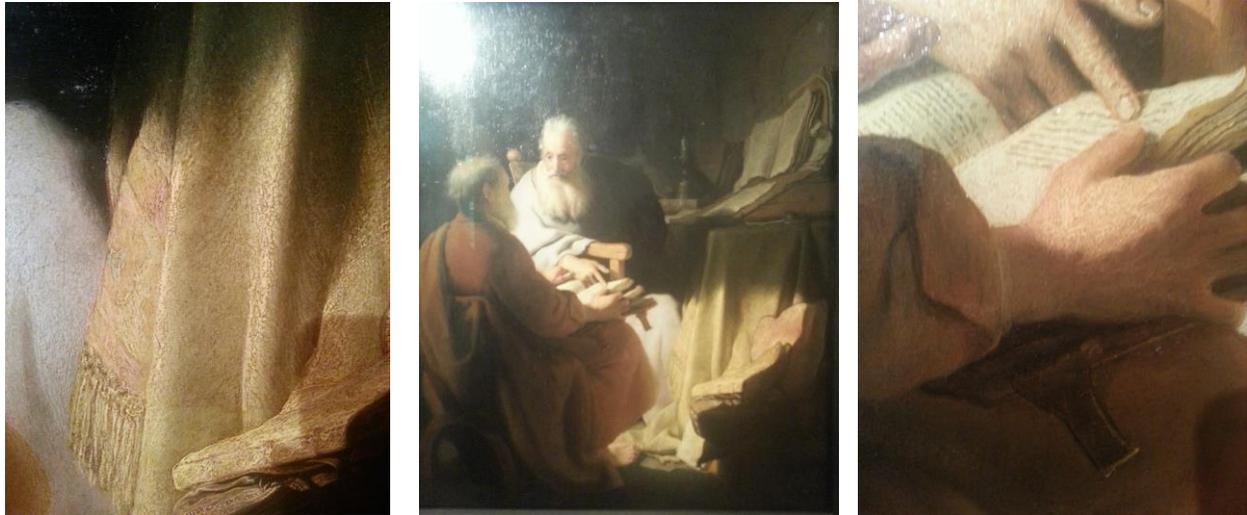
Regardless after lunch I headed back to the Victoria museum to see the rest of the exhibits I had to skip in more detail. I started on the 2nd floor where I had left off with the ancient history, Asian, and byzantine artwork of the European and came across several pieces I did not know where in their collection including an amazing Albrecht Durer piece which is my favorite European artist. He was the one who coined "to be an artist is to be a god of your own world" and honestly, the man earnestly believed so. He was insane but hey, his lithography was gorgeous and whenever I did portraits it was always based on him.

I also got to see the pinnacle piece of symbolic Christian European artwork in St. Jerome by Flanders which is iconic precisely because the symbolism of the time was so complicated but this work is so easy to study.



Albrecht DÜRER
German 1471–1528
Saint Sebaldus as a pilgrim
in a niche
1518, printed 1580–1600
woodcut
Folton Bergant, 1954

Most notably however I got caught up looking about 4 inches from the biggest artist they displayed and talking about it to several people around me....they had 3 Rembrandts on the wall and I got to talking to a set of people about the wonders of Rembrandt and his 1 hair donkey brush painting minute details into embroidery while still including broad strokes in his paintings as the old masters had done. It was weird because within a few moments I had amassed like 6-7 people and one of them was another art student who contributed a lot to the conversation as well. To see such a culture develop simply by sharing what I knew is something I do a lot and that is sorely missed for me while on this trip right now. It was a welcome reprieve.



I then went back to the east Asian exhibits where I got to see multiple amazing pieces I had missed including the Tree Goddess which was a Yakshi made in India and found all over Ankor Wat which symbolized the movement from man and society into nature and the path of the gods.

After all of this I opted to head back and wander through the streets again. I found an awesome gaming bar called bar-tronica and struck up a conversation with them about the traditional games, most notably their 64 version of Smash Bros. which I was aching to play. I ended up coming back later on at night to play until bed time around 11 in at night. I also visited that 2 story comic shop which had a section of LGBT+ friendly comics, very supportive people, and I visited a thriving Otaku store which had



everything from sci-fi to fantasy, to dnd, to dr. who and anime. It was fantastic. After several hours of walking around and seeing the art gallery for a while I headed back and had dinner with people who were looking for Tacos and then headed to bartronic to play until I was done. It was a good night.

January 10 – the great ocean road day trip



Wow, today was interesting. I can sum it up in the Facebook post sent to Selene but I'll elaborate on it gradually as well: "this has been an interesting day. A 6:30 start a bush fire, a tiger snake, uneventful koalas, a dead kangaroo, a depressed driver, burning breaks massive waves, a fainting girl and subway".

As the notion happens to denote the trip didn't go according to "plan". The driver was having some personal troubles and she was focused on some very negative points of interest throughout the great ocean road as a result which was amusing but worrisome. It became a running joke that she would end the point of interest with...."aaaand someone died." At one point we went over a bridge and she told us a suicide fence was developed because people were jumping over and even though we don't know if that was the case, there is a story about a husband who was so mad about his wife that he dropped his daughter over the rail had happened. At another point she talked about 11 people who died in a fire, and then 3 people dying in a flood. She spoke about the burning forest and the dead wallaby we passed by on the road. It was very negative in what I must say is the funniest and most amazing way but also in a worrisome and concerned way. I certainly hope that she was and is okay.



During the course of the time however we stopped by a park to see the koalas, but there were a total of 3. None of them were doing anything but sitting up in trees and they reminded me of Howler monkeys. I decided to go draw some ducks and the camp grounds were busy and covered in people. It appears a tiger snake had snuck into the camp and killed a duck so the management was coaxing it into

a recycling bin to take it about 3 km up the road. I took a few pictures, but my class mates didn't catch any of it. We got back on the road and went to the 12 apostles where our way there had caused the breaks and the wheel barring to heat up astronomically. We stopped by a forest to let it rest a bit and again at the apostles which were covered in people everywhere. It was like seeing the rest of china as most of the busses were Chinese and the tourism was very close together (I hope that didn't sound terrible :!). This isn't a problem at all but I feel it was more then worth mentioning as the demographic changes in New Zealand and Australia are dramatically shifting as they are.



After this I got to spend my first time actually stepping foot in the ocean, at the shipwreck gorge where a ship wreck had happened (haha). This was amazing as the beach was fine, the environment perfect, and the water was incredibly cold since 1000 miles away was glacier. This is probably an experience I will hold on my own for a very long time to come. I am living an adventure and it is thanks to this trip, my partner, and the people who have egged me on to where I am today. I have them to thank ^^

At last, we got in a new bus on our way back home and the break problem stopped but half an hour later a girl passed out. As we got to Sydney people were playing Adele's hello, to the visual depiction of a setting sun. Fucking gorgeous and brilliant I say. Wow.



January 11 - Jaques, the museum, Sophie, and the train trip

The morning started rather nicely with the meeting of another academic in Melbourne University by the name of Jacque given. His work was on the future of television and most of his publications by his college have been on where the medium is going. We discussed the draining stocks of broadcast only television and the corresponding increase in Netflix and other mediums. We discussed its history and the use of DVRs. He gave us some rather prominent infographics about it all

“saved” and yet, the equality has never been found. I spent about an hour there before meeting up with Pete again and I told him I would probably head to the Hotel after meeting with a friend. A long term friend of mine online and another invisible transgender woman named Sophie (Matthew IRL) we chose to meet off of the parliament building after I left the museum and I had some time so I sat down and decided to draw the hotel Windsor across from the building briefly. It had been a while since I did any form of environmental drawing and cityscapes. I am normally focusing on all of the people.

Unfortunately she had to briefly work, but she could hang out while doing so. All she did was count the number of people coming through one portal or another to ensure people weren't hopping the fence or otherwise causing a net loss in the public transport. We basically just shot the shit until around 5 when I had to head back to the hotel to get on the plane to Sydney.



The train trip was the most positively worst experience I have ever had traveling. The train was very bumpy and loud. It didn't provide blankets or any form of “comfort” available to it other than the drinks which were very expensive. All of the girls had decided they would drink quite a lot before the train and then upon discovering they were limited on what alcohol they could buy they bought the train out of hose and home. This of course left them loud, rowdy, obnoxious, and intolerable for myself, Bree who was not drinking, and the rest of the train. I have never been so ashamed to be considered American or be associated with them. I was also in a window seat and although the train had more space than that of a plane it was far more uncomfortable. I should have worked on my journal but I ended up not doing so purely because was mentally exhausted, distracted, and everyone else was trying to sleep with lights off and everything. Worst experience ever. Just ever.

January 12 – The train trip was positively miserable. Macquarie University

Coming off of the train after the entire night was miserable. I didn't get any work done because I was too tired, but I couldn't sleep at all in the cramped always bumping and moaning and groaning train. The drunken classmates near me made the first few hours a living hell and I was planning to work on this journal, but haven't completely caught up because of the fatigue from the trip. I'm writing this on the 13th after getting back from its events even.

Regardless after the trip I had to push myself enough to work in my sketchbook's journal portion a bit. I taped some things in and filled out what I could. Then I was off to Maquarie's conversation with the dean of the journalism and communication department. It was a very impressive building. We moved to the 9th floor in a meeting room resembling the meeting rooms you see in gritty CEO movies like the wolf of Wall Street. Here we met Catherine and Nichole who spoke a lot about how they teach journalism students, how much a study abroad costs, etc. One of the cool things was that Nichole

studied cultural studies online and in communication which is a direct parent to the field I am studying. Unfortunately however I couldn't get one question in edgewise before she left. We spent a lot of time discussing what could kill you In Australia which got my goat to be honest. Then again it may have been me being a terrible monster without any sleep and being annoyed from travel so I don't think I have an objective opinion at this point.

Notes from Catherine and Amanda:

Catherin – post-grad teacher and advisor in communication and new media that I should be looking in to

Amanda – an advisor with the foreign exchange office

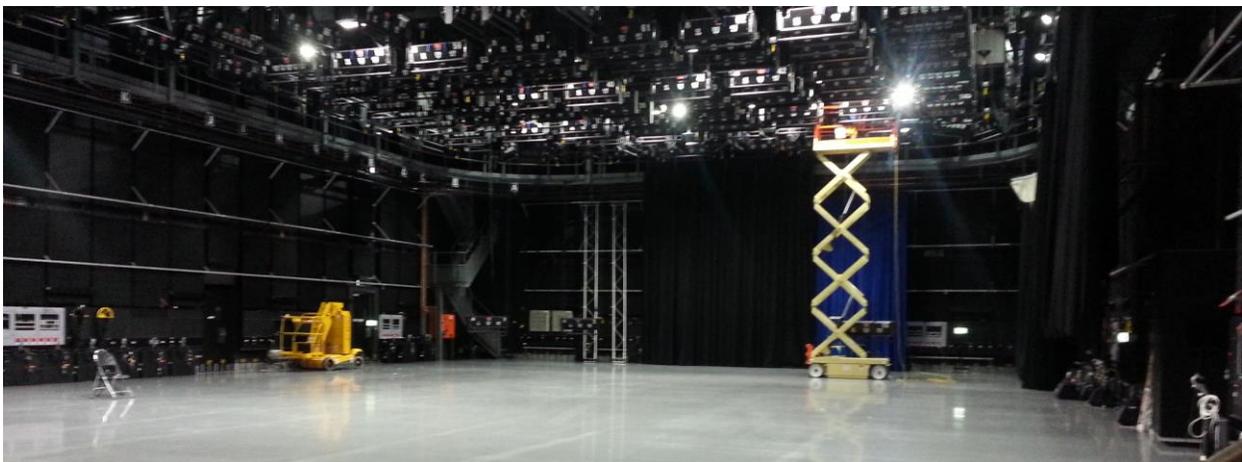
There is a major debate right now about whether it's a good idea to take notes right and this is a huge thing just in our school. I think it's a testament to how different and progressive we are.

Hicks system basically means you pay after education, not before. The majority of the program is balanced between genders but the games/interaction is 90% male.

Despite all of this Macquarie will be a potential place for me to study I think. I need to do some research as to what they have been publishing in in comparison to Massey for media communication and then we'll go from there. This would be interesting for me to look at.

As soon as Macquarie finished the rest of the students were going to go shopping and go to a mall near the college so I ducked out, got some nachos at a restaurant at the university, and then ended up sleeping for 4 hours, got up, finished a few things in my sketchbook journal (up to the great ocean road), and went back to bed for real (I slept for 10 hours and almost ended up late).

January 13- ABC Studios & Sydney University



Today began at ABC studios. This trip for the most part wasn't particularly useful for me but it was indeed a little exciting. The beginning of the tour was rather drab for me. We saw the production side of the studio s several live audience rooms and makeup, wigs, and otherwise. The gigantic Dr. Who

Tardis was the highlight of my day through most of this. I can't really say too much of it as it didn't have much relevance but everyone else seemed to enjoy it.

The second half however.....was amazing. We went up to the 3rd floor of the studio where their ABC archives were placed and we spoke to the 2 people responsible for saving and cataloging prior footage and radio recordings. This was really interesting to me because they were deciding what would become the personal history of the institution. Whatever they saved became the snapshot in time for that company and for the nation. Over a long period of time they discussed the difficulties with retaining that information in a relevant and accessible format. They discussed retrieving the data and the rites issues that followed with it. They showed us prior tapings and the machines that they relied on to access the data and most importantly, they showed us the people that kept the data intact, alive, and ready to view. Archivists are very special people in our world. I look up to them quite a lot really. They are amazing. I wouldn't want to do what they are doing, but I would love to speak with them about the history they see every day at ABC.



Shortly afterward we went to the main Sydney University. It was a "Stanford experience" to say the least with neo-gothic architecture mixed with modern architecture and the campus was prim and proper to the very blade of grass out on the sidewalk. Everyone happened to be very impressed with the campus and spoke a lot about coming here, but it didn't really phase me at all. I kept wondering why they would stake their futures and the work they would do on how the campus looked. They hadn't actually met a teacher yet had they? They didn't know what research was coming out of the institution or how it treated its students. That was very difficult for me to understand to say the least.



We were there to discuss game culture with a student there who was working on his PHD. This was the interesting part of the trip. He discussed game culture at length and discussed how environments would change the culture. He discussed location play and "ingress" which I must say is a very interesting game. I downloaded it and still don't quite understand how it works but it kind of made meetup make more sense. You are friends with the strangers around you and you compete friendly with them by seeing sites you've never seen, hunting for plaques a landmarks, then claiming them as your own.

His position was that this way of gameplay would change game culture and develop a culture that was widely impacted by the local culture outside of the game. This sound a lot like me does it not? This game culture is a huge deal because it has impacted the way that Australians interact with each

other online. Combine with the economic imperative preventing Australians from playing on online platforms via consoles and more on computers this seems to be of direct reliance to my job.

Notes from Kyle Moore: A doctoral Candidate at the University of Sydney

Studying the location elements of gaming culture in Sydney. The question was, “how can I understand from aussie gaming culture how local cultures are affected by westernization?”

First, wireless interconnectivity effects people’s connection so professional cultures haven’t really developed. There isn’t really a professional gaming scene. Cost of games are expensive due to delivery and therefore the console games are released for only parents who can afford it. Steam and other online modes of play have increased but only the console portions. Online game play is restricted due to the metered connections and PC gaming, although present isn’t huge. Access to games in general is not there so there is a huge problem with piracy.

A high frequency of mobile games are cheap and easy to download which leads to a lot of the games and that is where the location gaming of apps comes in. The average gamer is 33 years old and 98% of homes with a child play video games. 50/50 gender split over all and Asian gaming population is the biggest.

Before moving on talking about the corporate aspects, banning and censorship are big deals for the country and free speech is not a guaranteed situation. Instead they have to modify it for play.

“South park stick of the truth replaced its censored content with a crying koala and kangaroo because it wasn’t allowed to show some of the cut scenes and areas.”

Organizations like Fresh air and PVI select their environments and often that alone becomes a form of a gamer gate. Location based gaming is a problem if you are rural or others don’t play but regardless we are going to look at and study the company that makes Ingress and Pokémon Go! - They show great information about places and engage you in the area. The mode of transport matters and you can look at it to attain information. However you are also feeding the company that data and they can easily develop demographics for the game. There was a lot of meta-data collected from all of these games.

Overall the idea that you can have a location and environment effect the play that is attained or received is pretty amazing and understanding these dynamics has a huge impact on my work as a community facilitator. I downloaded ingress to see what it was about as a result.

January 14 – The PR firm, Hill & Knowlton, was amazing!!!

Today brought up a lot of mixed feelings for myself regarding career choices. I have been very gung-ho about the idea of making proper communities using the same skills I find in PR and social media marketing and applying them academically and for anthropology’s sake. That said though we spent a bunch of time at the PR firm here in Sydney and the love I used to have for PR crept up on me. The discussion of content management, the production of a campaign for a gin company and the training on crisis management. I love and have loved it all for a long time but I kept letting the idea of the bottom line and the money matters worry me too much. I know that PR is not something I want to get into for

large firms despite my understanding of its work. That said, would PR for non-profits be a good fit for me? The exhilaration of a good campaign coming about with my teammates and the conversations I had with the people there was mind blowing to me. The notes I took and the fascination I had was something I haven't felt in a very long time to be honest. I want to feel like that again.

I guess you could say I have been torn lately. I want to do community facilitation but I don't want to be a part of the community that has fostered me for so long. I want to do PR but I hate social media and the stress of it all in regards to the money aspect. I want to do graphic design but the monotonous use of programs and color and work for other people has bothered me. And I have missed the canvas but I don't want to put the work in on a canvas. I seem not to be lost at what to do with my life, but I want to do too much. I should consider interning at a PR firm for a time. I feel it would be a very good step for me. But we'll see.

NOTE: due to the amount of activity notes and the images that were involved it's better to see what I did in regards to notes in my actual sketchbook. I won't be summarizing it here but if you have no access to my sketchbook stay tuned! I will likely be posting scans of it.

After the trip to the PR firm I attended another museum with Pete. This one was HUUUUUGE. I only got to see one floor but the amount of traditional STEM science I saw and the way that the exhibits were designed made me want to look at this as well. There is just too much that I want to do. It had several exhibits from media to human anatomy, basic experiments to chemistry and an entire exhibit on the non-emissions future. I kind of forgot to take good pictures but here's one of a mortuary table:



January 15 - Joel, Alexis, light dinner, and getting away from the crowd.

This was a fantastic end to the official class time for the trip. We met up with prior CSU graduate Joel and his friend who had graduated from the American Art Academy, Alexis where we talked about video production, melanoma research and work for non-profits, and how to get from point A – your college – to point B, what you're doing at that moment whatever the hell that might be.

Both of the individuals we spoke to today were American and they had both started right where we as the class are now. They worked in the video production fields both for freelance and with companies, but the work they were doing was impactful. Neither of them had predicted where they would be in the least, and to see such refreshing honesty about how they felt about their lives was amazing. They both had families, they were moderately successful and extremely happy with their lives.

Joel went traveling and met his wife at a hotel in Paris. He was an adventurous soul and neither he nor Alexis stopped, basically ever. To see that was huge for me. My entire life has been one big mix of temporary passions from manga, to traditional art and painting, to public speaking, to public relations and now I'm wavering on my understanding of communities and going back to content design and marketing. I guess that makes me a rather multi-talented person with a lot on my resume, but I find myself growing dis-passionate with media and I fear that I won't love something long enough to feel comfortable where I am. And yet, both of these men have continued in creative fields despite that itch to keep moving on and doing so many other things. I would like to have that. I think this may be where I go. I want to be a jack of all trade for community non-profits and organizations. And if that changes in 6 months, both Joel and Alexis have taught me, as well as the rest of this trip – that that is just fine.

I headed to the hotel from here after a wonderful lunch at a bar and then spent the night to myself. Embracing a happiness in being alone. I wasn't worried about what I would or would not get done. I fell into my brain happy as could be, and ultimately, it was the first time in a while I wasn't worried about anything that was on my plate. That is a good feeling, I think. A very good feeling.

I spent several hours watching anime, some working on this journal, and I spent an hour in the pool which was creepy and not okay. I spent a few more hours talking with Selene, and drawing for a bit. I got prepared for school coming up next week and I talked to friends on Facebook. Overall I feel like this was pretty okay. I am staying up way too late for my own good and need to dilate but you know, I got another entire day ahead of me.

January 16 – Day off time!



My plans for the day were as follows: anime, morning breakfast at De La France, working on the journal for several hours, and then at 6 we are to have the end of the trip dinner. That seems for now to be precisely how it's going 😊

Well as I was working on the journal at de la France a 14 year old Islamic girl from the area of Pakistan came over and somewhat nervously asked what I was doing. I was in a sketchbook and on a computer typing away so she was wondering if I was doing some form of prose or poetry. I told her what I was doing and she seemed interested but in a rush. I showed her some other graphic design that I did as she seemed more interested in the art and then I answered some of her questions as to where I was from. She said she was headed to catch a plane back home after the poetry meet and I bid her goodbye. I took off from the area and decided to walk Sydney for about an hour. It is honestly a very dirty town but it has a certain kind of appeal to it. I don't particularly like Sydney but I can see why someone would want to live here.

I didn't find any interesting shops at all so I decided to head back to the hotel and begin packing to go home. I watched some anime, did physical therapy, and waited for the trip for dinner to come up. I was feeling quite peaceful in all reality. Good day.

At the end we made the decision to get a drink at the opera house. Knowing the opera house is one of the greatest monuments to architecture and seeing it in pictures I was very excited to see it myself. I got giddy and excited like a 9 year old and after a few moments of holding myself back I decided screw it, I'm basically here on my own and I let the 9 year old enjoy the place for a bit.

The opera house is honestly one of the most amazing buildings I have ever seen in the latest of these centuries. It was designed to look like a wave and a mountain. It was designed as a proper place for a dramatic scene and a beautiful sound and it happened just that way. The white crests looked just as a large



wave has when I first saw the ocean as it peaked out of the way. The Bridge facing it looked just like a pear out into the ocean and the people, places, stores, and lights gave it a majestic “Atlantis under the sea” feel that looked so calm and pristine yet at the same time grand.

As we walked up to it the wharf began to give me a feel much like the Chao Praya in Thailand did when Selene and I went there. I started to get excited again as we walked up the steps of the opera house and it looked like the wake of a wave. It started out so very shallow and as I climbed up it the white crest of the wave looked more and more dominating as if I would really capsize. The sound of opera by Sarah Brightman filled my head and the sound of an orchestra began to build and I just wanted to be excited, artistic, and alone for the time being. I broke from the group to enjoy myself.

When I had rejoined we went to a bar and I wasn't feeling in the mood to drink at all, so I just sat with one drink and listened to everyone go on about the usual stuff while enjoying the ambience. The only thing that could have made the night better was a good espresso in a high place overlooking the opera house and a deep profound conversation with the one I love. I was feeling very artistic....

January 17 – Back home and resting I am rather sure.

The trip home from the airport was relatively quick and Selene had picked me up so I spent most of the time admiring the majestic-ness of the Rocky Mountains I had been missing so long. The beautiful green hills and mountains of New Zealand definitely left a mark but the blue and white crested mountain tops of 14ers were just irreplaceable. I do recognize now how privileged I am to live in Colorado as it really is a state of beauty and we live in the New Zealand of the United States really.

I got home and immediately we went and got tacos because tacos. Illegal Pete's had a fantastic illustration in the bathroom of a satanic pentacle (upside down) but some of the lines were strategically removed such to reveal a picture of a cat, and around it was the words, “Hail Stan!” It made me laugh very hard. This just seems so indicative of Fort Collins culture and it made me feel home.

Our next order of business was to play as much smash brothers as I could before I felt I could no longer keep my eyes open and I just tanked.

January 18 – A day to rest.....I think

Today is the one day off I have and I'm going to spend it on this I believe. I have already added the illustrations to pdf folders and now I need to go back through the entire trip to add in images. As I'm already at 32 pages though I kind of wonder how large this file is going to be. I also need to think about and develop a website if possible but I don't know how to frame it just yet. I think I will likely select a few “topics” and then write on the emphasis of the trip. Or alternatively I can develop the site on an actual calendar with a cover page for each day and you can click and expand it. Maybe I'll boil down my experiences onto an actual image and about 150 words maximum on each. I'm not sure though. The first priority is finishing this journal. I don't quite know when it's due.

Edit: I made it through to December 23rd before having to end. This is exhausting but hey, that right there is a week's worth right?

Website Planning:

1. Message conveyance:
2. Audience:
 - a. On click:
 - b. For how long:
 - c. Getting them to return:
3. Disturbances:
4. Content Ideas:
5. Format:
6. Overall design of the site:
 - a. Artistic
 - b. Technical
- 7.

Mind Map:

1. There is a ton of “wisdom pieces” pieces here.
2. Obviously chronological order may be an option
3. People, places, things, get separate papers?
4. Maybe writing a blog using this as data and having about 3-5 of them?
5. Small 1-200 word image embeds maybe?
6. Should I even use text for this or should I do web as well?
- 7.