

A traveler and a Scholar

The Wayne Morse Scholars program motivated this UO senior to make a life-changing journey.

THE FIRST DAY OF TEACHING WAS A COMPLETE BUST.

Adrian Engstrom von Alten strode confidently into the Nepalese village classroom, eager to meet his new students. They sat elbow-to-elbow in a classroom lit by one small window. Few had pencils, schoolbooks, or notebooks. The tin roof amplified the heat of the sun. As Adrian began to teach, his confidence began to wilt. A lesson on English greetings was too easy for the students. The first page of their book was too difficult. Meanwhile, unattended younger children kept running up to his door and yelling while all the teachers looked on, chuckling, as they relaxed in the schoolyard.

"The class period was 45 minutes long, but I walked out after 40, fuming," Adrian said. "Underneath my anger there was curiosity— what was happening in this culture? What an interesting puzzle."



He soon learned that it was part of Nepalese tradition for teachers to show up at school and have an unscheduled holiday when they didn't feel like teaching.

Adrian who graduated in Spring 2015 with a degree in sociology and folklore, was in Nepal for ten weeks for his Wayne Morse Scholars practicum. The Wayne Morse Scholars program is administered by the Wayne Morse Center and is for UO undergraduates interested in public affairs and politics.

"I chose this as my practicum because it represents an intersection of many of my interests: I want to travel, I want to teach English abroad, I'm Buddhist and the religion is strong in the country, and my parents went to Nepal when they were young and have pictures from that trip," Adrian said.

Adrian lived and taught in Ghandruk, a village of 8,000

THEY (THE WAYNE MORSE SCHOLARS STAFF) WANTED ME TO DO LEARNING OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT. I TOOK THAT DESIRE AND RAN WITH IT.

people. It was a four-hour trek by foot (the only means of travel) to other major villages in the region.

Though Adrian was in Nepal during the April 2015 earthquake, he was fortunate.

"I was on the third floor of my guesthouse when the earthquake hit, and I thought the house would collapse, but there was actually no damage to the region of Nepal I was in," he said. "People were shocked, though, and very scared. When the

second earthquake hit, I was in class and the students nearly trampled each other trying to get out."

In addition to teaching, Adrian analyzed his experience and the culture, tying into his work toward a sociology degree. He credits the Wayne Morse Scholars program as the impetus for his journey.

"Without the requirement of a practicum or internship, I probably never would have thought of spending an academic term like this," Adrian said. "The Wayne Morse Scholars staff pushed me to do something exciting that looked at political studies in a new way. They wanted me to do learning outside of the classroom environment. I took that desire and ran with it."

Learn more about the Wayne Morse Scholars program and apply at waynemorsecenter.uoregon.edu/scholars

