

HANDS-ON LIFE CHANGING LEARN

Tying academic studies to the real world and drawing students and teachers into a dialogue about our shrinking global village



During the 2009 summer academic term, an innovative interdisciplinary general education program was offered at Andrews University, featuring a study tour to Tanzania. The tour took place May 13–31, with academic experiences prior to and/or in conclusion of the trip. The goal was to tie academic studies to the real world, drawing students and teachers into a dialogue about our shrinking global village. The program was carefully researched and creatively blended several disciplines, including psychology, literature, social work, religion and photography. It provided a wealth of learning possibilities, from the wondrous natural heritage of Africa, to its traditional cultures and contemporary African life. Blessed with some of the world's greatest natural areas, Tanzania is politically stable, has a reliable and comfortable infrastructure for visitors, and warm and friendly people eager to share their rich cultural heritage.

DONALD MAY

Academic Tour Director



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The tour's director was Donald May, associate dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and director of general education & student retention. He was previously a professor of photography for 20 years and led multiple tours around the world. Initially the tours were planned solely for photo majors, resulting in a wealth of visual experiences.

In 2001, May was named director of general education and recognized the value of travel as part of an enriched learning experience. In the summer of 2002, May transitioned to a more integrated academic tour experience.

May says, "I realized I had only been observing in the past. Taking classes in other disciplines enriched my visual and travel experience."

Four Andrews University professors accompanied him: Douglas Jones, professor of English and chair of the Department of English; Ann-Marie Jones, assistant professor of social work; Ante Jeroncic, assistant professor of theology; and Herbert Helm, professor of psychology. (Unfortunately, Jeroncic was injured the second day of the trip and therefore unable to contribute to this piece.) During spring semester and an intensive prior to the beginning of the trip, students took classes, enabling them to earn 12 credits. The classes were Cultural Psychology, African Travel Literature, Comparative Religions, Independent Study: Service, and Photography.

Participants worked alongside local Tanzanians performing service projects, and observing and participating in educational practices in two distinctly different villages, a Masaai village and a small Tanzanian rural community, Poli Village. They also had the opportunity to observe and

share cultural religious experiences, including a visit to a mosque in Arusha, and a Sabbath spent at the University of Arusha. During the trip, they came to understand the varied nutritional and wellness patterns of the communities they “lived” with. Portable generators provided lighting for on-site photography studios, where photos were given as a gift to the communities. Because of the rich shared learning experiences, photography became a vehicle to enhance the bond between tour participants and the local villagers.

Oh...and yes, there were animals. Exotic ones, scary ones, close contact with large mammals. Initially, students are drawn to this destination for the ability to observe nearly extinct animals in their natural habitats, which included Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti National Park. Yet when they record their top three moments of the journey, interaction with the people they spent time with, especially the driver/guides, is often the life-changing memory.

“In the context of the mission of Andrews University, with our keen focus on global understanding and changing the world, this experience is just good academic practice,” states May. ▶



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DOUGLAS JONES

African Literature



To be truthful, in the couple of months since I returned to campus from the Tanzania Study Tour, I have been reluctant to put my thoughts down on paper—mostly because I think it’s important to let one’s enthusiasm for something cool a bit and not sound too over-the-top exuberant about one’s foreign travel. But I’m finding that my several days in Tanzania with 33 other Andrews

people—students, faculty and friends—stands out as the best experience I’ve had in my teaching career.

Again, I don’t want to gush—but everything I’ve done since returning from Africa seems pale in comparison. And I’ve heard the same from the students who participated, too. How do we settle back into our former lives and routine when we’ve met little school children who are thrilled to own half a pencil? When we’ve come so close in our Landcruisers to a trio of elephants that we could count their eyelashes? When my Andrews students exclaim after visiting Ngorongoro Crater, “This is the best day of my life.”?

Let me share with you a little of what has impressed me about our wonderful trip to Tanzania.

I taught the Studies in Literature course, and for about two weeks before we left for Africa, I had the pleasure of leading

our group of undergrads in some great discussions of modern African narrative in anticipation of our travels. We started with our study of *The Dark Child*, Camera Laye’s memoir of adolescence in the Malinke tribe of Upper Guinea. This story provided us with insight into the superstitions and folkways of a tribal upbringing, and Laye’s treatment of young men’s rites of passage sparked an awareness that would inform us later as we met with the Maasai in their village.

Our second book, *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a young Nigerian woman, portrayed the challenges of one contemporary family’s moving away from traditionalist tribal religion to embrace Christianity. But within the family we are confronted with two very different approaches to Christianity. My class enjoyed this book, and it raised many questions that we probably grapple with in our own lives—along with more specifically African issues.

Alexander McCall Smith’s *The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* gave us a portrait of contemporary Botswana that allowed us to anticipate the everyday lives of many African people. Smith’s characters are believable and endearing, and the various cases Precious Ramotswe must solve kept us entertained and engaged. In many ways these books prepared us for our exposure to a new culture and environment. Through our reading and writing we anticipated our upcoming adventure—and the anticipation charged our discussion with energy and immediacy.

Then, once we were on location, we wrote our own literature. Students penned their own safari haiku poetry along with authoring verbal portraits of the people we

met in Tanzania. I'd like to think that we saw Africa more completely through a writer's lens—in addition to our camera lenses—as we eventually were moved to record the experience in our own literary creations. Certainly, the distillation of experience through poetry and thoughtful prose resulted in some memorable verbal images.

Let me share with you a handful of my students' poems:

*Wildebeest migrate
Thundering African plain
Dust billows, parched air*

Michelle Adame, elementary education major

*Hair like woven gold
Stands tall lion of Judah
All, man beast and god*

Jacques Laguerre, international communication major

*Dark faces, bright smiles
hearts aching for companions
two million children*

Kylene Cave, nutrition science major

My literature students also wrote verbal portraits, seeking to capture the essence of a person they encountered in

Tanzania. One of our students—at every village, school, or orphanage we visited—was a magnet to the children. I share with you psychology major Andréanne Cadet's portrait of one of her new friends:

Amiable is a happy young woman whose smile continually accompanies the games of her comrades at the Poli Village secondary school. Her brown almond-shaped eyes reflect the Tanzanian sun. Even though Amiable's hair is cut very short, her delicate features and coffee complexion distinguish her from the boys who play football in the schoolyard.

Amiable has never traveled, but she hopes that one day she will venture out of her natal land. That is why she enjoys practicing her English with the occasional tourist that gets lost in the narrow streets of her village.

Amiable often helps her mother sell intricate metal bracelets and colorful bead boxes to anyone who glances in the direction of the table where the artwork lies. Most of the time nothing is sold, but Amiable still smiles. Every morning, she quickly puts on her old grey uniform and with a cup of fresh milk, heads to school with the hope of one day leaving Poli Village.

The five Tanzanian guide/drivers assigned to us were wonderful ambassadors for friendship and understanding. Each one had a strong, positive influence on the success of the study tour. Mark Knutson, a visiting student from Southern Adventist University, profiles one of the men in his verbal portrait:

Everest. I am not talking about a mountain. I am talking about a man, a man with a mountain of life experiences. Everest was born in a small tribe at the base of the great Kilimanjaro. He is a talkative, yet soft-spoken man who has a vast amount of knowledge about his country Tanzania. His eyes are at peace in a world that is rough, his words are kind in a world that is upset, and his left hand bears the testimony of a tough life where multiple jobs are required to "survive," let alone provide for a family.

Everest has a unique way of connecting to each person he



Top left: Bradley Austin, photographic imaging major, tries to coax a smile out of the children posing in a makeshift photography studio set up in the Masai village. Once the photos were taken they were printed on site and given to the "models."

Above: The first Sunday afternoon spent meandering through Poli Village was listed as one of the top three experiences of the trip on a concluding survey. Everyone noted how gracious and friendly the Tanzanians were.

meets. He is able to do this simply by loving. He loves what he does, who he is with and where he lives. By the end of the trip he was able to help us understand and share this very same love and appreciation that we saw in him upon arrival in Tanzania.

Looking back at our days in Tanzania, I recognize there was something obviously other than course work that made the venture a life-changing experience. I don't really think any words I can think up articulate the power of emotion and discovery that bubbled just under the surface during our time together. Perhaps it was the time together that made the Tanzania Study Tour so meaningful—34 people riding together, jammed into five Landcruisers, discovering a new land and new people. Together with our five Tanzanian guide/drivers, we met children in the orphanages and schools who spoke to our hearts, reminding us of the uncertain future so many in Africa face. And, as we met in a Swahili church service with the students and staff at the University of Arusha, it became very clear that we shared a common faith—together.

Just before we left campus on May 14 for O'Hare, President Andreasen met us as we loaded the AU coach and told us that we'd never again be the same after visiting Africa, that we'd never again watch the news in the same way. He was right. This general education study tour changed each of its participants. During our time together we often talked about what we take for granted back at home—running water, food, books and pencils. We also marveled at the expansive landscape of the Serengeti, at the jolt of seeing nature red in tooth and claw, at the endurance, dignity and hospitality of the villagers we spent time with.

"The best day of my life was in Africa," writes Ashley Raethel, a psychology major. "The top was rolled up on our Landcruiser, and everyone in our car was standing up, the wind whipping our hair. There were animals everywhere, gazelle and zebra running in front of the car, almost as if it was a game to see who could get the closest. The sun was low in the sky and the colors of the Serengeti were coming alive. We couldn't stop grinning or yelling. . . . It was amazing. It was the happiest I have ever felt, flying down the Serengeti, the wind knotting my hair, dust coating my face. For the rest of my life those moments will be seared in my memory."

"I like to learn. I have always liked school. Classrooms are great. But there is something to be said for experience. A book can only tell you about love, you can never know the feeling until the floor falls out from beneath you. I had read about Africa, I had seen movies and listened to lecturers. But Africa was not real or relevant to me until I was there. [Now] a part of my heart is still crying for the beauty of Africa and for the other part of my heart that I left there."

In discussing what the Tanzania trip means to him, Ivan Ruiz, architecture major, states: "The least and the most I can say is that I have been profoundly affected....I have realized quite clearly how privileged I am to have experienced what I did."

"A conversation that I remember quite well from the trip was one in which a friend and I wondered at how many things had to line up for us to come on this trip. Had any small thing happened slightly differently, we would not have experienced joy on such levels as we did. I believe a lot of us come away from this trip first with gratitude and then with wonder." ▶

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ANN-MARIE JONES

Social Work/Service

Tanzania, East Africa, is a place where “Jambo” is the word of the day. This means “How are you?” or “How is it?” The typical response can be “Mambo” or “Power,” which means “okay or cool.” The people who use these words usually follow up with a ready smile. To say that the Tanzanian people whom my students and I met and worked with are nice would be an understatement. When we went to the villages they literally welcomed us with singing and with open arms. We felt as if we were royalty, not deservingly of course, but they made us feel that way.

On Sunday, May 17, we visited Poli Village, where we had a meet-and-greet with the elders, councilmen, teachers and the children. We also visited Children for Children’s Future (CCF) Orphanage, where we painted a room as well as planted scallion and cabbage. We returned the next day to plant



trees and help plaster a classroom wall. We were quite tired and sore by the end of the service project. Amanda Powell, physical therapy major, stated in reflection of the trip, “I really liked how the people there were willing to help us and not just sit and watch us do them a favor. I think that is very important for forming a healthy relationship in service.”

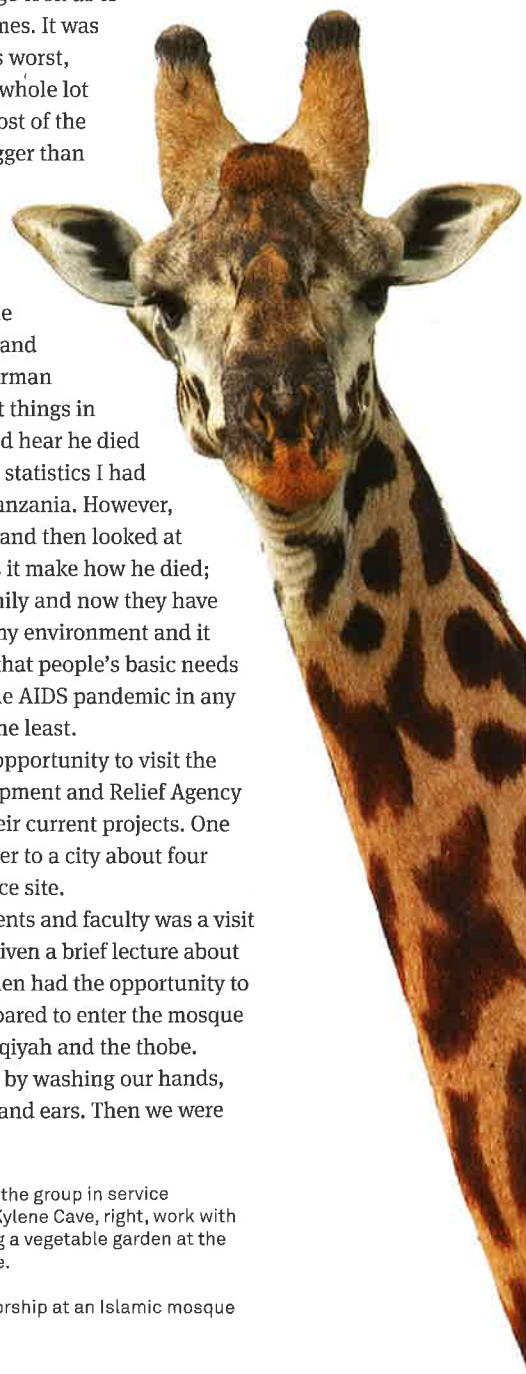
Two of the chairmen of Poli Village took us to visit some of the people in their homes. It was quite disturbing to see poverty at its worst, but more so to know there wasn’t a whole lot we could do about it at this time. Most of the homes my group visited were no bigger than the size of my guest bathroom at home; and at least four to six people lived there; usually only a mother in the home, taking care of her children and grandchildren. One elderly woman stated that her husband had died and when I asked the chairman what he died from, his response put things in perspective for me. I thought I would hear he died of AIDS and that would confirm the statistics I had read in preparation for the trip to Tanzania. However, the chairman looked at the woman and then looked at me and said, “What difference does it make how he died; he is not here to take care of his family and now they have no food.” I was shocked back into my environment and it was a wake-up call to let me know that people’s basic needs still need to be met, regardless of the AIDS pandemic in any country—that was sobering to say the least.

On Tuesday, May 19, we had the opportunity to visit the Usa River office of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and learn about some of their current projects. One major project was getting clean water to a city about four hours outside of their Usa River office site.

A notable highlight for both students and faculty was a visit to the mosque in Arusha. We were given a brief lecture about how the mosque operates. The women had the opportunity to wear the burka and hijab as we prepared to enter the mosque to pray. Most of the men wore the taqiyah and the thobe. We had to prepare ourselves to pray by washing our hands, feet, face and specifically, our nose and ears. Then we were

Top left: Hired drivers participated with the group in service activities. Aaron Moushon, middle, and Kylene Cave, right, work with their guide/driver Dawson Singo planting a vegetable garden at the Children for Children’s Future Orphanage.

Bottom left: Students participated in worship at an Islamic mosque in Arusha.





Above: An up-close and personal visit by one of many elephants while touring Ngorongoro Crater.

Right: Ivan Ruiz, religion major, performs a ritual dance with a local Maasai male. Sharing daily experiences built strong relationships between tour participants and Tanzanians. (Photo by Douglas Jones)

separated and the women were taken up to the roof to pray. The traditions and rituals were explained to us and we were able to ask a plethora of questions as well as take pictures.

We visited the Serengeti, where we saw many animals at very close range. Elephants were sometimes close enough to touch, but we knew better and resisted the great urge to leave our vehicles. The graceful giraffes were a sight to behold; sometimes they looked as if they were simply there to greet us. Then there were the playful yet shy zebras, gazelles, monkeys, wildebeests, jackals, hyenas and birds, such as ostrich, flamingos, and little blue and orange birds. The highlight for most people, however, was the lions—males, females and cubs; again, close enough to touch, but dangerous enough to make sure we stayed a safe distance away in our vehicles.

We also had the wonderful opportunity to meet a group of traditional Maasai. They are an amazing people who allowed us to come to their village and experience their lifestyle for a short period of time. Some of our female students, faculty and staff carried water on their heads for about three miles and a group of males herded cattle. The male/female roles are very clear and lines are not crossed. We were fortunate that two of our drivers were Maasai men and one of the men allowed us to visit the village where his family lives. We met his mother, who is one of several wives. They have a system that works well for them; even though some of us could not comprehend what seemed to be primitive ways, it works for them. They greeted us with open arms, asked some questions, allowed us to photograph them and even danced for us (the men); which included a lot of high jumping. Our male students had the opportunity to jump along with them.

The people who made the trip the most memorable were the drivers/guides. There were five Land Rovers and each



driver seemed armed with knowledge, skill, a much-needed sense of humor and a ready smile. Our driver was Dawson Singo, a native Tanzanian. He knew a great deal about almost everything. He was also the only driver who was a Seventh-day Adventist, which made Friday evening and Sabbath drives even more pleasant. Don't get me wrong, all the drivers were very pleasant and accommodating of our beliefs and values, but our driver seemed to know just what was needed when it came to the Sabbath and conversation regarding spiritual aspects. The seven passengers in our vehicle also had the opportunity to sing hymns, choruses and anything else that came to mind without any objections. At times he sang along in English as well as Swahili.

Well, now you know some facts. But what, you ask, was the purpose of this Tanzania Study Tour? From my perspective, it was to learn about service. Not necessarily what we in the U.S. can do for others, but what we can all do together to make this world a better place. I say the world, because we had students from various states and countries, which means that whatever they learned will follow them back to their respective areas and they will help to strengthen that region of the world.

The study tour was a way to teach the value of service, not just giving a few dollars or some clothes, but emphasizing the need to be prepared to assist wherever and whenever possible. The students learned that in many places the need is greater than the availability of valuable resources, such as a loving family, food, clean water, shelter, clothing, money, transportation, medical care and so much more. This was

an eye-opener for many students who had never visited a third-world country. It was an eye-opener for all of us, young and older alike, who are sometimes so out of touch with the needs of others that we think everyone is doing as well or nearly as well as we may be doing. Even for people like me who live from paycheck to paycheck, I would still be considered wealthy based on the fact that my food, clothing and shelter are usually taken care of, as well as the fact that I have clean water at my disposal.

Service is an asset we must stop taking for granted. People need our help, but we need the help of others as well. We must stop living a façade and allow people into our sphere in order to help and be helped. God has allowed us to have some property, be it a home, a car, a phone, etc., but He wants us to be able to have the mindset to share whatever we have with others. This may require us to leave our comfort zone and go to a distant land to offer our time and energy, but it doesn't have to. We all have the poor and needy in our own backyards; there is no excuse for us not to reach out and help someone.

Service, from a social work perspective, is simple; it all goes back to the Bible and the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." No one is exempt from the need to be served; it is just a matter of perspective as to who needs what and where the resources will come from to

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provide the various types of service. One student stated, "I don't think it would have hurt anything if we had had a little more service on the trip." Anyone can be service-oriented, but the bottom line is, what is your motivation? Whom are you trying to impress with your service, others or God?

It is my hope that this trip was a life-changing experience for at least some of the young people, but if not life-changing, it was certainly an experience they will not soon forget. ▶

HERB HELM

Cultural Psychology

A saying of the Maasai is, "Eyes that travel see." It was with this premise that students from Andrews went to Tanzania. Most of the students took a class in cultural psychology and one of the basic questions in this area is whether humans are fundamentally different or the same. There are three different theories on this question. Absolutism argues that there are absolute truths, or an underlying common nature, in humans. Relativism focuses on the functions that humans engage in within their sociocultural environment—here humans construct their reality. Universalism, like absolutism, "may view culture as a veneer, that masks essential and eternal truths."² However, the universalist sees these cultural variations as important—so it emphasizes both the cultural specific and general.

While I could discuss some of the theoretical or experiential elements of cultural psychology and what the students experienced and learned in Tanzania, I thought it might be more illuminating to let the students speak for themselves. The following are taken from their cultural psychology papers:

"Before going to Tanzania we read all of these chapters in our book about culture and what to



expect and what to be careful with and things like that. But they were just ideas, nothing more. It wasn't until we were in Tanzania that those ideas became concrete and started to make real sense."

"You have to watch your step much of the time, try to work out what it all means, worry about being offensive, ripped off, or humiliated. And because you have trouble in interpreting the feedback you are getting, you are uncertain about whether you are doing the right thing. All this leads to feelings of helplessness, and self-doubt as to whether you will be able to cope. More specifically, you may be confused about your role, about what you can expect others to do to and for you and you to them, both in



“TANZANIANS... LIVE BY ADAPTING TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT AND WE AMERICANS CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT TO FIT OUR NEEDS.”

your professional and social life. As you learn more about the other culture, the differences between your values, practices, and beliefs and theirs come into sharper relief.”

“Of all the experiences and places I was met with along the way, none hit me as hard as that of this very real problem [clean running water]. Coming from a home where I often allow the water to run for minutes at a time in order to get warm, it was a complete shock to enter a world where I was unable to use the water to brush my teeth for fear of becoming sick. Bottled water, a luxury for many, became a constant companion throughout our three weeks. We learned to take advantage of the thirty seconds of warm water, or to enjoy the short-lived showers that were produced by a bag of fire-heated water above our heads. Slowly, the smaller things that made up my life in America became a bigger deal and I was confronted with issues that people are faced with each day...When I arrived back in the United States I found it hard to allow myself to take long showers or let the water run for a longer time than necessary.”

“I have discovered that countries that are said to be less developed actually possess riches that more developed countries do not have. Hospitality is one of the traits I admire the most in Tanzanians.”

“One way in which the Tanzanians grow up and develop differently than people in the United States is that they live by adapting to their environment and we Americans change the environment to fit our needs.”

“We learned that holding hands (between men) is a sign of friendship. This act gives no information on a person’s sexual orientation. Regardless of how much sense this phenomenon made to me intellectually, it still remained an awkward sight even until the last day we left. I learned, firsthand, that it takes a lot of time for my cultural norms to change.”

“Never once did I get excited about going to the orphanages. It was only after I did a full analysis that I understood the true importance of the trip. Only then did I understand why I had to go. I severely underestimated the importance of human interaction in my growth process.”



Left: After spending two days at Poli Village the locals and tour participants gathered for a friendly game of soccer.

Right: A lecture on traditional African culture and history was provided by Daniel Akweso at the Iraqw Cultural Center.



"It is strange to say that I was not ridiculously excited about traveling to Africa. A person would think that any sane person would have a hard time sleeping at the mere thought of leaving on the trip. Perhaps, America had finally gotten to me with all its capitalist propaganda and self-serving advertisements. Tanzania was only a distant country with animals I could go to the zoo and see. The people were people; we have those in America. Hype and excitement were sadly absent from my emotions. There was only the thrill of traveling and the eagerness of spending time with my friends.... Tanzania was just a destination where I would live the next few weeks of my life: a place to breathe and exist for awhile. That was me thousands of miles and hundreds of lifetimes ago."

From my own perspective I found this an outstanding experience. I have had a fair amount of travel experience, and yet there was something special about Africa. In one way many of the towns reminded me of places like Thailand or Peru, and yet you knew you were not there. Many of the people we met were among the most gracious of hosts and hostesses. Villages and schools went out of their way to welcome us and their gratitude for small things, such as the gift of a soccer ball, was beyond the material value of the gift. Time was also spent on the Serengeti. This is a word that comes from a Maasai word meaning "endless plain" or "where the land runs on forever," and being there gives one

a different perspective on the expansiveness of the land and the smallness of you.

In a way these tours are like swimming. You can pick up many good books on swimming and learn all about the strokes, how they are done and what people have been able to accomplish in the realm of swimming. However, it is a totally different experience when you walk into the water and realize that while the books may have been correct you are now in a different realm. No matter how many books you read prior to going, there is no way to really understand your assumptions about life and other cultures, or maybe even your own culture. The values and ideals they have, how they live within their environment, and why they may have different living styles are elements you can only really experience as you immerse yourself into their world. It is with such goals that students and faculty pack up their bags and travel to wonderful lands such as Tanzania. ■

¹ Saitoti, Tepilit Ole (1988). *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*. University of California Press, Berkely and Los Angeles, CA.

² Lonner, W. J., & Malpass, R. S. (1994). *Psychology and Culture*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Read more about this study tour at
www.andrews.edu/go/tanzania

