International Year of Cuba

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For the past five years, WKU’s International Year of program has immersed students in cultures around the globe without ever leaving campus.

This year’s focus is on Cuba, a country cloaked in mystery and misconceptions, as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

Ecuador, South Africa, South Korea, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cuba. All countries a majority of students will never visit. But that hasn’t stopped them from learning about them through the International Year of program.

 “I think it’s cool that we have a little Cuban history in Kentucky that basically no one knows about.”

WKU grad student Shelley Spalding who studies both history and Spanish was asked to write about the little town of Maceo Kentucky near Owensboro.

 “Maceo was named after a famous Cuban war hero during Cuban war of Independence.”

Just one of many ways Cuba has been made more relatable to WKU students.

 “Cuba is a complex topic.”

History professor Dr. Marc Eagle says overall there’s not a good understanding of where the U.S. stands with Cuba.

 “People sort of know its communist so that’s bad, Fidel Castro is bad somehow but don’t have an understanding of what Cubans are like. What it’s like to live on the island, what day to day experiences are like.”

With guest speakers, exhibits, films and performances throughout the year, the International Year of program strings together a variety of educational opportunities for the campus.

 “Nice to not only cover in a little more detail in class but send them out to these things to get more out of International year of Cuba exhibits and talks.”

Giving a glimpse of and hopefully developing an appreciation for the Cuban culture.

 “I really enjoy that it chooses a country that many Americans have a lot of stereotypes about and it helps debunk a lot of those stereotypes and you learn about a really cool country.”

Next year the International Year of program will be taking a look back at all five countries that have been featured since 2014. Learn more at [www.wku.edu](http://www.wku.edu) slash IYO.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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