Christine Vassallo-Oby (née Preble)

Christine used her 2011 Decormier Scholarship to conduct fieldwork in the Yucatán Peninsula, specifically in the mass tourist zone of the Riviera Maya. Her ethnographic fieldsite is located on the island of Cozumel, Mexico. With this scholarship, she was able to spend multiple summers and a longer stay during the Fall/Winter 2012 gathering data about the complex intersection between cruise ship tourists and local populations in one of the world’s most popular cruise ship destinations. She gathered data of cruise ship tourist’s motivations for choosing such a vacation and their attitudes towards Cozumel and other forms of Mexican identity. Christine also interviewed local laborers in the hospitality industry including taxi drivers, tour guides, restaurateurs, servers, and timeshare salespeople. Her project entitled, “Imperial Consumption: Cruise Ship Tourism and Cozumel, Mexico” explores how the island is shaped by cruise ship tourist desires both physically, in terms of spatial layout of the island, along with permeating the everyday lives of those living on the island. With this research, Christine seeks to understand the complex ways the U.S.-based cruise ship industry establishes and reinforces a neoliberal empire built on control of Caribbean ports-of-call.