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1. Greetings!

This is the Weekly ISSS Newsletter that we send out every Friday. It includes very
important updates that you must be aware of, as well as information about events happening on campus and in the area.

Are you a part of a student organization and want to see your event advertised to your fellow students? Please send the details and/or flyer to ISSS@albany.edu.

2. Important Announcements

Have you applied for OPT yet?

Students applying for OPT are required to attend one of the below mandatory workshop sessions. As of now, it is taking USCIS 90 days or longer from the date they receive your application to process the request. The USCIS estimated processing times for an OPT application range between 3-5 months. Students who are applying for CPT are strongly encouraged to attend a workshop as well. Below are the dates of workshops for Spring 2018. No pre-registration is needed for the workshops.

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The international celebration will be held on Wednesday, May 16th 2018 at 2:30pm in the Campus Center Ballroom. If you have applied for graduation, you have received an RSVP email from ISSS for the International Celebration. Graduating international students, departing exchange students and scholars, and graduating study abroad returners will all be recognized at this special ceremony.
If you are looking for information on the official University wide Commencement ceremonies (where you wear your cap and gown), please visit the Commencement Student Checklist here: https://www.albany.edu/commencement/student_checklist.php

**Travel Signature Days!**

Your I-20 or DS-2019 must be signed every year while you are a full-time student so that you can re-enter the United States after travel. Usually, ISSS requests 5-7 business days for travel signatures. But on our special travel signature days, you can get it signed on the spot.

**Friday, February 9th, 2:00-4:00, Science Library G-05**

**Friday, March 9th, 2:00-4:00, Science Library G-05**

**Friday, May 4th, 2:00-4:00, Science Library G-05**

**Thursday, May 10th, 2:00-4:00, Science Library G-05**

**Friday, May 18th, 2:00-4:00, Science Library G-05**

**Bring your I-20 or DS-2019.**

Travel signatures are valid for one year for most full-time students. If you are uncertain if your signature is still valid, check with a ISSS advisor.
Academic Writing in English for International Graduate Students
Course- Register for Next Semester!

Are you a graduate student who wants to sharpen your writing skills? Do you want to know more about writing standards regarding research papers? Do you want to learn how to commit to a research project writing?

ETAP 500 is designed specifically for international graduate students and their focus on writing in academic discourse settings. Students will have a chance to engage in a series of graduate-level writing projects such as argumentative essays, critical reviews, and research papers. Students will receive a scaffolding guidance from the instructor and complete an actual research paper of their own interest at the end of the course.

For further information and registration number, do not hesitate to email the instructor of the class at l zalaltdinova@albany.edu, the secretary at bbrunner@albany.edu or ETAP advisors at etapcpn@albany.edu.

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ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Class Hours: Monday 01:15-04:05 PM  
Class number: 9020

Instructor: Liya Zalaltdinova  
For permission numbers email the instructor at l zalaltdinova@albany.edu,  
the secretary at bbrunner@albany.edu or ETAP advisors at etapcpn@albany.edu.

Course Description

Designed specifically for international graduate students, this course introduces the conventions of academic literacy by engaging students in a series of graduate-level writing projects such as argumentative essays, critical reviews, and research papers. Students will first explore the processes of academic writing by analyzing and evaluating sample academic papers and scholarly articles, and then will move on to produce their own written work by employing strategies such as drafting and revising as well as providing and responding to constructive feedback.

Writing projects will also focus on the fundamental aspects of an academic research paper (e.g., introduction, literature review, and citing sources) enabling students to produce a research paper on their topics of interest.

Through assigned readings, classroom discussions, writing assignments, and peer reviews, students are expected to develop an awareness of writing for scholarly purposes and to gain confidence in providing feedback to other students' written work.
ISSS is looking for Volunteers to be Flag Bearers!

Are you going to graduate this May? Do you want to be a flag bearer carrying a country’s flag at the commencement ceremony? Please Email jzhang6@albany.edu as soon as possible!

The Responsibilities:

1. Being a volunteer of flag bearer, in addition to attending the undergraduate or graduate commencement ceremony, you are agreeing to attend the International Celebration on May 16th at 2:30 p.m. at the Campus Center Ball Room (please RSVP here: https://goo.gl/LF20u4). (Please note: All flag bearers must be cleared by the Registrar and Judicial Affairs before their selection is final).
2. You will be asked to participate in a flag bearer rehearsal, prior to the commencement ceremony, Time and Location TBD. The rehearsal is REQUIRED for all flag bearers. Several alternates have also been chosen, so if you do not attend this rehearsal an alternate will be chosen to carry the flag of your country.
3. If you agree to carry the flag, the University will be relying on you be on time on the day of the ceremony: 8:30a.m on May 20th, 2018 for undergraduate ceremony or 3:30p.m. on May 18th, 2018 for the Master’s Ceremony
   
   Or 3:30p.m. on May 18th, 2018 for the Master’s Ceremony
   
   If you do not arrive on time, an alternate will be asked to carry the flag.

The Privileges:

1. You will have special seating in the front row at Commencement ceremony, so your family and friends will know where to find you.
2. Your name will be printed in the Commencement program as a flag bearer.
3. We will provide seating in the “priority seating” area for up to four of your family members and guests.

USCIS Updates Language Related to STEM OPT, Employer-Employee Relationships, and Third Party Placements

It has recently come to our attention that USCIS has made updates to their webpage “Optional Practical Training Extension for STEM Students (STEM OPT),” particularly as it
relates to the STEM OPT employer-employee relationship and third party locations or clients. ISSS is providing the below information as a courtesy update to students.

This is **not** a regulatory change, but rather signals a possible change in policy interpretation by USCIS. Policy and procedure can change (and changes frequently), so the following is also subject to further updates and changes. However, it is worth noting that policy changes can have future impacts, including but not limited to impacting future applications for benefits through USCIS. If you feel these updates may relate to you and your current employment situation, we recommend you bring this information to the attention of your employer and/or your employer’s attorney(s) for further discussion and evaluation.

You may read USCIS’s updated webpage [here](#): You may also read some history on the policy related to third party sites on NAFSA’s website, [here](#).

A few key updates include:

- “a STEM OPT employer may not assign, or otherwise delegate, its training responsibilities to a non-employer third party (e.g., a client/customer of the employer, employees of the client/customer, or contractors of the client/customer).”
- “under no circumstances would another F-1 student on OPT or a STEM OPT extension (who is undergoing training in their own right) be qualified to train another F-1 student on a STEM OPT extension.”
- “Moreover, the training experience must take place on-site at the employer’s place of business or worksite(s) to which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has authority to conduct employer site visits to ensure that the employer is meeting program requirements. This means that ICE must always have access to a student’s worksite; if the student is sent to different worksite locations as part of the training opportunity, ICE must be able to access such worksite locations. For instance, the training experience may not take place at the place of business or worksite of the employer’s clients or customers because ICE would lack authority to visit such sites.”
3. Other ISSS Updates and Events

Information on the SEVP OPT Portal

On March 23rd, 2018, SEVP (the government office which runs SEVIS) is expected to launch an OPT portal which students on OPT can access to view and update certain information in SEVIS. Please note this is a new system, and updates may be frequent as both students and advisors become accustomed to the system’s capability.

For information on how to use the Portal and what to expect, please click here.

Taxes Reminder: File your 8843 by June 15th.

ALL F-1 and J-1 students must submit an 8843 (even if you had no income) to the IRS by June 15, 2018.

Please go to: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8843.pdf, to obtain form 8843. For questions, please contact ISSS.

Research Assistantship for Native Arabic-Speaking Students

The Center for Technology in Government (CTG) is seeking two graduate assistants for a short-term opportunity during the late Spring and/or Summer 2018. Applicants must be native speakers in Arabic and full-time students at UAlbany. Students will be involved in an evaluation of e-government services provided in Arabic. The Research Assistant will collaborate in assessing website services, as well as the back office organizational structures.

To apply, please send an email with your CV/resume indicating also your available during the evaluation time-frame to CTG Program Assistant Jillian Palmer at jmpalmer@ctg.albany.edu

Volunteer Translators Needed- Pashto, Dari, and Arabic Speakers

The Refugee Community Health Partnership program is seeking Arabic, Dari and Pashto speakers to volunteer to translate, particularly in work with refugee populations. Most volunteers are needed on Mondays between 9am-12:30pm. Anyone interested in volunteering is asked to contact Carlie Thompson (c.thompson@ta-cr.org, 518-449-5155).
Refugee Family Strengthening at USCRI (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants)

The goal of our new program is to strengthen refugee and immigrant relationships with skills training and employment support for long-term relationship success and economic self-sufficiency. We want to help families and individuals achieve their goals and be successful in the U.S., both financially and psychosocially. Our hope is that clients take the communication skills they will learn in the Relationship Enhancement trainings to discuss a variety of problems they face when moving to a new country, whether within the home or the community at large.

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Participants will be required to take three surveys throughout the program. Each survey taken will result in a gift card awarded. The gift card amounts are $10 for the first, $15 for the second, and $40 for the third. A $10 raffle will be given out at each class.

The program is open for individuals, families, and couples. Open to all foreign-born residents regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or immigration status. If under 18, they will need a parent’s permission.

For further questions, please contact:

Somayeh Rashidi
Program Coordinator (RFS)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
991 Broadway, Suite 223
Albany, NY 12204
refugees.org/albany
4. University at Albany Events

Click [Here](#) for a full list of upcoming UAlbany events!

**Fairwell Albany**
Friday, April 27 8-10pm
State Quad
The UAlbany Programming Board presents its annual end of year event: FairWELL UAlbany! Taking place on State Quad Field, come out for food and carnival games as we begin to wind down the semester.

**5 Hour Driving Class - Great Dane Drive**
Sunday, April 29 12pm
Campus Center 375
$45
Hey Great Danes! Are you looking to get your NYS Driver's License in the near future? Stop by Campus Center, Room 375 on Sunday, April 29, at noon to take the required 5 Hour Class. Class will be administered by Albany Driving School. We ask that you please show up 10 to 15 minutes early and bring your learner's permit along with $45.00 (check or cash). We hope to see you there!

**Damien's Sip & Paint - UA Programming Board**
Monday, April 30 @6pm
Campus Center Ballroom
This Senior Week Kickoff event is one you do not want to miss! Damien's Paint & Sip will have seniors painting with a twist! Share an evening with friends, beverages, and art in a relaxed setting to make your next masterpiece! Damien’s Paint & Sip will be on Monday, April 30, 2018, in the Campus Center West Boardroom.

**Language Exchange Cafe**
Tuesday, May 1 8-9pm
Humanities 108
LC 18
Come join JSA's language exchange! You can practice your Japanese speaking skills or your
English speaking skills! Our weekly event is open to all UAlbany students of any language level. We hope to see you soon!

**Kickboxing**

Wednesday, May 2 @4:15pm-5pm
Physical Education Building - Group Exercise Studio
Ready to punch, kick, and jump your way into a sweaty workout? This cardiovascular class will do just that by combining martial arts, kickboxing, and more!

**The Choral Hour**

Thursday, May 3rd 7:30pm-9pm
Performing Arts Center (Main Theatre)
The University Chamber Singers and University-Community Chorale present a shared program. PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND THEATRE

**AdvisingPLUS tutoring schedule**

AdvisingPLUS offers weekly tutoring in a number of subjects to help undergraduate students with their academic success. Attend these tutoring sessions to help you get that A!

Full schedule is available here.

5. **Capital District Events**

**The Half Moon Market**

Friday, Apr 27, 2018 until Sunday, Apr 29, 2018 - 5:00 PM
Washington Park Lake House, Madison Avenue Albany, NY 12203
Free Admission
The Half Moon Market returns to the Lake House in Albany for our Spring event with 40+ local and regional handmade vendors, vintage pop-ups, a Friday night DJ, food trucks, beverages and more!

**WEEKEND MARKET SCHEDULE:**

**Friday Night Kickoff Party!** - Friday, April 27th, 5-9PM
Featuring DJ Selector David Normal spinning 1960's funk + soul records + handmade vendors and pop-ups, drinks and cider bar by Pint Sized and local food trucks.

**Saturday & Sunday: April 28th & 29th, 11 AM - 6 PM both days**
40+ handmade vendors and pop-ups, beverage and cider bar by Pint Sized, coffee by 3Fish Coffee + food trucks, vintage pop-ups and more!

Pretty Much the Best Comedy Show with Doug Smith at Proctors
Saturday, Apr 28, 2018 - 8:00 PM
Proctors Theatre, 432 State Street, Schenectady NY 12305
Cost: $15 in advance, $20 day of

Doug Smith is a rising New York comic who just made his late night debut on Conan. Following his selection as a New Face at the Montreal Just for Laughs Festival in 2013, he's been featured at the Oddball Comedy and Curiosity Festival, Bridgetown Comedy Festival, and the NY Comedy Festival where he was chosen to host six sold out shows for Norm Macdonald.

Doug co-hosts the stand-up/variety show See You in Hell which The Comedy Bureau listed in the Top 100 Best Things in Comedy 2014. In 2015, Doug was a finalist in Caroline's March Madness competition as well as the NY’s Funniest competition. He is also the creator and star of the web series Secret Weapon, which received high praise from numerous comedy websites and was a finalist at the Channel 101 festival. In addition to Conan, Doug’s TV appearances include AXS TV’s Gotham Comedy Live and Fuse TV’s Uproarious.

The show will also feature Ethan Ullman (The Howard Stern Show), Thomas Attila Lewis (Just For Laughs Festival), and additional comedians for a full night of standup comedy entertainment!

Lineup subject to change without notice.

10th Annual Cherry Blossom 5K Race for ALS and 1.5M Walk for Hope
Sunday, Apr 29, 2018 - 10:15 AM to 12:30 PM
Congregation Gates of Heaven, 852 Ashmore Avenue Schenectady, NY 12309
Cost: $15-$35

Welcome to the 10th Annual Cherry Blossom 5K Race (and 1.5M Walk for Hope) for ALS, to be held rain or shine in Niskayuna, New York, on Sunday, April 29, 2018. This event benefits the St. Peter’s ALS Regional Center.

This year's edition will feature a 5K Race and 1.5M Walk for Hope. So whether you like to run fast or stroll leisurely, we have an event for you!

Our race and walk both start from and end at Congregation Gates of Heaven on Ashmore Ave.
When: Sun, April 29, 2018 | 10:15 AM (run) 11:30 AM (walk)
Start/Finish: 852 Ashmore Ave, Schenectady, NY 12309
Website: [https://5kraceforals.com](https://5kraceforals.com)

**Nitty Gritty Poetry Slam**

Tuesday, May 1, 2018 - 7:00 PM
The Low Beat, 335 Central Avenue Albany, NY 12206

Poetry slam and open mic every first and third Tuesday at The Low Beat.

**Comedy Death Match**

Thursday, May 3, 2018 - 7:00 PM
The Low Beat, 335 Central Avenue Albany, NY 12206

Come out to The Low Beat for Comedy Death Match!