

AU student's article on Argentina to be published

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Alfred University student Ben Shankland, a senior philosophy major from Yarmouth, ME, will have an article in an issue of *Dilogo* to be published this month by DePaul University. His article, "Argentina and the Pursuit of Justice," examines the most recent period of military rule in Argentina, from 1976 to 1983, and how that affects Argentina's society today, particularly in the number of human rights groups that exist today as a result of violations that occurred during that period, which is known as "The Dirty War." Shankland said he spent the spring 2004 semester in Buenos Aires. "I wanted to live in a big city, and I wanted to go to South America since I knew very little about it," he said, explaining how he happened to select Argentina as the site for his study abroad experience. He was there, in person, when President Nestor Kirchner announced on March 24, 2004, that ESMA, the Naval mechanics school that became one of the most notorious torture sites during the military rule, would be turned into a museum dedicated to the people who were taken, tortured and murdered between 1976 and 1983. The audience, Shankland said, "was emotionally charged. The atmosphere in front of ESMA was one of intensity and one that clearly expressed the Argentine people's need for closure. There were thousands in front of the former concentration camp with signs, loudspeakers and cameras." In addition to being on hand for the historic event, Shankland also had an opportunity to interview a member of Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo, an association of women with "disappeared" children or grandchildren. Several members of the group were there for President Kirchner's speech. Abuelas dedicates itself to the search and recovery of children who were born in the detention centers while their mothers were prisoners of the state. "Atop their heads, white scarves with embroidered names and dates of their children or grandchildren stood out in the dense crowd with clarity and authority," Shankland wrote in his first-person account of the event. "Many people reached out to console them and give their respect. When the president finally arrived he was visibly shaken. The crowd roared with his presence and when he addressed the Abuelas at the front gate." Shankland, who will graduate from Alfred University in May, plans to spend the summer working on a lobster boat, as he has done each year for the past seven years. After that, he says, he would like to return to Argentina to further explore the country and perhaps to teach English. Next summer, he'll return to the lobster boats, and then, hopefully, enroll in graduate school in the fall of 2006. A graduate of Yarmouth High School, he is the son of Anne Haas and Mark Shankland, both of Yarmouth.