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# SCII Agenda Newsletter

*October 2024 Issue*

*The mission of the Schoolcraft College International Institute (SCII) is to coordinate cross-cultural learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the community.*

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Is There Any Reward for  
Goodness Except Goodness?

Amir Ghachim



SCII was pleased to host former Schoolcraft Honor's College student Amir Ghachim for his talk about his recently published book by Ehipassiko Press [\*Is There Any Reward for Goodness Except Goodness?\*](#) Amir faced various challenges in life but continues his journey to excel in his academics (currently a student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor) and other life goals including this recent book in collaboration with Dr. Steve Berg of the Schoolcraft English Department.

Amir investigates the issue of goodness from an Islamic perspective written in

the form of a [khutbah](#), which is a religious sermon. The book includes a series of prompts which allow readers to reflect on the role of goodness in their own lives. Although it is written from an Islamic perspective, the material is relevant for individuals who practice other religious/philosophical traditions or are interested in the issue of goodness in their own lives.

The event was well attended with over 80 guests, which included students from the classes of Professors Helen Ditouras and Mark Huston. The Schoolcraft community is proud of Amir's achievements and was so pleased he was willing to share his time with our current students.

Amir Ghachim is currently studying biochemistry at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor.

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# Focus Series

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*Story Telling as a  
Portal to Prevention*

Dr. Amra Sabic-El-Rayess



SCII was pleased to once again host award winning author, scholar, and professor [Dr. Amra Sabic-El-Rayess](#) from Columbia Teachers College for a SCII Focus Series presentation on *Story Telling as a Portal to Prevention*. Readers may remember her past workshops with Schoolcraft students, staff, and faculty on interrupting educational displacement and radicalization in disconnected students and her first book [The Cat I Never Named](#).

Her current book [Three Summers: A Memoir of Sisterhood, Summer Crushes, and Growing Up on the Eve of War](#) chronicles her teens years in 1980s Bosnia. Once again, her focus is using stories to nurture a sense of belonging and the use of writing as a way to build resilience to hate.

Dr. Sabic-El-Rayess book is a [PageTurners selection with an upcoming book discussion on November 12<sup>th</sup>](#); we invite student, staff, and faculty to read her book which is available at the Schoolcraft Bookstore.

Questions can be directed to [Helen Ditouras](#) a Professor in the English Department, Focus Series Coordinator, and co-coordinator for the SCII and

[Denise Schell](#) Professor in the English Department and Psychology and the SC  
PageTurners co-coordinator.



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*Cambodia: History, Culture  
and Current Issues*  
Dr. Colleen Pilgrim



Professor of Psychology at Schoolcraft College Dr. Colleen Pilgrim recently gave a Focus Series presentation about her participation in a three-week program sponsored by the [Council for American Overseas Research Centers \(CAORC\)](#) in coordination with [The Center for Khmer Studies](#). Professor Pilgrim along with fifteen faculty members from across the United States attended lectures, meetings with media professionals, civil society and environmental organizations, and site visits across Cambodia.

The main goal of her discussion was for participants to gain a better

appreciation of how the issues of the Cambodian people are relevant and important for all of us. Dr. Pilgrim discussed the main water issues of [Tonle Sap Lake](#) and the current impact of climate change in the region. She discussed the importance of the [Angkor Wat](#) and [Koh Ker](#) as [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#) and efforts to preserve them for future generations. Students learned about the cities of Phnom Penh and Battambang and political issues for its people.

Dr. Pilgrim ended the presentation with a discussion of the [APOPO](#) organization and the training of African rats to solve the problem of landmines throughout the Cambodian countryside. African rats with their intelligence, small size, and excellent sense of smell can clear an area of mines that would take weeks with just humans and metal detectors.

Overall, her presentation focused on the SCII goal which is to develop an appreciation of the diversities and commonalities among world cultures, and better understand the global forces shaping our lives. Look for more presentations about Cambodia in the Winter 2025 semester; a particular focus will be on the Cambodian genocide and its lingering ramifications for the Khmer people.

[Dr. Colleen Pilgrim](#) welcomes any questions about her Cambodia experiences or requests for classroom presentations.

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Council of American Overseas Research Centers  
Fostering International Scholarship

## *Overseas Opportunities for Faculty*

CAORC offers fully-funded overseas seminars that help faculty and administrators at US community colleges and minority-serving institutions gain international experience with the aim of developing and improving international courses, curricula, and teaching materials at their home institutions. There is an immediate and growing need for US community colleges and minority-serving institutions to provide a global perspective to students that will broaden students' cultural horizons and foster critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills for an increasingly interconnected world.

Currently, CAORC is accepting applications for the Summer 2025 Seminars for the [Indo-Pacific Region](#), [Mexico](#), and [Mongolia](#) with a deadline of Dec. 2, 2024.

Schoolcraft College faculty that are interested can reach out to Professor of Psychology [Colleen Pilgrim](#).

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## *Midwest Conference*

The Midwest Institute for International-Intercultural Education (MIIE) is a self-funded consortium of two-year colleges. Its primary mission is to provide curriculum and professional development by organizing workshops, conferences, and funding for college projects.

Consider joining your colleagues at the upcoming [Midwest Virtual Conference on Nov. 9th](#). Information can be found at the Midwest Institute site and questions can be directed to [Professor Theo Sypris](#), Director, Midwest Institute for IIE. Questions can also be directed to [Professor Helen Ditoras](#) our Schoolcraft MIIE liaison.



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