While many of the major turns in Beatriz Luraschi’s, ’12, life, such as spending a semester in Costa Rica, or working at the Prince’s Charities’ International Sustainability Unit (ISU), were born from a “small and seemingly fleeting idea,” her decision to attend Franklin University Switzerland was firmly rooted in her desire to learn in a new area of the world near which she had familial ties.

Currently, Bea works with the ISU to facilitate consensus on how to resolve some of the key environmental challenges facing the world. Her work focuses on tropical forests, their importance to biodiversity conservation, and the ecosystem services they provide, particularly in terms of mitigating climate change. She liaises among multi-sectoral stakeholders “in efforts to close policy-relevant gaps of knowledge.”

Bea considers her “collective Franklin experience” an asset to her career. She values all elements of this experience, “including the academics, travel — both academic and independent —, meeting lots of people from different places, and being comfortable in all sorts of social settings.” In particular, she mentions Professors Zanecchia’s and Hale’s academic and personal guidance and the academic travels they led to Malawi and Iceland, respectively.

While she remains unsure what she might be doing in five years, Bea enjoys daydreaming about the possibilities. “My field —,” she says, “which can be broadly labeled as the study of Environment/Climate Change/Sustainable Development — is, in some ways, all-encompassing, its raison d’être being: ‘how to save the world’. This to me, is ideal, because it means I can continue on an inter-disciplinary, multi-polar path on which I’ll never stop learning.”
Meet Professor Fintan Hoey

Fintan Hoey joined the Franklin faculty in 2012 as an Assistant Professor in the history department. He earned his Ph.D. from University College Dublin, Ireland, and previously held academic positions at Queens University Belfast and University of Kyoto, Japan, among others. This fall the faculty voted Professor Hoey to be their representative to the Board of Trustees for 2013-14. The Franklin Connection sat down with Fintan recently to learn more about this already very popular teacher.

Q: Tell us about your teaching at Franklin.
A: As a member of a small department, I get to teach a very broad range of history courses: everything from the Western Civilization sequence to courses on the US, my native Ireland, as well as on the history of human rights. I also developed two new courses. The course on “Global Britainishness” looks at notions of identity and different forms of Britishness across the countries of the British Commonwealth. This is quite a niche topic but was a surprising hit amongst students, most likely as it was a nice mix of international and cultural history.

This past semester I also developed my first First Year Seminar (FYS). This is a special class limited to freshmen where students not only learn about a particular topic from a variety of different angles but also the skills needed to navigate through undergraduate school. It is a fantastic feature of Franklin and a course I wish I had when I was starting my own college career. My course is based on Hiroshima from a variety of different perspectives. We looked at Japanese imperialism, the reasons why the US developed the different angles but also the skills needed to navigate through undergraduate school. It is a hit amongst students, most likely as it was a nice mix of international and cultural history.

Q: Do you have any advice for what parents can do to support their student best at Franklin?
A: Send them mail! As wonderful as email and text are, students are always excited to get a package or a letter every once in a while. Mailing goodies is a great way to show that you care and are thinking of them.

Q: Tell us about your research/scholarship interests. What topics are you pursuing now?
A: My Ph.D. research was on US-Japanese relations during the Cold War with a focus on Prime Minister Satō Eisaku. Satō oversaw several important changes in Japan’s alliance with the United States including the return to Japan of the island territory of Okinawa as well as a new understanding on nuclear weapons. Important source material was just beginning to be declassified by the Japanese archives when I started this project so I found some interesting things which I think add to scholarship on the subject. I’m currently working on turning my thesis into a book and I’m also embarking on a new project on Japan and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Research isn’t just about your personal and professional development; it also informs, improves and enhances teaching. For example, this summer I was a participant at a Summer Institute on nuclear weapons history in Washington, D.C., organized by the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project and the Society for Historians of America’s Foreign Relations. This was extraordinarily helpful in terms of research but also in teaching in that it directly informed my FYS on Hiroshima.

Q: Why did you choose to join Franklin? What was the process like?
A: When I finished my Ph.D. I emerged onto the academic job market which can be a pretty unforgiving place at the best of times. Luckily a few prospects emerged, one of which was this small liberal arts university institution in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. My interview with the search committee was via Skype, which didn’t leave much room for me to form an impression of the place. I must have done something right though since I was invited for a campus visit. My first impression was a very pleasant surprise that the place looked exactly as good as it did on the website! I spent a full day being taken around to meet the President and the Dean, members of the faculty, the librarians, and the students. Everyone was so warm and welcoming and I started to feel that I could fit in quite well here. Again, luckily, the committee thought so too and a few months later I started as a newly-minted member of the faculty.

Q: Tell us about Franklin students. What excites you about them as young people?
A: Franklin is a very special place. We have students from all over the world and the world is our classroom. This really enhances what you can teach and what you can learn from your students and what they can learn from each other.

The funny thing about working in education is that, while it might make you feel old, your outlook stays young. I’m not long out of grad school but even my cultural references are getting outdated; there’s nothing as bad as dropping the name of a singer or a film during class and getting only vacant stares or looks that say, ‘Don’t try it, grandad.’

On the other hand the energy, enthusiasm and, above all, the optimism of our students and young people in general are infectious and uplifting. These things keep you young in a funny way. These kids want to change the world, and you know something, they will too.

Q: How do you like living in Lugano?
A: Very much! Lugano is such a beautiful place, the mountains, the lake, the weather. It’s such a gem. Switzerland is very ordered and regular and its punctual trains are spoiling me. When I go back home to Ireland I have to be careful not to be the guy who starts looking at his watch when a bus is one minute late saying, ‘This wouldn’t happen in Switzerland!’ Naturally that kind of attitude doesn’t go over well!

Also, Swiss chocolate is divine.