“We all have our own stories to tell whether we’ve been U.S. citizens for our whole lives or we just moved here,” said Alessandra Beasley Von Burg, a communication professor and director of the American Ethnic Studies program. She is leading a project that asks one burning question: Where are you from?

Von Burg’s communication students will ask that question and film the answers, starting in Winston-Salem and then expanding the geographical reach of the project. It kicks off March 29 in Carswell Hall with a symposium that is free and open to the public. But it won’t begin with a typical lecture. It will start with a lesson in how to use a flip cam.

Chris Zaluski, a graduate student in Wake Forest’s Documentary Film Program, and two undergraduate communication students, Cory McConnell and Jawad Wahabzada will lead the hands-on workshop to teach the participants how to capture their own stories. “We’re going from small to big to see how these snapshots create larger ideas,” Zaluski said. “We will keep expanding the circle.”
The event, “Where are you from?: A Symposium on Immigration, Mobility and Citizenship,” introduces the project and will open the conversations about immigration and mobility issues. It will be held March 29 and 30 in Carswell Hall. Several speakers will highlight the experiences of minorities in other countries. One session will focus on the deaf community in the United States.

“We believe the ‘Where are you from?’ project can make a difference in the way U.S. citizens and policymakers perceive immigrants and the ways immigrants connect with their communities,” Von Burg said. “One way to stop discrimination is by sharing stories and finding points of connection.”

The organizers plan to collect hundreds of individual interviews for a multimedia website that will help researchers find common threads in the lives of Americans.

“Where are you from?” is different from many oral history and documentary film projects because collecting the interviews is a beginning, not an end,” Von Burg said. “We see the interviews as the beginning of a discussion about what it means to be an immigrant and what it means to be a citizen. We’re putting all the histories together to form a common history. It’s not just about international borders, but about finding patterns that reveal similarities between immigrant and resident experiences.”

Watch videos on the Youtube channel: click here.
Visit the event website: groups.wfu.edu/citizenshipsymposium

Symposium highlights:
March 29

- 2-4 p.m. — Workshop to record “Where are you from?” stories
- 2-4 p.m. — Lecture and workshop with Angela Kocze, a Roma activist and scholar from Budapest, Hungary, who will speak on immigration, mobility and minority rights in Europe.

March 30

- 9:30 a.m. — Panel discussion on “Who belongs? Dealing with Immigrants as ‘Others’”
- 11 a.m. — “Where is ‘home?’” From Letters to Blogs

Want to attend? Registration is recommended.

Category: Campus Life, Events, Symposium | Tag: identity, migration, symposium