

AAC&U Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA January 27, 2017

Discussion session: Growing Global Citizens in a Homogenous Soil

Dr. Deirdre D. Johnston (Professor of Communication, Hope College): Globally-connected Course Experiences

Globally-connected courses provide an opportunity to connect students with international perspectives and relationships without necessarily leaving their home campus. A globally conjoined course, "Narratives of Peace, Conflict, and Justice" was taught on the campuses of American University of Beirut (Lebanon), Bratislava International School for Liberal Arts (Slovakia), and Hope College (U.S.A.). The course culminated in a study-tour in South Africa.

The conjoined courses shared the same course themes, and many resources and readings. Students enrolled on the three campuses engaged in collaborative problem-solving through assignments completed in 3-person multi-national groups (via Skype). Students presented their individual, group assignments, and reflections on the multi-national interaction experiences on a Wordpress blog. The interactive assignments fostered meaningful connections between students across the campuses that led to deep personal, intercultural, and scholarly insights into race, conflict of identities, identity as narrative, and processes of conciliation in the contexts of Lebanon, Slovakia, the U.S., and South Africa.

Through the Skype assignments students learned about 'othering' of identities within their own domestic context and taught about this form of oppression to the other two national groups. USA students focused on race in America, Lebanon focused on sectarianism, and Slovakia on the Roma community. Teaching others about one's own domestic context resulted in the development of a meta-perceptual framework through which students learned how others (e.g., Lebanese and Slovaks) viewed them as Americans and viewed race conflict within the USA.

When students met on the study-tour in South Africa, they integrated new information and meta-perceptions about intersections of their own identities, and race and class, the importance of economic justice for reconciliation, and the processes of social healing in post-conflict societies. They were personally inspired by this experience in diverse ways, including decisions not to leave a home country, but work towards its development instead, to engage in community programs, to collect and tell life stories, and to dedicate their career goals to working for social justice and promoting international understanding.

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Dr. Gabriele Dillmann (Associate Professor of German and Consortial Languages Director Denison University/Great Lakes Colleges Association): Fostering a Global Mindset through Globally Connected Courses for Both Students and Faculty

With new cloud-based technologies and a sharp increase in hybrid teaching models innovative, technology-enhanced teaching and learning projects within a global connections context have become more readily realizable. Specifically, in the language and culture classroom, new video-conferencing applications with their multifunctional tools for interaction (screen sharing, chatting, presentation software, etc.) has made online hybrid learning uniquely effective, intuitive, inexpensive, inviting and “human” for both students and teachers.

However, if we want our students to become mindful global citizens with enhanced inter-cultural proficiencies and a sound mastery of digital skills appropriate for this day and age, we need to teach them more than the technology itself. Students need to learn digital and dialogue etiquette, “netiquette,” how to be effective team players and members of a learning community, and develop group and leadership competencies within a digital and global context.

I intentionally upfront technology and digital learning since these are the pillars on which these new global learning opportunities rest and which have made widely connecting students across continents and cultures possible in the first place. The globally connected courses project (GCC) between Denison University, a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest, and The American University in Bulgaria, an American-style, English language, liberal arts institution in Eastern Europe, has brought together faculty and students of German as a second/third/fourth/fifth language from the two institutions virtually over the course of now nine semesters.

Courses offered include intermediate and advanced language level courses, literature and culture courses with a variety of subjects (from Germany and the European Union to the refugee crisis to German Media to German Film Courses, and more). While these courses set out as a main goal to strengthen students’ language proficiency, especially speaking skills, students especially benefit from the intercultural learning that takes place in this very diverse environment, with students from parts of the world that our American students seldom get a chance to interact with, as they reflect on their own culture/s in relation to the similarities and differences of those from other cultures.

Global Course Connections have not only served our students well. As faculty members from two different countries and institutional cultures, we learned much from each other both personally as well as professionally. Our collaboration has led to a more reflective understanding and use of language pedagogies, has fostered collaboration to expand knowledge in our disciplines, which in turn have led to several research projects, joint presentations and publications of our work together. The kind of collegiality with a like-minded colleague that we may not always enjoy in our – especially small – programs has been invigorating and deeply satisfying.

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Dr. Patricia Lamson. (Director of Center for Global Education, Earlham College): The Border Studies Program

Many educators think of study abroad when considering the development of global and cultural competencies, yet domestic study away programs also offer powerful experiences that foster transformative learning. Students can have critical shifts in perspectives in domestic programs illustrating that students do not need to travel far to have their knowledge systems de-stabilized, and, in fact, the domestic location may be more de-stabilizing because it is within the home context.

The US/ Mexico Border provides an excellent example of how global issues are manifested in a local setting. This border is 2000 miles long and has a long history of contested space, cultural shifts, and political and economic forces operating within it. The area has become the center of heated debates about immigration, border enforcement, militarization, and the most recent rhetoric about building the wall.

The Border Studies Program provides college undergraduates a semester to study in Tucson and the Arizona borderlands. The educational program is centered on an examination of immigration to the U.S. and the development of international borders. Throughout the semester, students not only cross geographical borders, but also social, cultural, emotional and intellectual borders as well.

Students live in homestays where they experience border realities first-hand and on a daily basis. The complexities of migration inform the content and structure of the program and the courses and experiences enrich one another in an integrated curriculum. A critical component of the program is the Field Study, where students engage in 12 hours a week with an organization that is relevant to the realities of the borderlands and where students learn from seasoned practitioners and activists. The core courses examine the complexities of the historical, political, geographic, and economic forces that drive the conditions that are happening today. The Spanish language program centers around topics of the program such as border enforcement, neoliberalism, food justice, human rights, etc., exploring how the language informs identities and political views, thus fully integrating the language course into the overall program.

Three main program faculty teach the core courses, but the teachers include many: peers, activists, field study supervisors and workers, host families, guest speakers, and so on, so that learning takes place on many levels every day. Reflection is fundamental in the functioning of the program and the outcomes show that students return to their home campuses energized and motivated with tools to assist them in their future paths.

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Dr. Lorna Hernandez Jarvis. (Professor of Psychology, Hope College): Global Learning Fellows Faculty Development Program

Many of our institutions are adopting global and cultural competency goals for students and many have developed innovative and creative ways to meet these goals. There is however an increasing vocal position of resistance to these goals. Internationalizing the curriculum can be made even more difficult when many of our institutions (in particular small liberal arts colleges) lack the religious, class, race, ethnicity and international diversity to challenge students' experience and perspectives different from their own. It is also the case that many students lack resources to study abroad. In order to address these barriers to Global education it is critical that we equip faculty with the tools necessary to develop globally connected courses, immersion experiences, study abroad, and discipline specific courses in the regular curriculum that allow institutions to reach their cultural competency goals. At Hope College we developed a faculty development program in which we have trained professors and staff on intergroup dialogue and diversity education. The Global Learning Fellows program was developed in several phases. In the first phase a group of six professors each teaching in a major area of our general education curriculum were selected through a competitive process and paid to engage in weekly two-hour meetings for 12 weeks to be trained on intergroup dialogue and best practices in diversity education. At the end of the 12 weeks each of them provided a syllabus and sample assignments demonstrating how they planned to use their training in a particular course. During phase 2 each of these six Global Learning Fellows became leaders of teams of three faculty that met the following semester to be trained in this pedagogical approach to global learning. The subsequent 18 professors also developed syllabi for a course in which they would use their training.

The third phase involved each of the eighteen professors from phase 2 who then train another cohort of 72 faculty and staff members. The end result was a total of over one hundred faculty trained on intergroup dialogue and diversity education in a 2-year period. Intergroup Dialogue is a pedagogical approach to engage in difficult, controversial conversations in which the goal is to develop understanding of others' perspectives and experiences. The training walks participants through five stages, including, setting the environment for effective dialogue, learning communication skills, understanding social identities and their impact in society, embracing conflict, and developing allies for social justice. There are now over 100 courses in our curriculum that engage at least some aspect of this pedagogy. Our institution lacks religious, ethnic and racial diversity, presenting a challenge in representation of many voices. This program has been effective because the pedagogy involves the idea of impartiality and emphasizes bringing voices not represented in the room into the dialogue. Because the goal of this approach is understanding and not persuasion or debate and it emphasizes, communication skills, validation of those involved, and incorporates experiential learning and embodied cognition we have found it to be an effective way to address the resistance to diversity education.

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