

Final CDTLI Report – June 13, 2019

Project: Curricular Innovations Focused on Students Returning from Study Abroad

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Introduction:

This project took much longer than expected, but has finally borne fruit in the form of a completed syllabus for a new Post-OCS Course, titled “**Global Returns: Critical Engagements after Study Abroad.**” We met five times, but conducted the majority of our work through small groups and individual homework.

Faculty and staff associated with OCS have long recognized a need for curriculum focused on students returning from study abroad. Many students find the return to campus personally and academically disorienting. Most struggle in different ways with how to make sense of and communicate with others about their transformative experiences abroad. Integrating study abroad experiences into the rest of students’ academic trajectory can be quite difficult. We envisioned a post-OCS curriculum that would provide opportunities for critical self-reflection on the study abroad experience and help students weave those experiences into the rest of their time on campus.

The new Concentration in Global Studies provided the push needed to create this course by giving a yet-to-be-developed Post-OCS course a prominent place in its curriculum design.

Activities:

Our project had four stages:

1. *Investigating Needs and Models.* During this stage, we met as a group to discuss our understanding of both student demand for a Post-OCS course, as well as its larger intellectual and academic purpose. As preliminary homework, we informally polled students about their interests in this area. Then, individually, over the course of several months, we reached out to colleagues across the country to collect as many post-OCS syllabi and course descriptions as we could. We met to discuss these models, and talked about how they might work within the constraints of student interest and faculty time commitments at Whitman. We debated a number of very different approaches to post-study-abroad curriculum, as well as competing ideas about how a course would work logistically at Whitman.

Out of that, we decided to develop a 2-credit, pass/fail, half-semester course, taught twice a year by one faculty person. This model maximized student chances to take the course immediately after returning from study abroad and minimized the impact on faculty and departments.

2. *Structuring Our Own Syllabus.* At the end of fall semester, we had a long meeting to chart out our course. We structured this around three themes: “The Self Beyond the Self”(Critical

personal reflections on the study abroad experience and its impacts on students' lives, outlooks, and future plans); "What Happens on Exchange" (Critical scholarly reflection on study abroad in the context of history, power, and difference); "Justice After Critique" (Bringing personal and political reflections together to cultivate global citizenship grounded in critical humility and a sense of justice, rather than white savior complexes or facile relativism). We also decided that the course should have a significant public citizenship component, allowing students to put their exploration of study abroad into conversation with the larger Whitman community.

3. *Fleshing Out the Syllabus in Small Groups.* At this point, we divided into small groups, each one charged with providing detailed descriptions, readings, and assignments for a section of the course. Several people contributed to more than one group.

4. *Integrating the Parts.* Finally, we met to synchronize our small group contributions and fill in the missing pieces.

Products:

We have a completed syllabus and a plan for staffing the course, beginning in Fall 2020 (attached). We also have a bank of post-study-abroad course syllabi and readings that future faculty can draw on when they are personalizing and adapting our model.

Effects on the Curriculum:

We are excited to have this course come into regular rotation and serve as a key component of the Global Studies Concentration. With 45-90 students returning from off-campus study every semester, we expect that the class will impact a significant number of people.

What were the limitations or failings of this project?

We took a long time to complete our work. This is the main limitation of the project. We suspect that this a result of the fact that the project was not structured as a regularly-meeting study group or seminar. Instead, we had a concrete set of tasks to carry out, many of which involved a combination of group and individual work. More disciplining and direction from the coordinator might have helped speed the effort.

Global Returns: Critical Engagements after Study Abroad
IDSC 2xx
Pass/Fail
Cultural Pluralism

This 2-credit course, designed for students returning from semester-long study abroad programs and other extended international time abroad, provides students with the tools, perspectives, and a set of targeted assignments to make sense of and communicate with others about their transformative experiences abroad. When students return from study abroad, too often their time away becomes adjunct or ancillary to the rest of their studies. When this happens, opportunities to situate their international experiences within a larger, critical liberal arts framework are diminished or lost altogether. This course offers students an opportunity to return to their global experiences through critical interrogation and reflection on what it means to live in a foreign culture. Students will analyze their foreign study through the lens of other forms of global encounter, including colonialism, othering, and cosmopolitanism. Students will also assess different ways study abroad has transformed them, including psychologically and politically. In addition to readings and discussions, students will carry out a group project addressing how global issues in the media are framed and presented differently depending on international location.

Course Description

Grading:

Your grade is based on the following:

- **Global Public citizenship project (50%):** The global citizenship project is the final project for the course. You will pick a globally significant topic, examine how that topic is covered similarly and/or differently by various local/national/global media outlets across the world, and find a creative way of presenting your findings in a public setting. You will work in groups; those of you who speak languages other than English can help your group incorporate non-English language sources into your analysis.
- **Personal Statement (30%):** For your preliminary personal statement, you will consider how your OCS experience has impacted you. Specifically, you should examine:
 - 1) Personal impacts - that is, how your experience abroad has affected your sense of identity, social and emotional life, relationships, and/or everyday experience (sensory or otherwise) of the world around you.
 - 2) Impacts on your life as a student: how might your OCS experience inform your approach to choosing classes, affect how you approach course work and content, and/or change how you view your academic life beyond the classroom?

3) Impacts on your life as a citizen: After living abroad, how do you understand yourself as a citizen of various (local, national, global, or other) communities? What are your responsibilities to your fellow citizens in these communities? If your notion of citizenship changed as a result of your OCS experience, what specific aspects of your experience brought about that change?

The biggest challenge of this assignment is to avoid generalities and instead dig deep to describe specific aspects of your experience and specific impacts on you.

- **Participation (20%).** Everyone is expected to attend all classes, complete all small assignments and readings, and be prepared to engage in discussion.

Learning Goals:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Deploy a variety of disciplinary and theoretical tools to critically understand their time abroad.
 - Recognize and reflect on how their social positionality shapes and is shaped by their time abroad.
 - Debate competing perspectives on the politics of international travel and reflect on their experience of the ethics of study abroad.
 - Formulate an understanding of their place in global communities, networks, and processes.
- Make productive connections between their time abroad, their on-campus studies, and life after Whitman.
 - Formulate a vision for how their study abroad will shape their approach to choosing classes, affect how they approach course work and content, and/or change how they view your academic life beyond the classroom.
- Hone their skills at working in groups and making public presentations through the Global Public Citizenship project.

Course Overview:

Week 1 - Introduction

Session 1

Course introduction & Object Lesson

No Readings.

Object Lesson prompt distributed to students before this session.

Object Lesson Assignment: Bring a meaningful object from their time abroad, one that can serve as a springboard for reflection. Show the object to the class and briefly describe its significance. (Graded as part of Participation).

Give out prompt for **Personal Statement**.

Session 2

What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Study Abroad?

- Sanford J. Ungar, "[The Study Abroad Solution: How to Open the American Mind](#)" Foreign Affairs, March/April 2016.
- Talya Zemach-Bersin, "[American Students Abroad Can't Be Global Citizens](#)" The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 7, 2008.
- Shelley Baranowski, Christopher Endy, Waleed Hazbun, Stephanie Malia Hom, Gordon Pirie, Trevor Simmons & Eric G.E. Zuelow (2015), "[Tourism and Empire, A Forum](#)" Journal of Tourism History, 7(1-2), 100-130.

Week 2 – The Self Beyond the Self

In this section of the course, students will consider the ways moving from one culture to another and living between cultures shapes one's sense of self, including adoption of new subject positions such as cosmopolitan and "global citizen."

Session 1

Selin Visits Hungary

Stand-alone section of Elif Batuman, *The Idiot* (Penguin, 2018, Chapters "July" and "August").

Session 2

Self, Student, Citizen

Personal statement Due – Present/discuss these in class.

Give out prompt for **Public Citizenship Assignment**.

Week 3 – What Happens on Exchange? Models, Approaches, Critiques

In this section of the course we will explore different ways of thinking about what happens during study abroad. This deceptively simple formulation hides competing visions of the purpose and effects of study abroad.

Session 1 – Minds Opening and Closing

- Adrian Furham, (2012), "[Culture Shock](#)" *Journal of Psychology and Education*, 7(1), 9-22.

- Lee, C. S., Therriault, D. J. and Linderholm, T. (2012), [On the Cognitive Benefits of Cultural Experience: Exploring the Relationship between Studying Abroad and Creative Thinking](#). *Appl. Cognit. Psychol.*, 26, 768-778.”

Session 2 – Imagining the Other

- *Michel de Montaigne "Of Cannibals," in The Essays of Michel de Montaigne, trans, and ed. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Press, 1991)*
- Fernando [Coronil, Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories.](#)”
- [Do ‘global citizens’ need the parochial cultural other? Discourse of immersion in study abroad and learning-by-doing](#)

Week 4 – Justice After Critique

In this part of the course, we will take critique not as an end in itself, but as an important moment in the cultivation of a sense of justice. We will discuss how critique—the exposure of unconscious biases, the defamiliarization of habits of thinking—can serve as a precondition for the development of reflective judgment. Cultivating critical humility (recognizing your interpretive limitations and overcoming any savior complex) does not necessarily mean silencing ourselves or capitulating to facile relativism (to the idea that no judgments are possible, that all sides of an argument are equally valid and so on). There is no critique without a sense of futurity (a justice to come) and there is no justice without the necessary precondition of a critical mind.

Session 1

- Jacques Derrida, “A Europe of Hope,” *Epoché* 10, 2 (2006): 407-12.
- Slavoj Žižek, “A Leftist Plea for ‘Eurocentrism.’” *Critical Inquiry* 24, 4 (1988): 988-1009.

Session 2

In-class work in preparation for the **Global Public Citizenship** project.

Week 5-7 – Constituting Global Public Citizenship

Students work together to develop and present the Global Public Citizenship project.