The Global Classrooms Initiative: Converting Intercultural Understanding Into Workforce Readiness

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What is a Global Classroom?

- Joint course with an international partner institution, involving one faculty member and 10-15 students from each institution.
- Technologically mediated course, using synchronous and asynchronous digital platforms, e.g., Skype and Google Docs.
- Project-based course based either on joint research interest of faculty teaching the course, or commissioned project from an external entity.
- Smaller groups comprising equal number of students from each institution.
Rationale of the Global Classrooms Initiative (GCI)

- Provide students with academic experiences that mirror the kind of work in the foreseeable future, making them more competitive.
- Gain mutual understanding, tolerance, by equally talking and doing cross-culturally.
- Align international education with higher education more generally, and to our own campus more specifically.
- Provide one appropriate international educational model for our times.
- Generate impact.
International Education Context at Maryland

- Global Semester in Washington, DC
- Global Entrepreneurship Semester (Various Locations)
- Maryland Social Entrepreneur Corps
- Global Professionals Certification Program
- Global Classrooms Initiative
Challenges for GCI

• Funding
• Recognition
• Project-Based Education
• Small size classes in “scale up” landscape
• Partner Inspiration
Goals of GCI

• Triple number of courses in three years.
• Ensure every College offers at least one GC.
• Integrate more fully into undergraduate curriculum.
• Enable faculty better to run such courses.
• Assess value.
Building the GCI infrastructure

• Partnerships
• Technology
• Training
• Processes
• Departmental support
• Faculty incentives
• Student interest
Global Classrooms Initiative

• Pilot course: Capstone in International Development and Conflict Management (UMD-Tel Aviv University).
• Direct support for strategic projects.
• Scaling through a Call for Proposals.
• Community of Practice: sharing best practices and identifying solutions to GCI challenges; awardees, instructional designers, teaching and learning specialists, International Affairs staff.
GCI Call for Proposals

- Six awards offered year 1
- Four awards offered year 2
- $10,000 for three years ($6,000/ $3,000/ $1,000)
- $2,000 departmental contribution in third year
GCI Call for Proposals

• Competitive priorities:
  ➢ Target undergraduate students
  ➢ Implemented in partnership with Universitas 21 institutions
  ➢ Involve 10 weeks or more of international student-to-student interaction
  ➢ Jointly taught by faculty from UMD and the partner institutions
Global Classrooms 2014-2016

Univrsity of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

University College Dublin
Dublin, Ireland

University of Birmingham
Birmingham, UK

Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Israel

University of Leipzig
Leipzig, Germany

Higher School of Economics
St. Petersburg, Russia

American University of Afghanistan
Kabul, Afghanistan

Independent University, Bangladesh
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Hong Kong Polytech
Hong Kong, P.R. China

Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial
Quito, Ecuador

Universidade do Estado do Amazonas
Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil

American University of Sharjah
Sharjah, UAE

University of Queensland
Brisbane, Australia

Linköping University
Linköping, Sweden
Teaching a Global Classroom

• Why?
  Global Competence, 21st Century Skills

• What?
  Project-Based Learning (PBL)
Qualities of “globally competent” individuals:

- an appreciation for cultural differences,
- ability to understand and consider multiple perspectives,
- capacity for highly critical and analytical thinking,
- comfort with ambiguity and change,
- understanding of the complexity of global issues.
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PBL is grounded in the pedagogical claim that students learn best by experiencing and solving real-world problems.
“Project-based learning is a dynamic approach to teaching in which students explore real-world problems and challenges. With this type of active and engaged learning, students are inspired to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they're studying”

–Edutopia

http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning
What: Project-Based Learning

PBL typically involves*:

• students learning knowledge to tackle realistic problems as they would be solved in the real world
• increased student control over his or her learning
• teachers serving as coaches and facilitators of inquiry and reflection
• students (usually, but not always) working in pairs or groups

*Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Thomas, 2000
What: Project-Based Learning

Accommodates different learning styles

Students must use all learning modalities in the process of researching and solving a problem, then communicating the solutions.

http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning-guide-importance
What: Project-Based Learning

Magnifies achievement

“When individuals are interested in what they are doing and are able to use their areas of strength, they achieve at a higher level.” (Edutopia)

http://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning-guide-importance
How: Keys to Project-Based Learning Success

PBL is most productive when teachers:

• provide students with **frequent assessments and redirection** through project benchmarks and reflection activities.*
• provide students with feedback that they act upon.
  ➢ produces significant learning gains**
• emphasizes the **process, effort, and strategies** involved in accomplishing a task, as opposed to focusing solely on the final product.
  ➢ Students come to understand that learning is the result of cumulative effort.
  ➢ This improves their resilience and academic achievement.***

How: Global Classroom

✓ Cross-Cultural
✓ Virtual
✓ Project-Based
Global Classroom: Cross-Cultural

20 students:

10 UMD (undergraduate), 10 TAU (graduate)

13 countries in Spring 2014:

France  Jordan  Pakistan  Trinidad  Venezuela
India  Mexico  Romania  UK
Israel  Nepal  Russia  USA (8: 2 TAU, 6 UMD)
Global Classroom: Project-Based

• **5** groups (**4** students each: **2** UMD and **2** TAU)

• **Task:** Research and produce creative, viable, sustainable solutions to major contemporary development problems in places affected by organized, armed violence.
Global Classroom: Assessment

• Lots and lots of opportunities for assessment
  ➢ High- and low-stake
  ➢ Formal and informal
  ➢ Written and oral

• If it’s something they couldn’t have done without achieving the learning objective, then it’s an assessment.
How: Global Classroom

- Cross-Cultural
- Virtual
- Project-Based
Scenario 1

 ROLE: INSTRUCTOR
 CHALLENGE: HOW DO YOU JOINTLY DEVELOP A COURSE WHEN PBL IS FOREIGN TO ONE OF THE PARTNERS?
 TIMELINE: 1 MONTH BEFORE START OF SEMESTER

You have partnered with an enthusiastic institution abroad, eager to collaborate on an online course, and with some experience doing so. You have agreed to offer a project-based course in which 4 groups of 4 students each (2 from your university and 2 from your partner) will collaborate for the entire 15-week semester to design a project in response to a challenge presented by a client in the practice community. But when your co-instructor suggests the topics she plans to teach, you realize that they are all conventional lectures on her (highly relevant) research topics, but do not directly support project-based learning. How do you respond now to ensure you meet your shared PBL learning objectives? What might you have done earlier in the course development to ensure a more shared role in project-based learning?
**Role:** Instructor  
**Challenge:** How do you identify clients and get them excited to be involved?  
**Timeline:** One to three months before the semester

You want to source project topics from the real world. Who can you approach to be partners/clients for your course and how would you pitch it, given that you are working with students with a still-emerging skill set?
Scenario 3

ROLE: INTERNATIONAL OFFICER

CHALLENGE: HOW TO MAKE THE CASE EFFECTIVELY TO OUR CONSTITUENCIES AT HOME AND WITH PARTNERS?

TIMELINE: none

The 2008 Global Financial Crisis has significantly reduced government resources. As a result, public universities have suffered serious budget cuts, and have asked to do more with less. New initiatives are now funded based on their ability to “scale up” and lower the cost. One response of universities has been to offer shorter pedagogical interventions than in the past. How can we persuade our universities to support and promote “boutique” international experiences, such as small, project-based seminar “Global Classrooms”, in this “new order”? 
Role: Coordinator
Challenge: How to facilitate the growth of the Global Classrooms Initiative while maintaining a strong emphasis on project-based pedagogy?
Timeline: One year before class is offered

The second round of the Global Classrooms Initiatives competition has closed. Despite adequate timeline and numerous expressions of interest, only seven proposals were received for the five awards being offered. Moreover, only three of the proposals show the desired emphasis on PBL. Will you reduce the number of awards to cover the "true Global Classrooms" or will you still fund five proposals to support the development of a critical mass of courses that loosely fit the Global Classrooms description? What are the benefits and challenges of each approach? What could you do differently to prevent this issue from recurring?
The Global Classrooms Initiative

Questions?

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