Leveraging technology to develop intercultural understanding: A case study of a joint online course with U.S. and Macedonian university students
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Univ. of Sts. Cyril and Methodius
Skopje, Macedonia
Student Co-Presenters

Jetmire Ismaili

Katerina Petreska
The next 55 minutes...

1. The Concept
2. The Context
3. The Goals
4. How did we do it?
5. What were the results?
6. The Challenges
7. Q & A
The Concept
Bring together students from two universities in different countries.
University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia
Residential campus is in Ottawa, Kansas USA
Broad Goals of the Concept

✓ Meaningful interaction
✓ Memorable experience
✓ No (or low) additional costs for a “study abroad” experience
✓ University course credit
✓ Minimal administrative overhead
Ethnic groups in Macedonia
Ethnic groups in Macedonia: Roma
Islam
Ethnic groups in the U.S.
81% Christian
98% Christian or unaffiliated

American Religious Traditions, 2008
(Pew Landscape Survey)

- Unaffiliated: 17%
- Evangelical Protestant: 28%
- Mainline Protestant: 20%
- Catholic: 26%
- Black Protestant: 7%
- Buddhist: 1%
- Muslim: 0%
- Hindu: 0%
GOALS of the PILOT COURSE
Cultural Exposure/Awareness
Cross-Cultural Communication

10 Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

- Be Honest
- Be Flexible
- Listen Actively
- Respect Differences
- Ask Questions
- Build Self Awareness
- Avoid Stereotyping
- Distinguish Perspectives
- Think Twice
- Recognize the Complexity
Learn about history, ethnicity, and geography.
Real time interaction
Written and Verbal Expression
My America
To me, "America" stands for beautiful scenery and the freedom to experience that beauty.
Photos taken by Kristin Dawson, June 2012, Northern CA

Above is a picture of a United States Air Force Veteran, he is now homeless. Programs have been put into place to address this issue but still very many live in poverty or are homeless. Retrieved from http://aricnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2012/03/create-app-for-homeless-vets-win -25k/
This week you’re in charge of the discussions. Each of you is responsible for a discussion thread of your own. Think about something from the past seven weeks that you want to talk more about. Are there unanswered questions in your mind? Is there a topic you wish we would have spent more time on? Is there something you want more input from your classmates about? It’s your turn to initiate a discussion with your colleagues on any topic of your choosing that is relevant to our learning in this course. **Post your discussion thread (Use the “Create Thread” button) by midnight, CT on Tuesday/0700 CET on Wednesday of this week.** It’s your topic and your conversation. “Manage” it as you see fit.

- Beginning on Wednesday, engage in at least three discussions other than your own for the rest of the week.

After the course concludes, you will receive a link via email to a post-course survey. As you know, this was a pilot course and because of that, it is important that we collect good data from you about your experience. The survey may take up to 30 minutes to complete and we are counting on you to take this aspect of the course seriously. Your input will help us refine...
The Pilot Course...
Regions of the Balkans and the U.S.: Case Studies in Space, Place, and Cultural Geography

Students received credit at their respective universities.
Who were the teachers?

Rumena Buzarovska, Ph. D.

Steven Foulke, Ph. D.

Carine Ullom
Academic Technologist & Course Designer
Who were the students?

- Jana
- Ericka
- Bisera
- Tonya
15 students:
10 from Macedonia
5 from the United States

Selected for their interest in having an international experience

Macedonian students = traditional
American students = non-traditional

Macedonian students: no prior experience learning online
American students: seasoned online learners
Course Structure

- Fully online, 8 weeks
- Content alternated between US and Macedonian regions
- Language of instruction is English
- No textbook
- Required real-time, small group meetings
- Co-taught with faculty from each university
- Heavily technology dependent
Key Components of the Course
“Pre-departure orientation”

In-person orientation/training for Macedonian students

Recorded video orientation for US students
Student-created Image Gallery

Image Gallery

Created by the students enrolled in
REGIONS OF THE BALKANS AND THE US
HPS-31754 Spring 2 2013
with
Dr. Steven Foulke and Dr. Rumena Buzarovska
Journaling

I will never forget the experience of learning about another country's history, culture and people all the while being in the same class with them. The exchange of ideas, opinions and thoughts has been the experience of a lifetime. This is something I want to do again and have plans to get more involved in my schools International Studies programs. Who knows...maybe a trip to Macedonia will develop.
(Asynchronous) Discussion Forums

Week 3
Discussions: Before the Rain

Focusing on at least two of the following, discuss an aspect of the film that you found intriguing and/or confusing.

- landscapes
- music
- customs and lifestyle
- religion
- ethnicity
- gender
- the culture of weapons
- names
- language

Week 4
Discussions: Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.

Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.

Week 5: Skopje 2014: Implications for the future

Which aspects of Skopje 2014 do you find most intriguing and why? What kind of implications do you think the project will have in the long run? Consider issues such as identity, nationalism, the economy, aesthetics.

Week 6: Who are the Amish?

This week we have two discussion questions:

1. What do the Amish gain because of their desire to shut out the world? What do they lose?
2. Could you imagine choosing to become Amish (while quite rare, a handful of people do this every year)? What aspect of your new life as a member of Amish society do you think you would find most compelling, and what aspect of your new life do you think you would find most problematic?
The technology

Google Drive  Docs  Sheets  Slides

Blackboard  YouTube  Zoom
Just-in-time course development
And how did it turn out?

ottawau.blackboard.com
Image Gallery
This is a photo of the church of St. John at Kaneo, Ohrid. It's a beautiful monument and plays an enormous part in Macedonian culture, since it's one of the most recognizable churches in all of Macedonia. Beneath it, there's a shingle beach that has been turned into a private one now, a destruction of nature by force, so that privateers can suck more money out of tourists.

Image by: Ana B
The (side) effects of modernisation in Macedonia

Before

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skojie_Market_Bit_Pazar.jpg

http://wwwpassportmagazine.ru/article/179

by Eniena Fetai
I chose these pictures because one of our topics this week was the great plains and the pictures are from Yellow Stone National Park in 2010- By Ericka Bernhardt
The Badlands National Park is a place that my father took me horseback riding on several different occasions. We went to several different National Parks but this one has always stood out to me because of its beauty and its name.

Retrieved from www.nps.gov/badl

I was stationed at Camp Lejeune which is in North Carolina, however it is on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean far away from the Smoky Mountains on the video.

Retrieved from abc.go.com
If the Mount Rushmore was to be built in Macedonia, who would we put in there? Good question! In the picture that I did with Photoshop are some suggestions from my friends. In the first picture we have Kiro Gligorov, the first President of the Republic of Macedonia from 1991 till 1999. In the second picture I put Blaze Koneski (1921-1993), one of the most celebrated poet and writer in Macedonia. In the third picture I put Tose Proeski (1981-2007), a Macedonian singer, one of the best who touched lots of hearts and still does. You can read more about him in slide number 34, Bisera Ilkoska has written something more about him.

With a well-deserved place in picture four I put Boris Trajkovski (1956-2004), who was the President of Republic of Macedonia from 1999 till 2004, and he was one of the best.

Picture retrieved from:
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mount_Rushmore_National_Memorial.jpg

Edited by: Jetmire Ismaili
Above is a picture of a United States Air Force Veteran, he is now homeless. Programs have been put into place to address this issue but still very many live in poverty or are homeless.

By Chris Stark
I don't know how relevant this is for the movie, but one of you mentioned that you didn't know what the priests actually are until they said the prayer. Therefore, I decided to post some pictures of the clothes of the Macedonian orthodox priests.

By Brankica Angelevska
Retrieved from: https://www.google.com/search?hl=en&gs_rn=7&gs_rri=psy-ab&tok=1GUM689-ljEI2koESzgKjQ&cp=7&gs_id=r&xhr=t&q=pred+dozdot&bav=on.2,or.r_cp.r_qf.&bvm=bv.44442042,d.Yms&biw=1366&bih=667&um=1&ie=UTF-8&tbm=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=W4pYUd-aEYnXsgaGjICQA#um=1&hl=en&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=gospodin+gospodin+stefan&oq=gospodin+&gs_l=img.3.0.0i
These photos show one of the most famous Macedonian traditions: the Galichnik wedding.

It is an annual event, taking place in the village of Galichnik, and each year, for 50 years now, a couple of would-be newlyweds is chosen to be married this way. It really is a spectacular event, involving many customs and rituals.

by: Vladimir Stojanovski
Reflective Journals
I really loved the course. I learned a lot. As I mentioned in my previous writings in the journal area, I’ve never heard about the Gullah culture, The Amish people, never knew about ‘The Body Farm’ and I am so glad I came across these information. The course really showed me the good and the bad side of America, and now I feel prepared to go there. I definitely would enroll in another project like this, I had so much fun. This course not only thought me how to self-organize but I also learned a lot about technology. See, I’m an old soul (even though I’m 21) and I can’t stand technology, but to have a progress in this world you just have to learn it. I really can’t think of anything negative about the course. I loved every single part of it, and the most interesting part was of course the cross-cultural conversation. I really gave my all, and I am sorry for being late sometimes with my writing in the discussion area.

Please say thank you to Carin for being always there when we needed her for the technological part. Thank you once more for the wonderful experience, and I wish you all the best. You’re both wonderful teachers.
However, this two places have one thing in common and that is the investment of money incorrectly. Macedonia invests all its money on monuments, while America invests all its money on guns and wars, in spite of the fact that they own trillions to China. If we are to compare religion in the states and in Macedonia, I’m really surprised how religious the American people are, and aren’t ashamed to show it.

All in all, this course was very helpful to me. To be honest, at first I was afraid if the American students will offend me because I’m Muslim, but that didn’t happen, but in contrary, they were very interested in everything I wrote about Islam and wanted to learn more. Again, wrong prejudice, that’s why it is good this kind of courses to be repeated, and people from all over the world to be able to join.
Discussion Forums
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Steven Foulke</td>
<td>3/31/13 12:42 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Vladimir</td>
<td>4/7/13 8:37 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Kirstin</td>
<td>4/7/13 9:34 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Jetmire</td>
<td>4/5/13 4:37 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>4/7/13 2:17 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>4/6/13 6:15 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Ericka</td>
<td>4/6/13 5:38 PM</td>
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<td>Stefan</td>
<td>4/6/13 2:17 PM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Steven Foulke</td>
<td>4/6/13 11:58 AM</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Brankica</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Bisera</td>
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<td>RE: Discuss how the changing ethnic demographics in the U.S. present both challenges and opportunities.</td>
<td>Steven Foulke</td>
<td>4/4/13 2:40 PM</td>
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I was gone from Skopje for 4 days, and when I came back, I was shocked! Like daisies, new statues sprang up in the Center. I am attaching a photo from 10-15 years ago, when the center in Skopje was looking normal. When there was place for the people to walk, to hang out, place for concerts, or events. I don't know how much the students from America know about what is going on these days here. But there were elections on the 7th. On the 8th, in the morning, the new statues popped out. I guess if the leading party, put the statues before the elections were over, their winning in the elections would not be that big. In my opinion, putting all these statues is just a big money laundering. Protecting our nationality, or name is just an excuse, a painted veil. Students here live in terrible dorms, people don't want to go to hospitals, because they are afraid that they will become even more sick, or get some infection from the terrible conditions. We study in a university that is not renovated since it was built. Why wasting so much money on statues, and not invest in education or health system?! How do they expect from us to want to stay here, work here, see our future here, when there isn't any. This is the thing with this project. No future, no money, no nothing for us—mortal people, just dictatorship. And for those who have the power, this is their Golden Age!

Skopje square 10-15 years ago (166.961 KB)

Kirstin

RE: Skopje 2014

Angela,

The new statues popping up over night must've been a surprise and an irritation for so many people especially when the election was barely over. It makes me wonder what message the government was trying to send? From the outside looking in, it just seems like an awful lot of posturing is going on for those outside of Skopje. Is this for image? Are they hoping to be taken seriously by Greece so they can claim their name or Alexander the Great; will that make them feel legitimate and important? I am not sure what the motivation is but when a government ignores the basic needs of the people that it is supposed to serve, one can only assume egos and corruption are involved.
Let’s hear from our students
Cross-Cultural Conversations

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9mT2lvAh1E
Post-Course Survey Results

http://tinyurl.com/course-survey-results
Challenges
Challenges

• Semester calendars
• Finding the right students
• Administrative issues
• Differing university “cultures” (assignments, rigid weekly schedule, expectations, etc.)

Technology
  – Do students have internet access? Web cams?
  – Access to the LMS
  – Technical support

Scalability (required LOTS of technical support)
Questions
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ottawau.blackboard.com  
Username: coil  
Password: coil  
Access to a copy of the course, which also includes:  
  – Post-course survey results  
  – Links to cross-cultural conversation videos  
  – Our contact information
THANK YOU!
Fala Mnogu!

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