

A Roundtable on International Experiential Learning

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What Did You Read on Your Study Abroad?: Balancing Academic and Experiential Learning in International Study Courses

Kenneth Osgood

We in academia may have a remarkably static view of what constitutes “education.” That’s a lesson I learned when I returned from my first study abroad trip in 2006. For four weeks that summer, fifteen students and I journeyed through five countries, exploring the European battlefields, monuments, and museums of the first and second world wars. We trudged through the trenches of Verdun. We climbed the dragon’s teeth along Hitler’s west wall in the rain. We hiked the Argonne. We journeyed inside the Maginot Line, riding a railcar through a seemingly endless tunnel array in one of its largest fortifications. We investigated the meaning of resistance. We grappled with historical memory. We peered uncomfortably into Hitler’s office, now a music school, in Munich. We stumbled silently through the gates at Dachau.

And so imagine my surprise, after completing such an ambitious and often moving excursion, to have the following dialogue repeat itself, virtually verbatim, as I shared my experience with my faculty colleagues. The fall semester was beginning, and the usual question opened the exchange.

“How was your summer?”

“It was fantastic! I took ten students through five countries in Europe studying World Wars One and Two.”

“That sounds great. What did you read?”

What did we read? This was the first question, every time, without exception. The first few times I answered politely, describing the readings and assignments that rounded out our coursework. But as it kept happening, as one colleague after another posed this as the first thing they wanted to know about our study abroad course, my internal monologue became increasingly agitated. The rant in my head went something like this:

“What did we read? Did I hear you right? I just took ten students out of the country for the first time in their lives. For many of them, this was the first time out of Florida! Do you realize that we literally picked up pieces of shrapnel and barbed wire out of a colossal artillery crater in France? We had seen the bones, the piles of bones, of the unidentifiable dead entombed at Verdun. We had interviewed a German veteran who had watched his comrades starve to death in an allied POW camp. We studied the terrain at the Hürtgen forest to try to understand how so many were led like lambs to the slaughter. We had experienced, at once, the

most inspiring adventure and the most sobering lesson in human cruelty and folly. And yet the first thing you want to know is what we read on the bus? How about: What did we do? Where did we go? What did we see? How did we feel?”

After all, ours was an experience that could not be replicated in the classroom. For teacher and student alike, the journey was transformative, unforgettable. The most valuable lessons we absorbed through discovery. What we learned, we remember by that feeling in our bellies when our minds conjure up those unforgettable images of the ovens and the gas chambers and the bones. By these experiences, we came to understand humanity in a deeper way. And yet to many of my colleagues, this kind of learning did not seem interesting, and perhaps not even important.

I came to understand – or at least hypothesize – that two attitudes informed the oft-repeated question, “What did you read?” First, as trained scholars acculturated by our professions and our own educational experiences, we tend to value “book learning” over other types of learning. We test students on skills (how well they write) but we focus most of our teaching on delivering content, whether through lectures, discussions, or readings. If there’s any doubt, recall an AHA job interview you participated in. From one side of the table came the standard question, “How would you teach x course?” From the other came the answer, “I’d assign x, y and z for students to read.” For



Students from the McBride Honors Program and Ken Osgood in 2014 on top of Montserrat, outside Barcelona, Spain. The jagged mountain is home to a famous Benedictine abbey and basilica, a destination for religious pilgrims, and a location rich in religious, political, and symbolic meaning to the region's history and identity.

historians, readings in primary and secondary sources, research papers, essays, identification questions and the like are the currency of our trade. They offer metrics by which we assess the rigor of our teaching and the success of our students. We don't quite know how to handle other types of educational activities, some of which just seem fluffy, "like the dioramas they do over in the College of Education," as a colleague once complained to me about a non-traditional assignment in another professor's class.

Second, and flowing logically from the first, an underlying suspicion of international study courses may have lurked behind the reading question. My colleagues may have been sizing me up, trying to assess whether my study abroad course was a "real" academic course or merely a glorified vacation. Did the students "earn" the three hours of academic credit they received? Or, for that matter, did I earn the salary that I received for teaching them? Was the whole enterprise one big boondoggle?

So herein lies the challenge for instructors of study abroad and experiential learning courses: how do we balance the learning that comes from experience against the demands of training students in the pertinent disciplinary field, to say nothing of the conventions of our university system? For starters, we should acknowledge that such a tension exists, and recognize the ways in which we seek to strike that balance. Speaking very generally, and recognizing the exceptions, study abroad courses tend to employ one of three approaches:

(1) International experience as backdrop: Students take a course in a given subject area that is largely the same as it would be "back home," except that it is taught somewhere else. This approach emphasizes meeting the learning objectives of a given course, with the international environment as a backdrop that provides students opportunities for experiencing life abroad on their own. A calculus course taught abroad would differ little from one taught at home; only the setting would change. In this approach, the international experience is separate from the academic content.

(2) International experience as an accessory: Students take a course on a topic related to the area in which the study was taking place, and instructors use this environment to enhance student learning about that topic. Teaching a course on the Italian Renaissance in Italy would offer all manner of obvious advantages to student and instructor alike. In this case, the setting informs and enhances the delivery of academic content, but the course still privileges the academic content that would be taught in any university setting. My course on the world wars followed this model, covering most of the basic topics one might expect in such a history course, but augmented by on-the-ground experiences that facilitated student understanding of those same topics I would have taught at my home university. In this approach, the international experience enhances the academic content.

(3) International experience as educational travel: The course and content are largely framed by the destinations; visiting sites of historical, cultural, or other educational interest drives the subject matter, the questions, and the learning. Thus a course may involve traveling from place to place in South Africa, with each stop along the way providing the focal point for the educational experience. Students learn about the diamond trade by visiting a diamond mine, they learn

about apartheid by visiting Nelson Mandela's prison cell, and so on. In effect, for this approach the international experience determines much of the content.

All three approaches reflect differing ways to negotiate the tension between academic content and experience. The first two privilege the academic: the achievement of learning outcomes that mirror those of a similar course at the home institution, albeit augmented in differing ways by the locale. The third approach uses the experience to determine much of the academic content, with learning outcomes structured around the experiences provided, albeit augmented by the expertise and direction of the instructor. All three approaches have distinct advantages, and each offers a valuable learning opportunity for students. Having interacted closely with students traveling abroad, I know many students who have experienced each of these approaches and they have returned from their study abroad experience transformed: eyes opened to differing cultures, they develop a sense of empathy and understanding, an appreciation of differing ways of life, that are hard to develop in the classroom.

And yet I also wonder if these approaches do all they can to maximize cross-cultural learning. Each, in its own way, remains framed by an assumption that the international component is meant to enhance the academic. That is, the teaching of specific subject matter in ways akin to the home university setting is paramount. When my colleagues asked me "what did you read," they were drawing on this assumption, asking, in effect: to what extent did this study abroad course fulfill learning objectives in a university setting as we understand them? Viewed this way, cross-cultural learning will always be secondary, an ancillary benefit, but not a pedagogical priority.

When I began preparing to teach my second study abroad course in 2014, I wondered if I could reverse the priorities. Could I develop an international study course that had a different emphasis: one that used academic content to help students learn more from the international experience, rather than using the experience to augment the academic content, as seemed to be the prevailing trend? What would happen if I reframed my course by restructuring my pedagogical priorities?

Several factors prodded me to ask these questions. Years earlier, when I taught the world wars course, I was in a History Department at a large public university offering a history course, so the disciplinary focus came



Students from Florida Atlantic University and Ken Osgood in 2006 studying the topography surrounding the Ludendorff bridge at Remagen, captured by the Allies in March 1945.

logically, unquestioned. But since then, I had moved to an engineering and applied science university to run the Honors Program, which functions like a small liberal arts college, albeit with a unique student body (all highly motivated science and engineering majors). The needs of my students – who get precious few liberal arts courses, but are hungry to understand the world through the exploration of complex, open-ended problems, and who must develop key skills in communication, critical thinking, and social awareness – challenged me to ask the question: How can I best help them grow?

Other factors also challenged my assumptions. I had now become more educated about the value of active learning as pedagogy—an approach well documented in the educational literature to promote higher levels of student satisfaction, depth of understanding, and engagement with the material – and my teaching had since evolved to emphasize such approaches in all my courses. I was also team-teaching the course with my colleague Sarah Hitt, a literature professor and a creative instructor who had researched early modern transatlantic Spanish narratives, and who brought her own set of questions to the course planning. The interdisciplinary partnership on its own ensured that the course could not be framed merely in the confines of our individual disciplines; each of us would have to branch out.

And then there was the peculiar nature of the whole international experience I had mapped out for the students. We were all going to live in Barcelona, Spain, for two months. During that time, the students would work in various internships, tailored to their interests and arranged by CIS Abroad, an educational company that develops international work, study, and service programs in cities around the world. Our students would work full time for eight weeks in such fields as patent research, software, networking, civil engineering, and environmental monitoring. In addition, the students would take the course taught by Sarah and I. We would teach in the evenings, after students got off work, or on weekends, when we could journey to various sites. Given all these parameters, it seemed silly to offer a course framed by one of the three approaches delineated above. The students were going to be working and living in this country for two months, shouldn't we prepare them to get the most out of it?

So we set ourselves to the task of designing a course that would help our students understand the environment in which they were immersed. Our students knew very little about Spain aside from stock images of paella, nude beaches, and bull fighting. Most knew a few Spanish words, and a few had some rudimentary language capability, but none had any significant knowledge of or exposure to Spanish culture and history. So we wanted to equip them with information, concepts, and strategies to empower them to get beyond crude stereotypes and the superficial concepts presented for tourists so they could engage in meaningful cross-cultural learning. Our first priority was to foist the responsibility for learning on the students. As instructors, we would function more as coaches and guides, rather than purveyors of knowledge. We would provide them with readings, resources, activities, and framing questions to direct their learning, but the challenge of discovery would be theirs. In this fashion, the course would link academic and experiential learning, providing an analytical, interpretive, and reflective space to process their Spanish experience.

The class turned an investigative eye on the central question: "What is Spain and what does it mean to be Spanish today?" Thus our foray into Spanish history and culture would be imbued with a sense of purpose: helping students make sense of their own encounters in this complex and dynamic country, its culture framed by its position as a crossroads between East and West and as a site

of bitter ideological and religious conflict. The readings in history and literature, the assignments, and active learning exercises would be framed around these themes, linked by the overarching purpose of understanding the culture they were encountering.

Structurally, we developed the course so that it had two interconnected components. First there was the familiar seminar format. We met twice per week in the evenings to discuss readings and assignments on Spanish history and literature. Students read works like George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, the Irish writer Colm Tóibín's travelogue *Homage to Barcelona*, and a Spanish detective novel by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *The Angst-Ridden Executive*. Each in its own way explored the meaning and legacy of the Spanish civil war, the Franco dictatorship, and its aftermath. Students also read primary sources, historical articles, and contemporary media sources on pressing problems like the Catalan independence movement, the signs of which were everywhere we turned in Barcelona. In selecting readings, we sought to expose students to a wide variety of themes about Spanish life and culture, and to do so in a way that could connect with things they would observe and encounter as they went about their daily lives. We consciously chose many works written by foreigners to prod students to reflect on their own experiences as visitors to the area, and to encourage reflection on the value and limitations of the observations of outsiders. In most course readings, Barcelona figured prominently. The authors used local places, events, objects, and experiences as symbols to communicate feelings, values, and points of view. In this way, the experiences of the authors would mirror those of the students.

This also allowed us to augment our seemingly conventional academic material with our second component: active learning assignments that pushed students to connect their experiences in Barcelona with themes and concepts from the readings. Our goal was to get students to explore their surroundings off the tourist trail, to learn from their explorations, and to see connections between what they were reading and what they were experiencing. To foster this kind of thinking, we developed a weekly assignment we called "literature in the real world." We directed students to connect the author's experience to their own, by exploring any experience or object – an event, memory, monument, place, feeling, taste, smell, work of art, poem, architecture, etc. – that was mentioned, described, or alluded to anywhere in the reading selection for the week. We directed them to find a way to communicate its meaning and significance to the class to help us all understand on a deeper level what the authors were trying to convey. For example, food and place figures prominently in the writings of the Spanish author Montalbán, and some students dined at the restaurants and sampled the foods enjoyed by his characters; others visited the setting for a given scene in the novel, or read newspapers referenced in the story. The students came to approach it like a competition to find the most unusual, unlikely, difficult, or even distasteful adventure. One student, for example, journeyed by bus to a remote location outside the city to walk the trenches where Orwell had fought, and recapped in vivid fashion the feeling of the "front."

Another recurring active learning assignment we called a "cultural investigation." Students read selections from John Hooper's *The New Spaniards*, an overview of various aspects of Spanish life and culture, including music, dating, food, media, sport, and politics. Hooper also is a foreigner (British), and students were tasked with "testing" his analysis to see if his theories about Spanish culture seemed to hold up. They were asked, "Do my own observations and encounters substantiate or call into question the broader observations made by Hooper?" To make these assessments, students interviewed co-workers,

read newspapers, visited sites, and conducted their own observations. Naturally, their analyses were somewhat superficial as they were operating with limited evidence and time. But the goal was to get them to think critically both about the source and their surroundings, to become critical and informed readers and explorers. It gave the readings deeper purpose – as text now became informed by experience. It sharpened their powers of observation and opened their minds to new questions.

Through these exercises, Barcelona itself became our classroom. Every new experience and discovery became an opportunity for learning. Chance happenings and encounters took on new meaning. For example, Tóibín opens *Homage to Barcelona* by describing a procession of life-sized figures with oversized heads –the locals called them *gigantes* – but the description or meaning did not resonate much with the students when they first read the text. Yet, by good fortune, our class happened across a veritable museum of such figurines in the town hall of the Sarrià neighborhood. (To us, they looked like life-sized bobbleheads.) We asked the building manager if we could come inside to see and he ended up provoking a marvelous discussion about their cultural significance, as well as the history and cultural traditions of Sarrià – which had once been its own independent community but had since been “gobbled up” (his words) by Barcelona’s sprawl. Similarly, on another unscripted excursion we came across a museum exhibiting Spanish comic books from the 1930s to 1970s. We organized an impromptu class meeting at the museum, and were able to visualize the experience of war and dictatorship on Spanish popular culture, with ideas about traditional gender roles, heroism, religious conservatism, and anti-Communism evolving graphically before our eyes. Other such unscripted learning opportunities the students experienced on their own. When one student woke up early to see the sunrise at the beach, he encountered a very different city. Most of Barcelona lay asleep (this is Spain, after all), and he encountered dock workers, fishermen, and other working class day laborers whose “rough and tough” appearance made him uncomfortable, a chance encounter that made him reflect on the meaning of class divisions to the city as well as his own privileged upbringing.

Theories of experiential learning indicate that reflection is key; students need to assess, analyze, and synthesize aspects of their experience in order to add order and depth to their “learning by doing.” Recognizing the importance of such reflection, we also devised two final synthetic projects to wrap up the course. Again, we set them up to connect “academic” and “experiential” learning. For one project, students developed an ethnography of La Rambla: the main thoroughfare of shopping, dining, and cultural life that formed the soul of the city and figured prominently in the three main texts for the course (Orwell, Tóibín, and Montalbán). Since this section of the city played such an important role in Barcelona’s history, culture, and identity, students discovered that the street is viewed and portrayed very differently by each author, and by different groups of people who walked the street. Likewise, each student responded differently to this noisy, crowded, exciting, thoroughfare. Accordingly, we tasked students with determining their own interpretation of what La Rambla means to Barcelona. To do this, they needed to spend some time there listening to conversations, observing behaviors, clothing, and attitudes, watching how human interaction is tied to aspects of the place, and analyzing the spectacles in art, music, and commerce that gave the street its life. The assignment was wholly open-ended, but it required students to both observe and research, for they couldn’t make sense of their observations without digging deeper into the readings we provided as well as other sources, living as well as textual.

The other final project we called a “travel zine.”

A “zine” is a self-published work of original text and images; in effect, a mini-magazine. We tasked students with developing a zine that communicated the meaning of their own Barcelona travel narrative: a way to tell their own story as a visitor experiencing and learning about Spanish culture and history. Stylistically, students were challenged to look to the readings for inspiration – as travel and exploration were themes of most of the readings. Since their work as interns was a major part of their Spanish experience, they needed to include something that drew from that experience as well. Again, we left the assignment open to unleash their individual creativity. Projects can and should be creative, we instructed them, but they should remain informative, well researched, accurate, and substantive. The last few days in Spain, the students spent reflecting on their experiences as they composed their zines. Sarah and I held “office hours” at a nearby coffee shop, where we all met for half a day. The students came to write, discuss their ideas, and seek inspiration from us and each other. The final projects included poems, short stories, analytical essays, photo essays and other forms of expression that reflected on experiences that mattered most to them. In these reflections we could discern students wrestling with their own identities as informed by their cultural encounters. One student, for example, linked the Catalan independence movement to his own personal struggles with LGBT equality. Another reflected on how the Spanish pace of life had forced her to confront her own life choices as a workaholic chemical engineer. In this way, the resulting projects were more than mere academic exercises; they provided mechanisms for students to make sense of and give voice to their cross-cultural encounters.

After I returned from Spain, I took a new approach to answering the question, “What did my students read while they studied abroad?” I answered by talking about how what they *read* interacted with and informed what they *did*, and how what students *did* informed what they *learned*. I explained how the whole course emphasized learning through experience, and how we used conventional academic tools (reading, writing, discussion) to help students not only learn *from* the experience, but to figure out *how* to learn from experience. In the end, our course design may offer ideas for a fourth approach to balancing academic and experiential learning on study abroad courses, one that prioritizes the experiential, using the academic as an accessory to facilitate that kind of learning by doing. I don’t posit that it is “better” than the other three approaches, for that depends on the educational objectives. But if a goal of study abroad is to develop cross-cultural understanding, then we should at least identify that as a desired learning outcome and consider framing our teaching to enhance that objective.

Laying a Foundation: The Challenges and Opportunities of Short-Term Study Abroad Courses

Alison S. Burke and Dustin Walcher

In the fall of 2014, one of us (Alison Burke) approached the other (Dustin Walcher) to ask about co-teaching a study abroad course. Burke had led a one-week study abroad course once before, and for a variety of reasons was looking for a collaborator. We had talked previously, although mostly in passing, about what a co-taught course might look like. Both of us understood how transformative an international educational experience can be for students. The challenge lay in finding ways for more Southern Oregon University students to benefit. Walcher agreed on the spot.

Southern Oregon University, which we have called home for the past eight years, enrolls approximately 6000

students, primarily from southern Oregon and the far reaches of northern California—a region that, historically, has been economically challenged. In many respects, SOU's profile is similar to those of other regional universities around the United States. Incoming students are not as well prepared for college-level work as the average American freshman. They are also more likely to be first-generation college students, come from lower-income families, be non-traditional students, and have part-time or full-time jobs in addition to being full-time students. They are less likely to have a passport—let alone one filled with stamps.

Few SOU students even consider taking a traditional semester or academic year abroad. For students who are the first people in their families to attend college, work multiple jobs to pay for school, or have children, a lengthy period abroad is simply not realistic. If they are going to travel, they need a shorter-term option. Consequently, our primary goal in offering our course was to give students, most of whom had never traveled abroad before and some of whom had never even been on a plane before, another way to get out of the country. The international experience was an end unto itself.

Naturally, we also sought to design an intellectually and experientially engaging course. We teamed up together for two reasons. First, as we will explain, putting together and running a faculty-led study abroad course is time consuming and labor intensive. There are numerous steps that need to be taken and challenges that need to be met before anybody ever stands in an airport security line. The prospect of dividing that workload was welcome. Second, creating an interdisciplinary course that was cross-listed between two departments served to broaden our reach (Burke is a criminologist; Walcher, a historian). More prospective students were likely to hear about our class because we partnered, and they had the choice of earning credit toward degrees offered in either criminology or history.

We chose to concentrate the course on the topic of “crime and violence in Britain and France” and to take the students to London and Paris over spring break. The themes were broad, and easily taught by a historian and a criminologist. The class design largely conformed to the third schema Ken Osgood identifies in his article in this series; we selected sites to visit that were consistent with the larger course themes and then developed content in large part around those sites. Students heard us lecture for the first five weeks of the winter quarter (yes, we are still on the quarter system). Then, in groups, they presented more detailed information about the history and criminological significance of some of the sites we were going to visit. Our students examined Jack the Ripper's crime spree in the broader context of an urban, industrial, late nineteenth-century city; medieval systems of justice and political legitimacy, with a focus on the Tower of London; and evolving systems of authority in revolutionary France. In addition to their group presentations, class participants completed a more detailed research paper on one aspect of their group assignment. As a result, before we ever left Oregon our students possessed a reasonable foundation of knowledge about what they were about to see.

The work we completed in the classroom, then, largely served to establish a basis for the students' learning experiences abroad. In addition to visiting the East End, the Tower of London, and the Conciergerie, they witnessed part of a trial at the Old Bailey, toured an additional former prison, and examined the evolution of French law enforcement practices at a policing museum, among other activities. While in Europe, we required each student to keep a daily travel journal. The journals proved exceptionally fascinating. We required participants to analyze and provide critical insights about the official site visits incorporated into the course. But in addition, most



SOU students at the Clink Prison Museum in London.

wrote in some detail about their day-to-day encounters with foreign cultures—and with each other. We could see the intellectual and personal growth on the pages after we returned.

Critics of short-term faculty-led study abroad courses are correct when they point out that such courses have inherent drawbacks that long-term programs do not. Students almost always remain clustered in their own groups. They observe other cultures, but do not have the time or any real opportunity to truly immerse themselves. Their rewards are thus more limited than those typically experienced by students who spend more time abroad—especially those who take classes at foreign universities as part of the regular student body (instead of remaining in sequestered classes).

However, unfavorably comparing the benefits of short-term faculty-led programs with those of long-term immersion programs assumes that students are choosing between those two options. The vast majority of students who enrolled in our course framed their choice as either going abroad with this class or not going at all (this was true of thirteen of the sixteen who enrolled). The student we had who was in his mid-thirties and had a wife and four children would be an unlikely candidate for a semester abroad. Indeed, the majority of our students who came to us without any experience traveling internationally could not imagine enrolling in a longer-term study abroad program and being thrown into an unfamiliar environment for an extended period of time. In our course the time abroad was limited, and wary students had two professors along whom they knew and trusted. From the perspective of most of our students, the course provided a safe introduction to international education.

Short-term study abroad, then, is best understood as the process of laying a foundation with the hope that students can build more elaborate international experiences upon it in the future. In fact, one of the students who joined us on this excursion accompanied Burke in her previous study abroad class to London. He had never been on a plane before that trip (and yes, the flight attendant gave him the requisite wing pin to mark the occasion), and he enjoyed the experience in London so much he enrolled in the class to London and Paris, and brought classmates who had never previously traveled abroad so he could mentor them and show them the ropes of international experiential learning.

Ideally, participation will spark an interest in the cultures and histories of other areas. Some students will go on to embark upon longer-term study abroad programs that they did not have the confidence to undertake prior to their short-term course. Others will travel internationally after graduating and will, we hope, go beyond mere tourism to lifelong experiential learning. By itself, the experience of learning abroad encourages students to examine the world and their own assumptions from another point of view.

All of this is to say that the rewards stemming from teaching a study abroad course are tremendous. But leading such an undertaking is not without significant challenges. Despite support from the provost, substantial and almost unrelenting institutional and other bureaucratic barriers threatened our class from the beginning. Some of those challenges were financial. To say that fiscal stress has become routine would be an understatement; SOU has been in retrenchment twice in the past decade. All administrative decisions are filtered through the lens of the university's fund balance. As a result, it is imperative that the class enroll a minimum of ten students, and ideally, more than fifteen. This institutional reality helps to contextualize our decision to partner and cross-list the course; by doing so, it became far more likely that enough students would enroll to permit the class to go forward.

Bureaucratic challenges were numerous, frustrating, and had the potential to undo the course. SOU's Office of International Programs (OIP) is led by proficient and helpful professionals. But it is also understaffed. When Burke led her first study abroad class to London, nobody in the OIP was responsible for assisting faculty with the logistical arrangements necessary to make a study abroad course a reality. Consequently, she used an outside travel agency that specialized in educational tours. After that class, the OIP worked on facilitating contracts with other agencies and offered some assistance for future classes, but we had a rapport with our previous agency so we opted to use them again. However, such outsourcing creates a host of additional challenges.

The first of those challenges involved contracts. Our travel agency had standard contracts, and SOU's legal counsel would review and modify them. But the OIP only partially facilitated communication between counsel and the travel agency. To ensure that the course was not undone by disputes over legal language, we had to stay on top of every detail. We followed up with multiple emails to the counsel, only to have him ultimately reply to somebody in the OIP. So we also had to keep in routine contact with the OIP, as that was the only way to find out whether we had to get back to the travel agency about time-sensitive details. Contracts also require the signature of the vice president of finance. He—and you may notice a trend here—did not usually respond to emails from faculty members either. Just managing the contracts required a great deal of fortitude.

But the contract problems paled in comparison to those emanating from the financial aid office, because students were also involved directly at this level. SOU's financial aid office as a rule does not disburse funds until the fourth week of the term in order to prevent students from collecting money and then dropping their classes. We



SOU students in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

ran our course during the winter quarter, in advance of a spring break trip. Financial aid disbursements in the fourth week of the term would come after the airline's deadline for payment on reservations for spring break. Obviously, our students needed their financial aid in order to pay the travel agency.

We thought we had an agreement to move forward with early disbursements, but once again, we encountered communication challenges with various parts of the university. When students went to the financial aid office themselves, they were unable to make any headway. Ultimately, we asked for the intervention of a university vice president, escorted students to the office, and helped facilitate a financial aid process with which we had scant previous experience. We were ultimately able to secure an accelerated aid disbursement plan that gave students approximately forty-eight hours to make their payments.

We also received requests from student support services to meet with advisors who were concerned about the monetary aspect of the trip. As we previously stated, the students are not well off financially, so spending two thousand dollars extra for one class presented concerns for those whose job is centered on student success and retention. We had to assuage their misgivings and assure them that the trip would be extremely beneficial to the students. Significant time and energy was expended in managing the university's sometimes byzantine bureaucracy.

Unforeseen issues with students also emerged. Our advice is to expect the unexpected. We warned all students to resolve any passport issues (get a passport, renew a passport, locate a passport) well in advance of the class. Naturally, we had a student with a unique challenge. The name on his driver's license did not match the name on his birth certificate. Neither of us can remember why, but suffice it to say that with almost no time to spare he was able to secure a passport. Had it not worked out, he would have lost a substantial amount of money for the travel deposit *and* he would have failed the class.

The possibility of failing the class is another unique aspect of the short-term study abroad course. The one-week travel component is more important than the accompanying term of work, but both are necessary. A student cannot pass the four-credit class if either of those components is missing. Students' performance while abroad is a major consideration in their grade, so if they end up not being able to go, for whatever reason, they cannot pass the class. Similarly, if students are not good ambassadors of Southern Oregon University, they will not pass the class and may even be sent home early (that contingency is outlined in the contract they sign).

Midway through the winter, when we had to contend with so many bureaucratic obstacles while staying on top of all of our other duties, we swore to each other that we would never undertake such a task again. Once we got abroad, that unshakable resolve lasted less than forty-eight hours. Whatever frustrations we experienced getting the course off the ground seemed to pale in comparison with the incalculable benefits we witnessed. We saw our students' eyes light up when they visited the sites they had researched. We heard newfound excitement in their conversations about course material. And we saw significant personal growth. Students who had never visited a major city before and were intimidated at the prospect of using the London Underground were navigating the Paris Metro without trepidation just days later and exploring as much as they could in their unscheduled hours.

And so we are now in the midst of cramming for our next course abroad. This one will be on crime and violence in Italy.

A World Within: Teaching the History of U.S. Foreign Relations in Partnership with Community

Kimber Quinney

It has been the work of history to free truth—to break down the walls of isolation and of class interest which held it in and under. . . . The truth is not fully freed when it gets into some individual's consciousness, for him to delectate himself with. It is freed only when . . . the truth which comes to consciousness in one, extends and distributes itself to all so that it becomes the Common-wealth, the Republic, the public affair.¹

—John Dewey

When we think of boundaries in history, we might imagine an outline, a border, a map that defines a place in time and what happened there. We might also speak of disciplines and fields and methods of history that are bound by explicit and often distinct protocols and practices.

In recent years our conversations have pushed such boundaries. They have focused on the changing meaning of "nation-state" and conceptions of nationalism, for example, and they have benefited from interdisciplinary themes in our research. And, of course, as the present discussion about experiential learning shows, we are contemplating the boundaries of teaching history.

But I am interested in the boundaries of history in a more philosophical sense.² Where does the teaching of history begin and end? Do historians have a responsibility

to lend our expertise to society? Do we have a moral obligation to community? I am still grappling with these questions, but I would like to share just one example of a real-life context in which they converge.

Institutional Boundaries

Our worlds have very real, practical limitations. For example, my institution—California State University, San Marcos, which is thirty-five miles north of San Diego—is one of twenty-three campuses in the California state system. As part of the largest public university system in the United States, my campus is clearly hampered by bureaucracy and by the society in which it functions. Indeed, a good word to describe the CSU system in recent years is *beleaguered*. We weathered the storm of the recession relatively well, but it did have direct and lasting impact on our campus and local communities.

Our student population reflects the region that our institution serves. Over half our students identify as being traditionally underrepresented minorities. For the past three years, over half our graduates have been the first in their families to achieve a four-year college degree. We are officially designated as an Hispanic-Serving Institution, and it is fair to say that a good proportion of our students are undocumented. A majority of students work at least one and sometimes two or three jobs. More than ten percent of our students are veterans or dependents of veterans—the highest proportion in the CSU system. Cal State San Marcos also has the highest proportion, and the only increasing number, of American Indian students in the system. We serve proportionately more former foster youth than any higher education institution in the entire country.

Readers will not be surprised to learn that in the 2015–16 academic year, just under two percent of our student population studied abroad. The reality of the institutional context in which I teach is that only a small number of my students will find it feasible to study outside California, let alone outside the United States. But I believe I have an obligation to provide as many different learning experiences as possible. So when I began thinking about how to integrate experiential learning into my courses on the History of American Foreign Relations, I had no choice but to reframe the concept of an "international exchange experience" by expanding institutional and intellectual boundaries.

Boundaries of Knowledge

First and foremost (and this is essential to what follows), I am increasingly convinced that transformational learning happens outside the walls of the ivory tower. The definition and history of the term *ivory tower* is worth recounting. Defined by the dictionary as "a state of privileged seclusion or separation from the facts and practicalities of the real world," the phrase is biblical in origin. Appearing in the *Song of Solomon 7:4* ("your neck is like an ivory tower"), it was originally a reference to a noble purity.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the phrase was used to describe intellectual pursuits that are isolated from everyday life. Although it first appeared in French, the earliest mention in English is in the 1911 translation of Henri Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. Although Bergson addresses the relationship between a comic and society, rather than between an academic and society, the meaning resonates:

Every small society that forms within the larger is thus impelled, by a vague kind of instinct, to devise some method of discipline or "breaking in," so as to

deal with the rigidity of habits that have been formed elsewhere and have now to undergo a partial modification. Society, properly so-called, proceeds in exactly the same way. *Each member must be ever attentive to his social surroundings; he must model himself on his environment; in short, he must avoid shutting himself up in his own peculiar character as a philosopher in his ivory tower* (italics mine). Therefore society holds suspended over each individual member, if not the threat of correction, at all events the prospect of a snubbing, which, although it is slight, is none the less dreaded.³

Today, *ivory tower* is used disparagingly, especially because it is assumed that intellectuals in the ivory tower do not recognize their disconnect from society and, worse still, do not seek to correct it.

One way of beginning to break through the walls of the ivory tower in the twenty-first century is community-engaged scholarship. The term “scholarship of engagement” was first used by Ernest Boyer in 1996. He redefined scholarly work to include academics who are involved in a reciprocal partnership with community and bring their expertise to bear on community problems. “The academy,” he wrote, “must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing, social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must affirm its historical commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement.”⁴

Community-engaged scholarship implies a renewed role for universities to advance democratic principles and to contribute to the public good. According to the New England Resource Center for Higher Education, which is responsible for facilitating and approving the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for universities across the nation, this practice of scholarship

includes explicitly democratic dimensions of encouraging the participation of non-academics in ways that enhance and broaden engagement and deliberation about major social issues inside and outside the university. It seeks to facilitate a more active and engaged democracy by bringing affected publics into problem-solving work in ways that advance the public good with and not merely for the public.⁵

This approach to the creation and dissemination of knowledge expands the mission and meaning of university teaching in the community and explicitly identifies concrete, “real life” experience as a high-impact practice—that is, a mode of teaching and learning that readily engages and transforms students.⁶

Boundaries of Experience

John Dewey’s philosophy of education and, in particular, the ideas he put forward in *Education and Experience* (1938) are as relevant today as they were one hundred years ago. Although many of us in higher education might dismiss Dewey’s ideas as being aimed at elementary school education, they are directly relevant to twenty-first century teaching and learning at the university level.

An advocate for progressive education, Dewey reminds us that education and democracy reinforce each other. One of his most insightful observations is that education for the benefit of a future value or in the abstract is far less impactful than education in the moment of experience.

What then is the true meaning of preparation in the educational scheme? In the first place, it means that a person, young or old, gets out of his present experience all that there is in it for him at the time in which he has it. . . . The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shouts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. *We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future* (italics mine). This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything.⁷

Dewey’s assertion that we are missing a potent learning opportunity (i.e., the moment when a student is most apt to learn) when we teach in order to prepare our students for a future assignment or grade or learning objective is insightful. Experiential learning happens in the moment.

David Kolb’s theory of the experiential learning cycle is especially relevant.⁸ Kolb boldly defines learning “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”⁹ His experiential learning cycle is a theory that describes how we take in and process information and ultimately, apply knowledge. The four stages of this cycle are:

1. *Concrete Experience* (a new experience of situation is encountered, or a reinterpretation of existing experience).
2. *Reflective Observation* (of the new experience. Of particular importance are any inconsistencies between experience and understanding).
3. *Abstract Conceptualization* (Reflection gives rise to a new idea, or a modification of an existing abstract concept).
4. *Active Experimentation* (the learner applies them to the world around them to see what results).¹⁰

A student can enter at any point in this cycle of learning; each learning mode informs the others.

Within these institutional and philosophical frameworks, then, came the search for a feasible—even if imperfect—pedagogical practice as an answer to the irreplaceable experience of “study abroad,” and that is what I have come to identify as an “international exchange” experience at home, in San Diego.

Expanding Global Boundaries to Include Community

I suspect all the communities in which we teach have a significant number of associations and organizations that are global in orientation. In my city, for example, we have the San Diego World Affairs Council, the San Diego Diplomacy Council, the San Diego Chapter of United Nations, and the International Houses at Balboa Park. But we might further expand the boundaries of how we define *global*: in San Diego there are also many ethnic and cultural centers, immigration resource organizations, and faith and interfaith centers that lend a global character and perspective to our region.

One of the most successful partnerships is the ongoing collaboration between the university and the San Diego office of the International Rescue Committee. Founded

in 1933 at the behest of Albert Einstein, the International Rescue Committee provides aid to refugees and displaced persons around the world. It is hard at work in over forty countries and twenty-six U.S. cities “helping to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing, and power to people devastated by conflict and disaster.”¹¹

In June 2016, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees issued a report that reveals staggering—and historically unprecedented—figures of global migration. According to the UNHCR, 65.3 million people are currently displaced from their homes.¹² That number exceeds the figures in the aftermath of World War II. As a recent *Atlantic* article reported, “To put it in perspective, the tally is greater than the population of the United Kingdom—or of Canada, Australia and New Zealand combined.”¹³ Over three million people are from industrialized countries, the largest total UNHCR has ever recorded. Half of all refugees are children.

The current refugee crisis is obviously a major worldwide humanitarian crisis that is directly relevant to the history of U.S. foreign relations.¹⁴ But it is simultaneously a crisis that is directly relevant to San Diego. The urgency of the crisis, in other words, is felt in our communities, and its trends mirror global trends. According to the IRC San Diego website, “The IRC in San Diego opened in 1975 in response to the arrival of Vietnamese refugees resettling to the area, and has since grown to serve approximately 1,000 new refugee arrivals from many countries around the world each year. To date, the IRC has resettled over 28,500 refugees from 29 countries.”¹⁵ And the numbers continue to grow. In June of 2016, the San Diego chapter issued the following announcement, urging the local community to help: “Each year the IRC in San Diego resettles approximately 1,000 refugees with the majority coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia in recent years. Now, with only a few months left in the fiscal year, nearly half of all the people who will be resettled through the IRC in San Diego this year are set to arrive in just three short but very busy months. By September 30th, we expect as many as 500 individuals, mostly Syrian, to reach their new homes. This marks a significant change in the demographics of clients served by the IRC in San Diego. The majority of new arrivals will be Syrian, while for the past 8 years Iraqis have been the largest group served.”¹⁶

How do I convey the urgency of this crisis and its relationship to U.S. foreign relations in a way that does it justice? One approach is to invite my students to experience the reality, to witness how real lives are affected, to provide an opportunity for an “international exchange” program between my CSUSM students and the growing number of global refugee youth who now call San Diego home.

One of the many youth programs provided by the IRC is called IRC Peacemakers. The Peacemakers are high school and college students who speak to various groups in the community about their experiences as refugees. They benefit from the opportunity to develop their public speaking and leadership skills and share their personal stories through speaking engagements, while the program fosters multicultural understanding and raises awareness of issues affecting refugees and immigrants among people in the wider community—including my CSUSM history students.

Every year that I teach the History of U.S. Foreign Relations, I build in an “international exchange” experiential learning component that involves students in my class meeting with and ultimately befriending the IRC refugee youth in our community. The community partnership is ongoing and reciprocal. IRC youth attend our local universities; university students do their community service projects and internships at the IRC. In fact, a Cal State San Marcos graduate is the current director of the youth career development program at the IRC.

I recognize that there will be naysayers with regard to an “international exchange program” as it is defined here. This pedagogical approach is not intended to replace or replicate the more traditional, intensive, immersive experience in a foreign county. But it has value in its own right. It is far less cumbersome than a traditional study abroad program, which has bureaucratic, chronological, and geographic limitations; it creates a perpetual opportunity for learning; and it illustrates how the global is local, and the local is global. It also represents community-engaged scholarship and demonstrates reciprocal benefits to university and community. It thus reinforces civic learning and democratic engagement, typifying the essential relationship between education, history, and democracy.

Moreover, this kind of learning happens in the moment. It is a loosely structured, experiential format that shifts learning from an instructor-centered to a student-centered environment of cultural exchange. It personifies the political, epitomizing the essential (and yet all too often overlooked) relationship between policy and people. This version of an international exchange program provides a stark reminder to all of us that refugees become new Americans, thus exemplifying how American foreign relations continue to shape and reshape the nation.

Experiential learning in this context invites us to think differently about the boundaries of history—beyond the ivory tower—because we are forced to bear witness. We must question our obligations as historians (and students of history) to address and redress the consequences of U.S. foreign policy and to accept the responsibilities we bear to our own communities that have been so profoundly affected by that policy.

Notes:

1. John Dewey, “Christianity and Democracy,” in *The Early Works, 1882–1898*, vol. 4, *Early Essays and the Study of Ethics, 1893–1894* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL, 1971), 8.
2. We need a roundtable on this topic! For inspiration, see the Research Seminar “Boundaries of History” offered by the History Department at St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Humanities; and Jan Eivind Myhre, ed., *Boundaries of History* (Oslo, 2015). Both address the kind of questions posed in this essay, including boundaries between professional history and “lay history,” and the public. For example, Myhre asks, “What were [the historians’] responsibilities, and how did, and do, morals enter into historical scholarship?”
3. Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (New York, 1914), <https://archive.org/details/laughteranessay-00berggoog>.
4. Ernest L. Boyer, “The Scholarship of Engagement,” *Journal of Public Service and Outreach* 1, no. 1 (1996): 11–20.
5. http://www.nerche.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=265&catid=28.
6. The Association of American Colleges and Universities also defines diversity and global learning as a high-impact learning practice. <https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>.
7. John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Kappa Delta Pi Lecture, 1938, repr. 1997 (West Lafayette, IN), 49.
8. David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1984).
9. *Ibid.*, 38.
10. *Ibid.*, 42.
11. <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/san-diego-ca>.
12. <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html>.
13. Krishnadev Calamur, “A Refugee Record,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 20, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2016/06/un-refugees/487775/>.
14. With all my emphasis on transformative learning, I should be clear that the transmission of information is absolutely essential. I am careful to teach the “facts” about global migration (relying on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees figures,

for example, and including concrete, legal definitions of *refugee*, *international displaced persons*, and *asylum seekers*). I also trace the historical patterns, noting that the global refugee population grew from 2.4 million in 1975 to 14.9 million in 1990; a peak was reached after the end of the Cold War with 18.2 million refugees in 1993. By 2000 the global refugee numbers had declined to 12.1 million, and in 2005 it was down to 8.7 million, the lowest figure since 1980. Among the questions I put to the students: What changed in 2005? And what is the relationship between that change and U.S. foreign policy?

15. <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/san-diego-ca#why-are-refugees-arriving-in-san-diego>

16. <https://www.rescue.org/announcement/increased-arrivals-expected-through-september>

Our Time in Havana (and Ho Chi Minh City): Studying History While Studying Abroad

Matthew Masur

When I brought a small group of students to Vietnam in January 2011, I did not see it as my first foray into “experiential learning.” I’m not sure I was even familiar with the term, and if I was I probably dismissed it as just another trendy higher ed phrase—another way for teachers to use “impactful” strategies like “flipping the classroom” to “grow student engagement.” But while many of us may eschew the jargon that is common in higher ed circles, we also tend to embrace the concepts or practices it describes. Historians “flip” the classroom every day by having students read something outside of class and then discuss it with their classmates the next day. We have always worked to keep students engaged and interested. And while “experiential learning” might be slightly less common in history courses, we have found ways to learn about the past—and, by extension, how that past is understood—by bringing students to museums and historical sites.

Initially, my motives for bringing students abroad were not so lofty. A measure of selfishness may have been involved, as leading a student trip gave me a chance to return to Vietnam—something that wasn’t easy on an assistant professor’s modest salary. I had spent a fair amount of time in Vietnam and benefited tremendously from my experience. I also had a general appreciation for international travel and knew that many of my students had rarely, if ever, journeyed abroad. This is not to suggest that the educational benefits were an afterthought; it was just that I hadn’t spent much time considering how study abroad would overlap nicely with the goals I had for my history courses.

Although slightly more complicated than bringing students to a local historical site or interpretive center, study abroad provides excellent opportunities for students to complement more traditional forms of studying history. In the past few years I have taken students on three short-term study abroad programs: two to Vietnam, and most recently to Cuba. My institution has embraced short-term study abroad as an alternative for students who cannot participate in semester- or year-long programs, either for financial reasons or because of personal preferences. My trips took place during winter recess (Vietnam) or spring recess (Cuba), minimizing conflicts with other activities. In my experience a shorter program is also “safer” for students who are nervous about traveling abroad for an extended period. Granted, challenging yourself and becoming more independent is one of the main arguments for study abroad. Nevertheless, I’d rather see students go abroad for a week or two than not travel at all.

The first trip exceeded my expectations, so I brought a second group of students to Vietnam in 2013. Then last year I led a trip to Cuba as part of a course on the Cold



A marker at the Ap Bac battlefield

War. While it might be disingenuous for me to say that I had abandoned my earlier selfish motives (I *really wanted to visit Cuba!*), I had come to appreciate that study abroad, as a form of experiential learning, provides unique learning opportunities that are particularly well suited to the study of history. For one thing, venturing abroad can expose students to the diversity and interconnectedness of the world—central themes in many history courses. And visiting the places where history unfolded is a sensory experience that cannot be recreated in the classroom. Students can see the landscape, feel the climate, and hear the sounds (or note the absence of sounds) that provided the setting for historical events. Finally, they can gain a deeper appreciation of history as a mode of thinking and analysis by seeing how different countries tell the stories of their past, sometimes in ways that may not align with what students have learned in the classroom. While these “experiential” elements will not replace more traditional methods of studying the past (namely, reading and discussing primary and secondary sources), they can effectively complement the basic techniques we use in our courses.

Organizing these trips can occupy a fair amount of time, depending on the level of support at a given college or university. When I first traveled to Vietnam, we did not have a full-time study-abroad coordinator, so I ended up taking on most of the planning and administrative responsibilities.

For subsequent trips we used API, a company specializing in academic study- abroad programs. API was particularly useful for our trip to Cuba, which required us to navigate complicated regulations in both the United States and Cuba. For each trip I also worked with colleagues—both at my own institution and at other institutions—to share the responsibility of planning and running the trips.

If my institution is any guide, colleges are increasingly interested in showing that they provide a global education for their students. History is a logical field for exploring the processes of globalization, as historians can help to explain the roots and consequences of global interconnectedness. Traveling abroad can augment these historical discussions by giving students first-hand exposure to examples of globalization. At the same time, students can observe the resilience and persistence of local cultures in the face of globalization's seemingly inexorable march.

During my first study trip to Vietnam, students began observing signs of globalization before we even arrived at our destination. They were pleasantly surprised when we landed in Seoul for our layover and they were immediately greeted by the familiar pink-and-orange color scheme of a Dunkin' Donuts store in the airport. (For kids from New England, this is second only to a Red Sox hat as a comforting sign of home.) As we traveled around Vietnam, students continued to notice familiar sights, sounds, and tastes: KFC and Pringles, karaoke bars playing Katy Perry songs, shops selling knockoff Nike T-shirts. The students were especially surprised to see the proliferation of global brands and products in a nominally communist country. The juxtaposition of propaganda posters extolling Ho Chi Minh and gleaming new shopping malls and cafés was a bit puzzling and prompted numerous discussions about Vietnam's political and economic system.

Our experience in Cuba was a bit different, but no less revealing. Cuba was almost entirely devoid of the brands and symbols that students often associate with globalization; there was no Coca-Cola, no McDonald's, no Starbucks or Dunkin' Donuts. Cuba conformed to the students' preconceived notions of a closed, communist society. But upon further examination, it became apparent that Cuba was still integrated into a global system, if in slightly different ways. While we were in Havana a cruise ship docked and released a stream of international tourists. Propaganda posters around the countryside depicted the

smiling faces of international figures deemed friendly to Cuba, including Che Guevara, Hugo Chavez, and Nelson Mandela. And of course, the long history of globalization could be seen everywhere, from Spanish-style colonial mansions in Trinidad to vintage American automobiles on the streets of Havana.

I was a bit concerned that students would view globalization only through the spread of recognizable products and brands. In both Vietnam and Cuba I encouraged them to think about other components of globalization. For example, in Vietnam I had them read about American opposition to the importation of Vietnamese catfish.¹ In Cuba we talked about the spread

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of news and information on an island with limited telecommunications networks and internet access. The students were intrigued by the stories of entrepreneurial Cubans who shared international news and other information via the "packet": a USB drive loaded with articles and other reading materials culled from the worldwide web. In both countries we talked about the networks between locals and their friends and family members who had emigrated to the United States, particularly in terms of the financial remittances that constitute an important part of the Cuban and Vietnamese economies. And in Cuba we discussed the U.S.-Cuban collaborations

that have developed in areas like hurricane tracking, drug interdiction, and air traffic control.

An additional benefit of studying abroad is that it places students in the very locales where historical events unfolded. In my experience, students learned the most from their visits to the sites of battles or military operations. In Vietnam, we took a short detour on the way to the Mekong Delta to visit Ap Bac, the site of an early encounter between U.S. military advisors and Viet Cong soldiers. Having read about the battle, my students were aware of its significance and its repercussions for America's involvement in Vietnam. Visiting the actual site of the fighting, however, was different. Stepping off our bus, students could feel the heat and humidity that American soldiers would have encountered fifty years earlier. The rice fields where American advisors came under fire were still intact, with markers indicating where the fighting took place. Students could gaze over the rice paddies, observe the terrain, and imagine how the battle unfolded. A small museum included additional information about the battle, while a model village depicted the collaboration between NLF troops and the local population.

We had a similar experience in Cuba when we took an overnight excursion to Playa Girón, one of the landing sites of the Bay of Pigs invasion. As with the trips to Vietnam, the students were assigned readings—in this case, Howard Jones's *The Bay of Pigs*—to help them with historical context.² Visiting the site reinforced and amplified what the students had read, just as it did at Ap Bac. As our bus made its way to the beach, students gained a greater appreciation for the physical landscape and the road networks that contributed to the operation's failure. More than fifty years after the invasion, the area has not undergone extensive infrastructure development, so the students could still see the swampy surroundings and thick vegetation that Jones describes in his book. The students also had the opportunity to wade in the water where the invasion took place. At one point several students noticed small clumps of seaweed just below the surface of the water; according to Jones, the CIA mistakenly believed that beds of coral further out in the water were just additional masses of seaweed. When the rubber vessels approached the landing spot they briefly



Cuban Propaganda Poster

ran aground on the coral—one of the many missteps that marred the invasion.³

One final advantage of going abroad to study history is that it can help students see the varied ways in which people and nations tell the stories of the past. In both Vietnam and Cuba, students encountered state- or party-sanctioned versions of the past. This was true at Ap Bac and Playa Girón, where museums told the heroic stories of Vietnamese and Cuban patriots, many of whom were martyrs for national independence and social revolution. These accounts made some students slightly uncomfortable, as they pulled no punches in describing America's motives and tactics. My students were not terribly naïve—they had read other historical accounts that criticized American actions in Vietnam and Cuba. They were, however, surprised at what they viewed as a lack of objectivity in the narratives they encountered at museums and other educational sites in Vietnam and Cuba. I used these experiences to encourage students to think about the purpose of museums and other educational sites. Are they meant to inform? If so, about what? And although American museums may appear more evenhanded, what biases might they include?

One of the most productive experiential learning activities came after we visited the War Crimes Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. The museum is a common stop for tourists, and it often elicits complex reactions from American visitors. My students were no different: even those who harbored doubts about America's involvement in Vietnam found the pedantic and propagandistic tone to be rather off-putting. In order to give my students more context to understand the museum and the historical narratives it employed, I had them read Scott Laderman's excellent chapter on the museum in *Tours of Vietnam*.⁴

After spending a couple of hours at the museum, we adjourned to a local coffee shop and discussed our experiences. I am often skeptical of educational activities that ask students to reveal their "feelings," but in this case the students' reactions were informed by Laderman's excellent analysis of the museum. While most of them still found the presentation at the museum to be one-sided, they seemed to have a greater appreciation for the fact that this was a valuable opportunity to encounter a truly Vietnamese perspective on the war—even if it was only one of numerous Vietnamese narratives.

Students' encounters with "official" versions of the past were not limited to museums and battle sites. In both Cuba and Vietnam, students engaged in conversations with scholars, other students, and tour guides. These conversations often turned to America's complicated role in the world, both now and in recent decades. Here again, students were sometimes surprised at the rather harsh critiques that they were subjected to. They sometimes felt as if they had to either apologize for America's actions or, in other cases, justify them. But these moments when students felt defensive about being Americans were always balanced by other occasions when they experienced affection and admiration from people they encountered in both countries. In fact, they were surprised that they didn't encounter more animosity. Although it is a bit of a cliché, my students quickly recognized that people in Cuba and Vietnam often hold wildly divergent views of the American government and the American people. In both cases, there was no shortage of anti-American government sentiment—not surprising, considering the historical relationships involved. But people in both countries regularly expressed their hope for better relations with the United States. In Vietnam, much of the rhetoric seemed motivated by Vietnamese concerns about China's growing influence in the region. In Cuba, it was prompted by recent steps to establish diplomatic relations and end economic restrictions on Cuba. Whatever the motive, it gave my students insights into the complex interplay between the past and the present—a past marred

by violence and ill will, coexisting with a present marked by hope and optimism.

Notes:

1. Scott Laderman, "A Fishy Affair: Vietnamese Seafood and the Confrontation with U.S. Neoliberalism," in *Four Decades On: Vietnam, the United States, and the Legacies of the Second Indochina War*, ed. Scott Laderman and Edwin A. Martini (Durham, NC, 2013).
2. Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs* (Oxford, UK, 2008).
3. Jones, *The Bay of Pigs*, 100.
4. Scott Laderman, *Tours of Vietnam: War, Travel Guides, and Memory* (Durham, NC, 2009), 151–82.

The Internationalization Agenda and the Teaching of American Foreign Relations

Brian C. Etheridge

The American Council on Education recently reported that internationalization efforts have "accelerated" across the landscape of higher education in the last several years. As part of their reaccreditation strategies, several American institutions have identified internationalizing the campus as a signature initiative, with enhancement plans like *Building International Competence*, *Learning without Borders*, and *Preparing for Success in a Global Society* that articulate ambitious learning goals for their students. Regrettably, however, historians of U.S. foreign relations, when they exist on such campuses, are often not included in these initiatives, even though their areas of specialization naturally position them to make significant contributions. Using the work of leading theorists in internationalization, I would like to suggest briefly how foreign relations historians could situate their teaching practices within this framework and thereby strengthen their teaching, their visibility in these efforts, and the agenda itself.

First, it is important to define what we mean by internationalization. Here I would turn to the work of Jane Knight, who has been toiling on this issue for many years. Seeing it as a response to the "the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement"—that is globalization—Knight describes internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education." To understand the effectiveness of institutions of higher education in addressing the challenges posed by globalization, Darla Deardorff has convincingly argued that we must move beyond raw numbers of international exchange and look instead at the intercultural competence of our students.¹

Although it is a contested term, scholars agree that intercultural competence involves helping students learn how to understand the world from a different perspective. In this way, intercultural competence broadens traditional notions of internationalization in significant ways. First, it takes into account cultural encounters in both domestic and international contexts, a scope that allows it to address issues around immigration and intergroup dynamics, as well as international or foreign relations. Second, intercultural competence stresses identity formation and interpersonal skills, in addition to acquiring knowledge about foreign affairs. In other words, rather than just knowing about another society or culture, intercultural competence seeks to empower students to engage in another culture appropriately and effectively.²

There have been many models for understanding how to people develop intercultural competence. Virtually all

of them share a framework that is segmented into stages. Two of the most popular are intercultural maturity and the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In their intercultural maturity model, Patricia King and Marcia Baxter Magolda argue that development must be understood across three different dimensions: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Central to their model is the observation that learners can get stuck if they do not develop in all three—so for example, if a student does not have a stable identity, if their sense of self is based on others, then it will make it challenging for him or her to learn about a different perspective without feeling threatened.³

Milton Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) is one of the most influential. Bennett's model traces how students can move from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative perspective regarding difference. Bennett's first two stages are denial and defense: in the first, learners are unable to see or recognize cultural difference; in the second, learners see difference, and they do not like it, often feeling threatened by it. Frequently seeing the world in an "us vs. them" framework, they seek to erase difference, either by forcibly converting "others" or, in extreme cases, by eliminating them. In the third stage, that of minimization, learners suppress difference and emphasize common and universal values among all people. Although learners in this stage are able to build empathy with people unlike themselves, this stage is still considered ethnocentric because learners here often choose to dismiss behaviors or values that are inconsistent with what they see as universal. The last three stages are considered ethnorelative. The fourth stage, called acceptance, occurs when learners decenter their own culture and begin to see cultural difference as the product of different systems, including their own. The final two stages involve adaptation and integration, in which learners become bicultural and develop new, integrated identities.⁴

Achieving an ethnorelative position regarding difference is a long-term project, as Bennett's model stresses that learners cannot skip a stage in their development. Being able to work with our students, many of whom come to us in defense, and move them through to a stage of adaptation, in which they see difference, are comfortable with it, and are able to engage it, takes years of deliberate effort—hence, the popularity of institutional enhancement plans that provide a coordinated and comprehensive strategy of internationalization. Crucial to these efforts are the creation of learning opportunities in which students have

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experiences in which they feel disoriented, uncomfortable, even threatened, because these are key conditions for the growth that allows students to move through these stages. Darla Deardorff, one of the leading voices in this area, argues that study abroad and service learning, precisely the kinds of activities talked about in some of the other essays, are essential pedagogies in developing intercultural competence for our students.⁵

I would like to close by making a special plea for scholars in our field to consider how to incorporate these outcomes and pedagogies into our foreign relations classes. In teaching about America's encounter with the world, it can be easy to fall into the trap of offering narratives of policymaking, but I wonder if that means that we run the risk of perpetuating some of the flawed thinking that has created many of the mistakes we decry in our narratives. If we want to move our students past an American-centric way of viewing the world, we need to prepare our students to encounter difference, and then provide them the opportunities to do so. Ideally, this would happen through things like study abroad or service learning, but it could also incorporate simulations and role-playing experiences that encourage students to take different perspectives on foreign policy issues. Making efforts to help students understand and appreciate how our friends and adversaries have interpreted the world differently could lay the groundwork for a stronger and richer body politic. Raising student awareness about cultural difference not only enables and empowers them to operate successfully in a diverse society, it can also lead to better and more reasonable decisions long-term in our foreign policymaking.

Notes:

1. P. G. Altbach and J. Knight, "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 11, no. 3–4 (September 1, 2007): 290; Jane Knight, "Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 11; Darla K. Deardorff, "A Matter of Logic?," *International Educator* 14, no. 3 (June 5, 2005): 26–31.
2. Darla K. Deardorff, "Assessing Intercultural Competence," *New Directions for Institutional Research* 2011, no. 149 (March 2011): 68.
3. Patricia M. King and Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, "A Developmental Model of Intercultural Maturity," *Journal of College Student Development* 46, no. 6 (2005): 571–592.
4. Milton J. Bennett, "Becoming Interculturally Competent," *Toward Multiculturalism: A Reader in Multicultural Education* 2 (2004): 62–77.
5. Deardorff, "Assessing Intercultural Competence," 69.