

LEVERAGING ONLINE INSTRUCTION TO AUGMENT INTERCULTURAL LEARNING ABROAD

Opal Leeman Bartzis, Monya Lemery and Deirdre Mendez



Advantages/Disadvantage of Online Learning in Study Abroad

What do ***You*** think?

Introduction to Courses

■ UT Austin Semester Plus

Fall Semester (US academic calendar)

1. UT Faculty-led course
(3 credits, 3 weeks)

2. Semester exchange participation (full-time enrollment)

3. Applied Cultural Analysis course (1 credit, online during semester, taught by UT Austin)

- Goals: engage students in longer abroad experiences and intercultural learning on-site, degree progress, strong ties with departments and exchange counterpart
- Decision to go with online structure: provide a cost-effective “bridge” between two disparate parts of the program, connection to main campus, flexibility for faculty and program schedules

Introduction to Courses

- **IFSA-Butler**

- "Exploring Community & Culture in a Global Context"
(3 credits, semester course)
- Goals: intercultural learning, development of skills, knowledge and perspectives, community immersion experience, cultural mentorship
- Decision to go with online structure: central teaching, transcribing by Butler University, feasibility for almost any program location, cost-free for students
- Organizational commitment to C&C in all programs: face-to-face courses, general integration, and online learning



Goals for Intercultural Learning

- UT Semester Plus
 - Develop intercultural competencies during experience abroad
 - Gain analytical, problem solving and critical analysis skills
 - Articulate skills into resumes
- IFSA-Butler
 - Develop intercultural agility
 - Critically reflect, with guidance, on the experience of studying abroad
 - Integrative learning
- Both Programs
 - Awareness of own cultural orientation
 - Analytical perspective on reactions
 - Meaningful experience of diverse locations

Structure and Assignments

- Students assigned to diverse discussion groups in Canvas
- Readings
 - Cultural framework
 - Anthropological perspectives
 - Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
- Class equivalent – discussion forum postings
- 3-part analytical paper on country or community

Weekly Discussions

- Combine students from mixed locations
- Establish a connection
- Define arc of engagement via weekly themes
- End with skills

Student Writing

*In the scenario, how do you think Nancy is handling the situation?
Is her approach helping her meet her goals?*

I believe that, up to this point in the story, Nancy is handling the situation well. She has help up her end of the contract, and works hard to be the best partner possible. She is setting an example and standard for both companies.

Reading your response definitely gave me another perspective I had not considered. I appreciate that you remained focused on the cultural tendencies and solely judged their behaviors based on the tendencies. Because when I read the Kuching side of the story I realized that I had misinterpreted the story and that Nancy had equal fault in the difficult relationship.

Challenges

- Structural
 - UT –bureaucratic barriers, varied program calendars
 - IFSA - challenging enrollment processes, degree institution permissions, varied program calendars
- Academic
 - Time commitment
 - Providing adequate feedback
- Operational
 - Lots of moving parts!
- Student Engagement
 - Assessing student attitudes towards material and concepts
 - Early notification of problems

Learning

- UT Semester Plus
 - Challenges –students’ value of course, online instructor taken less seriously, group dynamics on the ground, perceived disconnect between three parts of program
 - Best Practices – transparency of program model, online instructor meet students in person pre-departure, synergy with on-the-ground faculty director
- IFSA-Butler
 - Challenges - occasional retention issues, structuring and re-structuring discussion groups, training resident staff to provide support, Canvas issues
 - Best Practices - pre-arrival engagement, provide continual and rich feedback, be aware of differing levels of experience with online learning, online collaborative learning theory
- Deirdre
 - Challenges – guiding students, clear assignment
 - Best Practices – make early contact, be explicit, detailed, vigilant

Student video

Segments to show:

0:00-00:59

4:46-5:58

7:51-end

What about you?

What problems have you experienced and what strategies and solutions have you developed for online courses?

A photograph of a city skyline featuring several prominent skyscrapers. In the foreground, a multi-arched bridge spans across the frame. The buildings are illuminated by warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The text 'THANK YOU' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters in the upper center of the image.

THANK
YOU