

Cross-cultural Pedagogical Exchange: Dialogue between AUC and Partner Universities from the Arab World, the Global South and the West

Mohamed Fahmy Menza, Core Curriculum (adapted from CLT Day poster with the same title)

ABSTRACT

In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, the Core Curriculum sponsored a special project designed to use Internet videoconference technology and other forms of communication to promote dialogues between AUC students and their counterparts from a host of backgrounds and disciplines from all over the world. An informally dubbed 'Dialogue Project' evolved in a number of different directions, the most significant being the establishment of a three-credit-hour course focused upon a weekly videoconference. The Dialogue Project also sponsored a special topics course titled 'Arab and American Identities in Tension' which brought students from AUC, the American University of Beirut and the University of Washington together in a small village in Cyprus for 2-3 weeks each summer to live together and discuss issues concerning the relationship between the United States and the Arab World. In the wake of the Arab Spring the Project also introduced two new academic courses that are mainly based on partnering with universities from the Arab World and the Global South, 'The Arab Spring in Arab Eyes' and 'South-South Dialogue'.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

How do we define 'Dialogue'?

- Ongoing process of 'responsive understanding'; involves both the heart and the mind
- People participate in dialogue both as individuals and as group-members;
- Power, privilege, and culture are underlying themes
- Transition of dialoguers from the polite/angry mode to meaningful engagement in dialogue is possible with continuous reflection on one's own thoughts and feelings;



LEARNING OBJECTIVES/ COURSE REOUREMENTS

Learning Outcomes

The dialogue course aims to bring together students from different cultures alongside counterparts from AUC in order to explore a diverse set of issues pertaining to the social, economic and political contexts of a wide variety of countries in the Arab World, the Global South and the West. In doing so, it addresses these selected current and possible future issues from a regional as well as a global perspective. By the end of the course students should be able to utilize the videoconference technology in: a-conveying/reflecting upon their own opinions b-enhancing their knowledge about the similarities and differences between different cultures and c-improving their critical thinking skills.

Course Components

Attendance & Participation.....25%
Presentation.....15%
(Students assess their peers in presentations according to guidelines set by class)
Reaction Papers.....30%
Final Research Paper.....30%

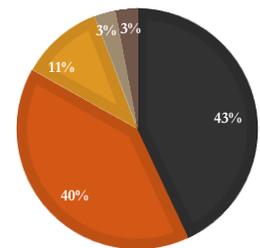
FACTS & FIGURES

- 150 average number of AUC students who enroll in our dialogue courses annually
- 21 # of countries partnered with since 2001
- 36 # of universities
- 5 # of continents with established contacts

FEEDBACK/RESULTS

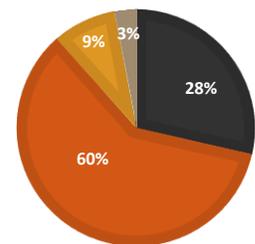
THE VIDEO CONFERENCE DIALOGUES HAVE HELPED ME IMPROVE MY CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree
■ Neutral ■ Disagree
■ Strongly Disagree



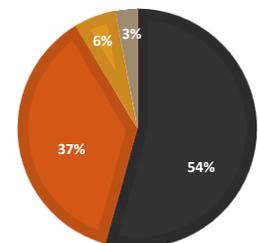
THROUGH THE VIDEOCONFERENCE DIALOGUES, I NOW FEEL THAT I HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERSPECTIVES OF THOSE FROM OTHER CULTURES

■ Strongly Agree
■ Agree
■ Neutral
■ Disagree
■ Strongly Disagree



THE PURPOSE OF USING THE VIDEOCONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY IS CLEAR TO ME

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree
■ Neutral ■ Disagree
■ Strongly Disagree



"Videoconferences with students from different countries - all with similar socioeconomic and political backgrounds - have really given me insight into my own country and how there are so many opportunities...we can use their past experiences to push Egypt forward". Shirwet Sadek, Student Global South (Spring 2013)