

International/Global Studies: Examining the Whole and Its Parts

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History and Mission

The Center for International and Intercultural Studies (CIIS) since the mid-1980's has overseen the off-campus study programs and has sought to integrate the off-campus experience with the liberal arts mission and with specific academic programs. The office was created, in large part, to regularize several study abroad programs that had arisen within specific departments and to develop additional options for off-campus study which would serve the whole student body. Centralization allows us to respond to best practices in the field (such as liability issues), to work for equal access of students to these programs, and to maintain data on them. Study abroad has been widely seen, on this campus, as one particularly effective path toward realizing several of our aims and objectives: to "free students from the confines of limited personal experience and from limited knowledge of the physical, historical, social and cultural world," to promote "self-confidence and self-knowledge" and to develop "respect for differing opinions." Virtually any student who studies abroad will see U.S. culture from new vantage points and will understand that "ours" is only one kind of comity among many. Virtually any student will be intellectually energized by broad exposure to many facets of the host country, and virtually all make important gains in self-confidence and self-knowledge.

CIIS in Relation to Recent Curricular Initiatives and to the Development of the Individual Student

We are currently about the work of strengthening and re-focusing essential educational goals at SLU, through recent initiatives such as the Rhetoric and Communications Institute, Civic Engagement, Community-Based Learning, and Academic Planning. Common to these initiatives is the effort to situate each student as an active agent in her/his education and to allow for more exploration, by the students, of the context and purpose of their classroom studies; this is what we mean by "engaged" learning. International and intercultural education, enriched by off-campus study, has much in common with these efforts. As we reconsider other elements of a liberal arts education, it is appropriate to consider how CIIS fits into the big picture and to consider how off-campus study might be even more compelling and transformative for our students. It is also an opportune time to consider CIIS in relation to the newly developed major in Global Studies.

Why undertake a review now? Firstly, while the SLU mission hasn't changed, the world has. International awareness and intercultural skills (that is, the ability to be aware of and sensitive to differences in cultures, to be comfortable moving outside of one's birth culture, and to be able to work with people from different cultures) are increasingly essential to life and work in the 21st century. Our students won't choose whether or not to have international and intercultural experiences in their lives: these are already thrust upon them, and SLU needs to prepare students to be effective participants in this globalized world.

Secondly, nearly 50% of our students study off-campus; and the vast majority of participants report that off-campus study is one of the most intense learning experiences offered at SLU. This is in part because most programs incorporate various strategies for engaged learning, including courses that make intentional use of out of classroom sites in the host country (e.g. museums, government offices) and internship or independent learning opportunities which require students to interact in a culturally different, "real world" workplace where they face "real" (not academic) problem-solving. The commonalities between study abroad and community-based learning are significant; among these are the fact that students become much more aware of a social environment that is at once the object of study and is also a experience of a different kind of community.

Thirdly, off-campus programs typically are one-eighth of a student's experience. When such programs are viewed as "time out" or time away from serious study in pursuit of a touristic pseudo-sophistication, the student loses. When the off-campus program is tied to the student's work, goals and interests on campus, the kind of learning accomplished off-campus is much more powerful. This strong effect of study abroad requires thoughtful academic planning on the student's part. The student needs to put in enough research time to learn about the options in order to make a sound choice that will complement an interest. Then the student also needs to prepare for study abroad by taking courses that will prepare her/him to get the most from the program. The off-campus program application is, in effect, a form of the kind of academic planning that we are moving toward. Good applications read exactly as an academic planning portfolio might, charting a trajectory with roots in past study, ambitions for further study and location of the abroad program as part of this trajectory. Students who apply for grants to enrich the study abroad program with a self-designed project extend this process. The number of students who enrich their international experience through travel grants from CIIS has grown significantly as endowments in this area have increased. CIIS now awards about \$40,000 annually in travel grants.

Fourthly, students returning from off-campus study are increasingly drawing on that experience to inform their academic work and future career paths. This is certainly the case for Global Studies majors whose senior project is comparative and builds upon research and study done abroad. Most area studies minors are declared after a semester abroad, and most have a capstone seminar/SYE in which students build upon what they learned abroad. In the past three years we have had 29 students complete an SYE in European studies as a consequence of study abroad. Students in a number of majors (anthropology, biology, environmental studies, religious studies, government, economics) use research abroad to feed into an SYE in their major. About 8-10 students per year who have completed study abroad are later awarded travel research grants from CIIS to

undertake research in an international or intercultural setting; the requirement is that such research must feed into an SYE or independent project. A number of government majors begin their SYE on the Washington Semester Program. Students with an interest in health careers find the medical policy “track” in the Denmark program a valuable part of their resume. A number of students confirm their interest in the Peace Corps and in international work with non-governmental organizations after study abroad. Increasingly, study abroad energizes future academic work, career plans, and civic engagement.

CIIS in Relation to Other Structures on Campus

Academic Departments and Individual Faculty Members

CIIS has sought to foster stronger connections between academic departments and off-campus study options. This arises from our perception that students who consciously “use” study abroad to enhance their majors or to develop certain skills or to complement experiences they have on campus – in short, who are more intentional in selecting and preparing for a specific program -- gain much more from the experience and continue to draw upon their new learning when they return to campus. To encourage this effect, CIIS has developed conversations with departments, identifying “good fits” between the major and study abroad opportunities. For ten departments we have prepared a tailored handout about off campus programs that complement the major.

CIIS works with individual faculty members to help them become more informed about, more connected to, specific programs. This is done by offering site visits to programs and by having faculty members serve as on-campus coordinators for the programs. The more faculty members know about courses that are offered abroad (even to the extent of helping to shape these) the more they will trust these to be key building blocks in the student’s career.

Finally, CIIS works with individual faculty members who are interested in developing summer courses with international and intercultural foci and travel components to semester courses. In recent years we have offered (quite affordable) summer courses in Thailand, Peru, Kenya, Sapelo Island, Bahamas, and Austria. Courses with travel components (where the university has provided supplementary financial aid for students) have included: La Frontera, Music of New Orleans, and Tropical Biology.

Athletics, Community-Based Learning, Student Life Links

CIIS also pursues ways to connect off-campus programs with extracurricular interests (athletics, campus journalism, leadership and community service activities, for example). We are just beginning to make connections between off-campus study and community-based learning initiatives by helping to design a Global Citizenship minor. This initiative has considerable potential to connect “engagement” on the home campus with the abroad experience: specifically, we hope to coordinate CBL placements here with comparable placements in programs abroad (drawing on existing structures for internships/independent studies that are already part of programs). This will enable

students to get a valuable comparative perspective on how different societies approach different issues: for example, child care and early education, domestic violence, care for the aging, rural health care, shelters for homeless, or food programs. CIIS wants to offer a re-entry course (probably a .5, associated with a journal to be kept while the student is abroad). Such a course would address current student concerns about “re-entry” and provide an opportunity in which students would seek out additional academic and para-curricular options to extend their off-campus experience. This course might become a CBL course.

Area Studies Programs and Global Studies

CIIS currently has vaguely-defined oversight responsibilities for 7 area studies programs (African, Asian, CLAS, European, Canadian, Native American and US Cultural and Ethnic Studies). Of these, the first 4 have significant connections to particular off-campus programs (Kenya; China, India and Japan; Costa Rica and Trinidad; and 6 programs in Europe). African/Asian/CLAS/European studies offer courses that prepare students for study abroad and provide courses and SYEs for their return where the experience abroad can be further analyzed. There are opportunities for fruitful relationships between these area programs and the off-campus programs, although there is considerable variety in how much connection there is between the two.

We cannot say that the relationship between CIIS and the area studies programs is essentially focused on the off-campus programs. Some off-campus programs are not specifically linked to an area (e.g. Australia) and some programs are more strongly identified with a major than with an area program (e.g. Denmark, Washington, D.C.) so that recruiting, orienting and developing many off-campus programs has little to do with an area studies program. While European studies takes advantage of many programs in Europe, the group is not particularly involved in the running of any one of them. We have area programs which are only slightly linked to an off-campus program; for instance, while we have Canadian studies (the only free-standing department among the “areas”), very few students take advantage of the off-campus programs in Canada. Our exchange with Fisk University is nominally linked to US Studies, but the exchange has been slightly used and not necessarily by students aware of the area program. [Collaboration this summer between CIIS and US Studies seems likely to re-energize this program.] Native American Studies has been intermittently connected to initiatives at Akwasasne. In short, area studies programs have developed (as did the off-campus programs) idiosyncratically and for a myriad of reasons and certainly not always necessarily connected to off-campus programs.

One way of seeing the “non-logical” development is to note that Native American Studies might arguably belong to a larger entity of US Ethnic and Cultural Studies; this entity might serve as the umbrella for faculty and student interest in the Hispanic/Latino/a US-based populations, and the budding interest in Asian-American experiences. However, faculty and students with these interests might also be connected to CLAS or Asian studies or to an expanded idea of Africana or Black Atlantic studies. At the moment, these interests do not get sufficient attention in any quarter. Peripheral to CIIS, but not

without interesting connections, are the Outdoor Studies program with its Adirondack Semester and the Gender Studies program which generates student and faculty interest in comparative global gender issues.

CIIS has no formal relationship to Global Studies, which is arguably the academic entity with the greatest connection to off-campus study. Indeed, it is at times confusing to speak of SLU's global studies and international studies since these are distinct entities that sound to many like the same thing. Global studies majors are expected to study abroad at least once, and many manage to be abroad twice. The initial conception was that Global Studies would build upon on the existing area studies programs; to this end their students are required to take "3 electives from each of two areas of study," along with other requirements for theory, method, and transnational courses. However, one of the "two areas of study" may include the US (hence the development, in part, of US Studies) and a student's concentration may include an area where we don't have an "area studies" program, such as the Middle East. For these and other reasons, among them the absence of any official occasion to meet, the relationship between area studies and Global Studies has yet to blossom into one of mutual interest. Yet the area and global studies programs have many common concerns about educating students to be more aware of global problems, making our campus more reflective of the world's cultures, and making the campus more intellectually satisfying for students with intercultural and international backgrounds.

From 2001-4 I convened the area studies coordinators once each semester; these opportunities allowed coordinators to discover how much they had in common and to share best practices in one or another program (relating to work with admissions, links to student groups on campus, preparing web sites, recruiting minors). However, the main thing the area studies programs share – and this is what limits their development – is time and manpower from their faculty boards to do much more than keep a curriculum for the minor in place. It is essential to grasp how little "power" these programs have, (1) because students are not required to do a minor and have virtually no incentive to declare it and (2) because the area boards have so little influence on hiring. On occasion a board has lobbied a department to craft a position description which will serve the area program, and even less frequently the area studies may be represented on the search committee. In the main, the area studies programs have little influence and great vulnerability with respect to staffing. While most of the individual area courses are well-enrolled, the fact that SLU does not require a minor has meant that fewer students than one might expect declare the minor and include it in their academic planning. Yet the area programs remain one of the richest places where students pursue interdisciplinary work on issues critical to the globe.

One way the area programs contribute to campus life is through hosting lectures and cultural programs which have considerable potential to enrich the campus, but too often these are poorly attended. In 2004-05 the area, global and gender studies programs met to produce a master calendar so as to better plan and support programming arising from these areas. Additionally, we had a faculty colloquy with an outside lecturer of interest to the members of these groups. This continued earlier efforts to create some

faculty development opportunities that would bring the associated faculty in gender/global/area studies together with more understanding of each other's work. Another initiative intends to strengthen and energize area studies by having more contact with "opposite number" faculty at Potsdam and by promoting exchanges where SLU faculty offer courses at Potsdam and vice versa.

Modern Languages and Literatures

CIIS is housed in the building dedicated to Modern Languages and Literatures; this department has been importantly connected to the programs in France and Spain (where it regularly provides the program director) and, to a lesser extent, in Austria, Kenya, Japan, and China (by offering KiSwhili, Japanese and Chinese). A number of members of MLL are on area studies boards; however, there is room for much more interaction between languages and other departments and programs with an international dimension.

Curricular "Hot Spots"

There are particular areas of the curriculum where issues lend themselves to being studied in a global or comparative context. (1) Gender studies is one that has already been mentioned. (2) Faculty in biology, geology, chemistry and environmental studies have shown considerable interest in off-campus programs where study of different environments is important to the field; indeed, many if not most environmental policy concerns benefit from study in a global context. Last year a group of faculty proposed, unsuccessfully, a Conservation Biology major which would require off-campus study. Interest in this initiative continues to develop, and a reconfigured plan may be taken again to Academic Affairs. (3) There is growing interest within our economics department in the opportunities to get their students studying in situ economic integration in Europe, economic transformations in Asia, and (to less extent) issues of underdevelopment in Africa; Latin America remains on the periphery of this department. More economics majors are now studying abroad, with encouragement from several faculty members. As a result of an FYP on globalization, taught by Karl Schonberg and Mike Jenkins, a group of sophomore students will have a residential unit in 2005-06, continuing the focus on this theme; virtually all involved in this group plan to study abroad and to be economics majors. The presence of a number of excellent international students choosing this major has contributed to the interest in global economic issues. (4) The Fine Arts Department is developing a combined major with Asian Studies and is currently chaired by a distinguished African artist; there is interest there, and in music, film studies and theater, in incorporating an international perspective into the arts curricula. (5) Both Anthropology and Sociology, as disciplines, lend themselves to comparative studies; these are departments in which off-campus study could be more intentionally incorporated.

Intercultural Issues

In the forgoing I have focused almost exclusively on things international. However, we have a Center for International and Intercultural Studies. Our dean and our chair of Global Studies have theorized about why and how these twin areas of attention should be integrated. There is work being done in several quarters on how to enhance the intercultural experience on campus: how to attract more diversity students and how to make the campus a site in which minority and majority/middle-class/white students can learn, and learn from each other. The link between Intercultural Floor and Global Studies 102: Race, Class and Identity is one effort; other culture-specific theme houses and their programming is another. These efforts can be better connected to some of our area studies programs (notably, CLAS, NAS, US, Asian, and Canadian studies). This is an area that cries out for more communication between Student Life and the academic program. What should the role of CIIS be in this work?

Admissions

SLU is currently considering whether to increase dramatically the number of international students. That conversation needs to be explicitly linked to initiatives about making the campus more intercultural. We also need input from those on campus likely to be affected by growth in the numbers of international students and diversity students from within the US. More coordination and more vision is needed about how this should transform the campus.

CIIS has piloted and plans continue one option for first-year students to study abroad; this may be a good time to have further conversation with Admissions about the value of this program and the possibility of additional variations on it.

Conclusion

While there is abundant evidence of interests in “things international” across the campus, there is a lack of synergy, a lack of mutual awareness, a lack of coordination among these many efforts. The proliferation of programs and initiatives, while initially energizing when a new one comes into being, contributes to the faculty’s collective sense that their members are pulled in too many directions, serving on too many committees. Likely this is especially true for those faculty members serving on area boards as well as departments. It is also the case that when there are so many programs with overlapping areas of concern, it is confusing for students and faculty to know who is doing what, to figure out who shares their interests. It seems fair to ask if, at SLU, with respect to “international,” “intercultural,” and “global” studies, the whole is less than the sum of the parts. It might prove useful to try to reduce or re-articulate some of these structures so that students and faculty can “navigate” more clearly among the options. More centralized organization of a limited number of programs might lead to more effective resource management. On the other hand, perhaps “letting 100 flowers bloom” gives us the best results. My concerns are how to create spaces for critical conversations, collaborations, and initiatives, and how to have a structure that “make sense” to those who need to use it.

Discussing these issues and capitalizing on the connections between “engaged learning” and off-campus study seems well worth discussing. Above I identified two “hot spots” where I see considerable potential: global environmental issues and global economic issues (2 & 3). Both incorporate off-campus study into the academic program in especially rich ways. Both lend themselves to a “policy focus”; that is, real problems, in acute need of further study to find optimal solutions are readily placed at the center of study in ways that increase the students’ sense of agency and involvement. Both connect disciplinary expertise with ethical and philosophical issues that lie at the heart of the liberal arts and the work of preparing global citizens: issues such as balancing environmental protection with private and corporate interests and with development needs; defining what a “developed society” should aim for; and reflection on the responsibilities of already-industrialized nations in matters of global environmental issues. Both of these “hot spots” might be fruitfully connected to the global studies department. Both might have the potential to change our admissions work.

The relationship between area and global studies would benefit from further examination. Do the area studies programs “logically” belong more with Global Studies (because of on-campus academic courses and connections) or more with International Studies (because of the off-campus program links)? Might area and global studies be best served by having the area coordinators regularly attend ex officio the global studies meetings? Or might the IEAC (the International Education Advisory Committee) be restructured as a university committee on which the chair of global studies, the area studies coordinators, and the chair of Modern Languages/Literatures had permanent seats? Or are there still other ways to achieve this enhanced collaboration?

What is the role of the associate dean for international and intercultural studies with respect to the area programs? How could the associate dean assist them more? Where lies the responsibility for determining which off-campus program we will support? Does the initiative come from the area programs, from departments (like Global Studies or Modern Languages), or from CIIS? How do we determine whether we should add an area studies program (e.g. Middle East) or expand one (e.g. Africana Studies)? Do we in fact need area studies programs? Without them, where would we locate oversight in the curriculum for transnational courses? Where shall we have oversight for courses that serve multicultural populations within the US (e.g. Latino/a studies)?

I conclude that it would be good to structure a series of conversations among key groups to consider our present structures, recent initiatives, and questions I have raised here. Among other considerations, such conversations would contribute to the kind of self-study needed for the next Middle States review. Finally, such conversations would sharpen the expectations for the Center of International and Intercultural Studies and for the next associate dean who will head the office.