**Workshop Summary**

Making Critical Connections:

Teaching International Development in the Liberal Arts

Chicago, IL January 11-12, 2011

**Introduction:**

Many of us are presented with the question, “what is development”? Another question that some of us have encountered within our own research (and in the classroom) is, “why *do* development?” These two questions, in addition to others, were the impetus for this two-day workshop. With the support of an ACM FaCE Grant, five faculty members from Beloit and Colorado Colleges facilitated discussions around the issue of international development, with the intention of developing best practices for interdisciplinary teaching.

These problem must be approached by combining the forces of social sciences; finding commonalities in our approaches to teaching about development as well as identifying different disciplinary perspectives . Implicit in this approach is encouraging students to the necessary tools when they go abroad. In this way, students question the impetus of the development project in the first place and think about issues in a broader perspective.

Our overall conference goals were to:

* Create a network around international development that links us to scholarly research, study abroad, students and teaching.
* Share teaching/research materials pertaining to development and begin conversations on best practices
* Find ways to integrate development into non-development courses.
* Establish a “common language” that can be used across the disciplines, and situate this in the context of a liberal arts education
* Focus on what’s inside the classroom, how our curriculum is structured

**Making Critical Connections: International Development in Practice**

In order to address these issues in the classroom, it was generally agreed that we devote a module within our courses to “doing development.” should the course be based on specific cases or be a survey? Material should be integrated into courses this semester and responses of students should be analyzed during the next conference. We should create something and have immediate feedback in the spring. Report on developments over the semester.

Future topics could include HIV/AIDS case in Botswana or Ecotourism in Costa Rica, GMOs, etc. Many students are interested in food security issues (community gardening). We could create a toolkit and apply it to problem-based issues. In drafting a syllabus, our goals are to:

* Prepare students to get the best of their development experience abroad
* Give them a toolkit before they go, good working knowledge
* Establish appropriate expectations
* Master concepts that are central to development, even if they are contested concepts.

We need to ask certain questions pertaining to a commodity and political economy. For example, who has the right to a commodity? What are the nuts and bolts of political economy? How has the right been obtained? What are the international regulations and regimes/organizations that shape the commodities’ property rights and local practices?

**“Land” as a topic**:

This list is to model how one might teach a problem from an interdisciplinary perspective and depending on case study the problems will differ and will be part of a larger syllabus. These are guiding questions to help us think through theories and guiding practices of international development (general questions around which we can create more specific questions).

* What is the problem (nature of problem: cultural rights, efficiency)?
* Who has the right to own or control land? How has the right been attained?
* Who are the actors involved? (anthropology)
* How is land defined at the local, national and international level?
* Why does land rights matter, why should we care? (economics)

Hopefully, teachers will fall back on the website of this conference so professors can share suggested readings and podcasts; there is a need for strong coordination. Each professor could contribute a reading, 4 minute podcast, or collaborate around a role-playing exercise. The website should be used as a resource to plug in expertise to supplement these issues.

The problem-based approach gives us more wiggle room in what we are scheduled to teach. We start out small, with a module, as a way to perhaps create a larger more interdisciplinary course. It would be a practical approach to immediately use in our courses rather than create an unwieldy large course. This module would be composed on sets of activities that we would agree on.

* On the segment on development we would use a case study using general readings about development, and present questions to students to identify in groups the answers.
* On the second day we would go onto ACM website and assign suggested readings.

We should come up with interesting questions from economic perspective, explaining overlaps and differences between different approaches. Classes would be used to introduce theory. Course could be stretched to get an understanding, intro to all of things with a focus on particular development problem. Students will see that looking at an issue from one discipline does not complete the analysis—they need a more comprehensive understanding of problem. As long as questions are tackled and set up, faculty can talk about parallels and integrate disciplines.

**Sample Case Study:**

Yet what are the students getting from this exercise? The point is to get different methodological approaches and posing questions that we think are relevant and appropriate for our disciplines or many disciplines. We should find an issue in the field that speaks to this from your discipline:

* Choose a problem that relates to land rights and tourism (for example): is tourism a viable strategy for development?
* Approach your problem/case study from your discipline.
* Use case study to approach questions such as what is the problem? How do you define development? Who are the actors involves? Why does it matter? etc.
* “Toolkit” for students: what skills can students acquire from studying this case study? (Reading/thinking about case study from different disciplinary perspectives).

For students who haven’t gone abroad, it gives them something more concrete, about a particular issue; it also gives them a toolkit to analyze questions. For students who have gone abroad they can relate questions to past experiences. We should come up with our own problem-based topic, go through the exercise and present that in May (building blocks for bigger course approach). We can coordinate, narrow the topic together, and gather specific questions. We can focus on the case study in our module.

**Class Assignments and Exercises:**

How should students approach this? What would you have students do, such as assignments to give them a skill set to approach problem and evaluate?

* Applied role-playing exercise; stakeholders, court cases, pre-post exercise (pre and post questions for assessment, differentiate between students that have and have not studied abroad).
* Observe how students carry out exercise and determine whether this is helpful for pre/post departure students.
* Development project (tourism). How would you analyze problem? Youtube video.
* Pretend students are development consultants and argue case and votes which consulting group will effectively tackle this issue.

Choosing to do this model is asking students to reflectively think about their identities and how this informs their reading of case study, and makes them care or not care about specific case study. What baggage do they bring? For the May conference, we must connect these two meetings and report back on this experience, including accomplishments, reflections, videotapes, and discussion about where to move forward. How can other disciplines interject into this particular approach? How can we connect our activities with study abroad, professionals and students?

We should try to get a couple of students who have intention of studying abroad and who have returned from abroad to see perspectives of both groups. How are they preparing? How many programs are available? Convey to them what they think is missing; they might think everything is fine but we see the disconnect between classroom content with study abroad.

This unit has the potential to help students studying abroad, as well as professors for advising purposes. It can be seen as a general development course for pre-departure and pre-entry (different assignments for 2 groups); focusing on ethics and expectations, with domestic and international application. It could also be a module that is integrated into existing courses, or an applied course for ACM study abroad.