

BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE # 14

Intercultural competency: How can we teach it?

Facilitator: Jennifer Esperanza

Participants: Jose Antonio Fabres, Damian Hanft, Hiroko Hirakawa, Carol Lacy-Salazar, Josielyn Inaldo, Rajaram Krishnan

1. What is intercultural competency and why does it matter?
 - *We thought about including competency as being able to understand world affairs and one's place in the world as a global citizen. It includes being informed about not just other cultures, but one's own local community and the diversity within it.*
2. Who is responsible for helping students develop intercultural competencies?
 - *There are many assumptions that can be associated with this: that it begins with an experience abroad, that it often assumes a particular 'Other' (ethnic, cultural, religious) such that that when one does not often think about learning the culture of ethnic majority groups. For example, when international fairs/exhibits are held on college campuses, they are most often represented by non-Western European groups. Also, those representations of non-European groups might run the risk of stereotyping-- i.e. that a Bollywood dance is performed to represent India-- without much critique of the economic, cultural and political milieus through which these representations of culture have been generated. What we hope to encourage students to do, as being culturally competent, is to be aware of such complexities and to apply them in their analysis of culture both at home and abroad.*
3. How can the curriculum incorporate the development of intercultural competencies?
 - *We discussed how Beloit offers a course on preparing students to go abroad-- to teach them about intercultural competencies, but it could do better in terms of urging more students to be more reflexive and reflective as they go abroad. One of the participants on our table talked about the preparation course offered at her institution (Cornell College?), which involved journal writing before and during the exchange experience. This might also extend to a post-study abroad course, in which they continue their journal entries as they process what they've learned and try to integrate it into their educational experiences back home.*
4. How can we help students to understand what it means to be interculturally competent and the relevance of this to their studies and lives?
 - *We discussed, at length, the importance of compassion in intercultural competency, but the challenges involved, as compassion is something that cannot be taught. How does one*

teach compassion, if it were possible, and who is responsible for doing this? Another component of intercultural competency that we felt was important, but also difficult to formally teach is humility. This is especially important for students travelling to developing countries, where students might assume that the absence of particular amenities (i.e. electricity, indoor plumbing, etc.) are inherently a lack of an "essential." We agreed that students must realize that standards of living differ from place to place, that the quality of life is defined differently, and that they must be aware of certain privileges with which they were raised, and to not assume these privileges as universals.

5. How do we help students apply the intercultural competencies they acquire abroad to contexts at home?
 - *We then talked about how these ideas-- compassion, humility, an awareness about the complexities of the world and peoples' living conditions could translate to looking at social problems in their own countries. Rather than thinking about and combating poverty in the developing world/Global South, how might students apply these interests to poverty in the US? Especially for students interested in international development, we thought that it was important to understand what sorts of intercultural competencies they have learned going abroad, and how those interests can be useful for thinking about problem solving in their local communities.*
6. How can the intercultural learning taking place abroad benefit students who do not study abroad?

BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE # 17

Intercultural competency: How can we teach it?

Facilitator: Josh Moore

Participants: Kevin Murphy, Alexei Pavlenko, Linda Phillips, Robin Ragan, Amy Saar, Pacia Sallomi, Julie Scott

7. What is intercultural competency and why does it matter?
 - *We discussed what we teach students: collection of attitudes, skills, knowledge and flexibility in working across cultures. We discussed how privilege can make one think they are more culturally competent.*
8. Who is responsible for helping students develop intercultural competencies?
 - *We discussed how some of these skills are innate, that some of them come with maturity. Can we teach maturity? Can we teach wisdom? How much can we teach them before they go and how much needs to be part of guiding their thought process upon return?*
9. How can the curriculum incorporate the development of intercultural competencies?
 - *We agreed that preparing students to have an attitude that allows them to learn from discomfort and struggle is important. We also discussed the importance of post-study abroad courses to help students integrate their experiences.*
10. How can we help students to understand what it means to be interculturally competent and the relevance of this to their studies and lives?
 - *Underscoring the importance in all aspects of the institution -- mission statement, and learning goals embedded in the curriculum.*
11. How do we help students apply the intercultural competencies they acquire abroad to contexts at home?
 - *Include assignments that encourage comparative studies of host and home environments.*
12. How can the intercultural learning taking place abroad benefit students who do not study abroad?
 - *Using programming and co-curriculum to share experiences and stories. We can incorporate cultural competencies into studies of the home community.*