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RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE'S GLOBAL MODULES PROJECT

Champlain College, a leader in both online and international education, uses the Internet to create Global Modules that link the students and faculty at international educational institutions for shared online readings, discussion and teamwork. The readings challenge cultural assumptions as well as promote critical thinking and collaborative learning. Students are divided into virtual mixed groups with the charge of attempting to address global problems and then presenting their findings to their peers. This article presents an overview of the Global Modules approach, including the technological and pedagogical implications. In addition, the article will focus on Champlain's innovative efforts to embed the Global Modules approach as a required part of the college's new interdisciplinary core curriculum. Champlain College redesigned its general education requirements with a sequence of eleven interdisciplinary courses in fall 2007. The result of the curricular redesign is an integrated series of international dialogues spread over the student's university experience. Its aim was not only to address the breadth of disciplines, but to understand them in a contextual, meaningful way. These courses are thematic in approach, and model the inquiry-based method of learning. The Global Modules are embedded throughout the new Core in key courses as required, graded assignments.

1. INTRODUCTION

"You had a few doubts about the philosophy behind the Grameen bank in your first posting - let me try and give a shot at them. Coming from a nation that practices such a system, I may help you look at things from another perspective."

These are the words of a young Bangladeshi woman living in Dubai who in the 2003 Spring semester participated in an innovative online discussion linking international universities run by Champlain College. The students, American, Emirati, Bangladesi and Indian, were discussing inequality in general and the Grameen Bank's microloan program in particular. An energetic discussion emerged over the Grameen Bank's decision to loan almost exclusively to women. Some American students, mainly men, proposed that this was simply inequality in a different form. The Bangladeshi woman was, through the avenue of the combined class, uniquely qualified and positioned to provide a different and invaluable view.

"First your initial question - why women? One thing you need to understand is the status of women in general in the rural society of the sub continent. Women are treated, unfortunately, as second class citizens by the system and only as 'tools' by the immediate society. Once she is married

off, given birth to a son (yes, this kind of narrow thinking is still prevalent in many corners of the sub continent), she becomes non-existent, at society's level known only as so and so's wife or mother."

With these simple words the young woman changed the nature of the discussion entirely. Instead of dry statistics from a textbook or philosophical musings from their professor, the students were deeply moved by the real-life experiences of a fellow student. From these early tentative steps Champlain College has now taken this approach and made it a key component of its curriculum and educational mission.

The Bangladeshi student certainly did provide another perspective but is that enough to justify the time and effort of establishing an international online network? When discussing his hopes for a brighter future, the Jordanian leader El Hassan Bin Talal proposed "promoting a politics of inclusion, and involving ourselves in dialogue and exchange." Noble goals, certainly, but how do we create an environment for this dialogue and exchange? To that end, Champlain College, a small baccalaureate college in Burlington, Vermont, has spent the past two years completely restructuring its core curriculum to best prepare students of the 21st century for their role as global citizens. A key component of this new core curriculum is the college's innovative Global Modules project, where Champlain students connect with students at various international universities for short, thematic, course-embedded, online discussions. Starting in the Spring 2008 semester Champlain will start positioning the Global Modules as mandatory assignments in certain key required interdisciplinary courses. The goal is to create an integrated series of progressive assignments based on global dialogue carried over the four year university experience. In this chapter we will examine Champlain's innovative approach to providing an international education.

Before discussing the Global Modules project and its role in Champlain's new core curriculum, it might be a good idea to step back and take a look at a more traditional solution to global learning – study abroad. While the advantages of studying abroad are well-documented, and Champlain continues to support active participation in it, we feel offering study abroad alone is not enough. Many factors, rang-

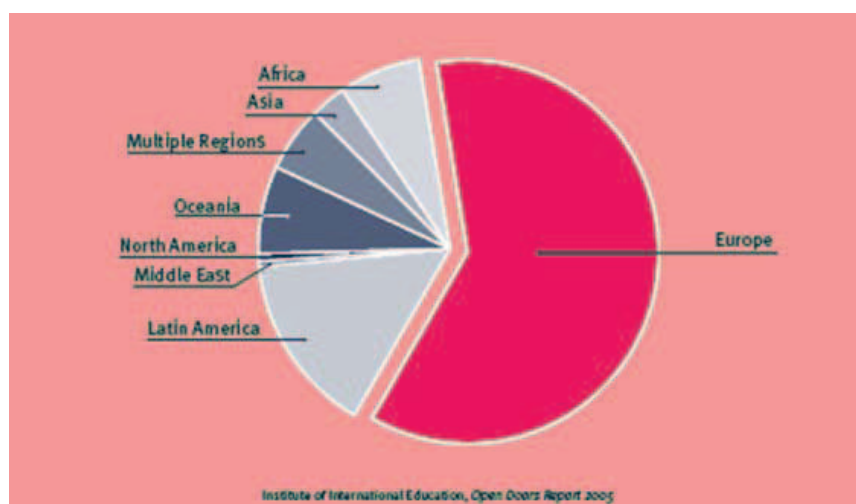


Figure 1. Host Regions of U.S. Students Abroad, 2003-04

ing from financial considerations to tightly-structured degree requirements, combine to ensure that less than two percent of American university students are able to participate in such programs. We must also realize that the experiences are often singular, isolated events that come late in the curriculum, usually in the third year, and typically exclude areas like the Middle East. Further, certain pivotal areas, most notably the Middle East, are either not chosen by the students or not offered as options by their universities.

Figure 1, taken from the Institute of International Education's *Open Doors Report 2005*, clearly shows that the destination of US students is overwhelmingly Eurocentric, with the Middle East hosting a mere 0.4% of all study abroad students from the U.S. in the 2003–2004 school year. This enormous lack of diversity is unacceptable if we are to prepare students for the global challenges of the 21st century. As stated by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, and the Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, two expert organizations deeply committed to international exchange and study abroad,

"We no longer have the option of getting along without the expertise that we need to understand and conduct our relations with the world. We do not have the option of not knowing our enemies-or not understanding the world where terrorism originates and speaking its languages. We do not have the option of not knowing our friends-or not understanding how to forge and sustain international relationships ..."

The need for increased diversity in the destinations of study abroad students was also cited as a major challenge by the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program in their 2005 publication "Global Competence & National Needs". What solutions have been offered to ameliorate these obstacles? The Commission's recommendation is to spend more money on study abroad. While this may increase participation by students, it does nothing to change the diversification of the student body participants, nor does it address the lack of diversification of destinations offered.

Incorporating such global learning into the curriculum is exactly what groups like the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) have been promoting for a number of years. In one of their most recent reports, "College Learning for the New Global Century", they concisely outline the essential learning outcomes to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. The report concluded that these four outcomes were essential for today's successful university graduate:

- KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN CULTURES AND THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL WORLD
 - Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
 - *Focused* by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
- INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS, INCLUDING
 - Inquiry and analysis
 - Critical and creative thinking
 - Written and oral communication
 - Quantitative literacy

- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving
- *Practiced* extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance
- PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, INCLUDING
 - Civic knowledge and engagement-local and global
 - Intercultural knowledge and competence
 - Ethical reasoning and action
 - Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
 - *Anchored* through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges
- INTEGRATIVE LEARNING, INCLUDING
 - Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
 - *Demonstrated* through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

While most of these outcomes were reinforced by the Global Modules experience, a closer look at the third category, Personal and Social Responsibility, clearly reflects key strengths of the approach.

To that end, we have initiated an ambitious program of embedding Global Modules across the curriculum. Participation in the Global Module project not only raises cultural awareness for all students early in their college careers, they also allow our students to speak freely with students from all over the world, from Mumbai to Uganda, from Jordan to Australia. Global Modules are an online global-learning solution which allows for the free exchange of ideas and opinions between international students that can be incorporated into any class. Using Global Modules involves very little training, preparation or class-time, with assessable results that clearly demonstrate their effectiveness. The Champlain College Global Modules project is an extremely low-cost, online global-learning solution which allows for the free exchange of ideas and opinions between international students that can be incorporated into any class. Global Modules make international dialogue possible for every student, from every nation. Further, because, as will be discussed shortly, the Global Modules are designed around topics chosen to inspire focused discussion, it is possible to maximize the exchange. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the Global Modules are not designed to replace study abroad. Instead, one of our hopes is that by requiring students to communicate with other students from around the world early in their university career it will actually increase the number who study abroad, as well as enhance their study abroad experience.

2. BRIEF HISTORY

For five years professors at Champlain have used their college's software and technical expertise to create short and flexible online Global Modules with other international institutions. We give students, both Champlain and international, access to a

Global Modules website designed and run by the college's faculty members. Once or twice a semester the classes "meet" online for assignments, usually in four week blocks. Global Modules are designed to link the students and faculty at two or three international educational institutions for shared readings, discussion and teamwork. Their readings, chosen through consultation among the faculty at the different universities, are designed to challenge unspoken cultural assumptions as well as promote critical thinking and collaborative learning. The key is to choose readings and assignments that force the students to work together to cooperate and solve problems, and in the process come to grips with their national or regional biases. Students are broken up into groups with equal representation from the participating schools. As a group they try and solve various national, regional or international problems and present their findings to their peers. Group critique and reflection then round out the experience and place their work in a greater global context.

Table 1. Structure of a Global Module

Week 1	Students post introductions in the online shell and get to know each other
Week 2	Shared reading assignments; students post answers to questions
Week 3	Groups established - equal representation; assignments
Week 4	Groups post projects; group critique

At Champlain we ran our first Global Module in Spring semester 2003. In it we linked two Seminar in Contemporary World Issues classes that were being taught in Burlington and at our campus in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The students in the two locations shared a common reading on the Grameen Bank, the Bangladeshi organization that gives micro-loans to the poorest of the poor. The excerpt at the start of the chapter is drawn from this Global Module. To get a loan from the Grameen Bank lenders have to agree to Sixteen Resolutions, which are really a means of societal transformation. The first part of the Global Module assignment was an online discussion of the article and what the students thought of the Grameen Bank. This also gave the students a chance to get to know each other by posting introductions. We then broke the students into virtual groups that were half-Burlington and half-Dubai. The group assignment was for each group to come up with their own list of ten resolutions, post them, critique the work of the other groups, and then reflect on what they had learned. By focusing on the Grameen Bank the students were forced to address issues of poverty, aid, gender inequality, and work together in international groups to solve problems. Not surprisingly, the two groups approached this issue in very different ways and thus learned from each other. The extraordinary outpouring of student interest and enthusiasm from the very first experimental Global Module let us know that we had stumbled across a potentially very valuable mechanism for bringing students together in a virtual classroom.

Since that initial semester we have run many more Global Modules, with disciplines as varied as philosophy, sociology, communication, science, literature and history – and topics as diverse as human rights, gender issues, globalization, communi-

ty, medical ethics, concepts of the self, and perceptions of Arabs in film. In addition, we have also successfully expanded the scope and added a third partner, our campus in Mumbai, India, which allowed for groups that one-third Indian, one-third Emirati, and one-third American. We have also expanded to other institutions, such as Klagenfurt University in Austria, Ghana University in Ghana, Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates, Al Akhawayn University in Morocco, Deakin University in Australia, Nipissing University in Canada, Kenyatta University and Moi University in Kenya, the University of Alcalá in Spain, Christchurch University in New Zealand, Corvinus University in Hungary, and Princess Sumaya University and the University of Jordan in Jordan.

3. WOMAN AS "THE OTHER"

After this general introduction, let us examine the Global Module approach in greater detail. A key element in constructing a successful Global Module is the selection of a topic, which can be a delicate balancing act. On the one hand you want to choose a topic, along with corresponding readings and questions, that tweak the students, make them question some of their cultural assumptions, and get them thinking in a more global fashion. On the other hand, you do not want to start an argument that is counter-productive. We are also sensitive to different societal interests and limitations. Essentially, we are trying to model for our students the exact type of cultural sensitivity that we are hoping to inculcate in them. An example of the challenge of finding an appropriate topic can be seen in any gender-based theme. A Global Module discussion based on Simone de Beauvoir has been successful in Morocco and Jordan, but was off-limits in the United Arab Emirates.

It is essential to give the participating professors the freedom to come up with their own topics if they choose. This helps to ensure that the discussions remain meaningful and up to date by tying them to unfolding world events. At the same time, one of our objectives is to create a large database of successful assignments, readings, and discussion questions. This gives professors a selection of ready-made Global Modules to choose from and also a guideline for constructing new assignments. Of the many topics that have been explored so far, the most routinely successful is a Global Module entitled *Woman as "the Other."* In it the students read the introduction to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and use it as a tool to discuss the sense of "otherness" of women in the modern world. Here is the master module for the *Woman as "the Other"* Global Module, broken down by week:

Woman as "the Other"

Week 1:

Let's take the opportunity to get to know each other. You'll find three folders in the Week 1 Folder, one called *Introductions*, one called *Water Cooler*, and one called *Questions*.

During a normal week, unless otherwise directed, always remember to post at least two times.

We'll begin our reading and discussing next week. With that in mind, we want you to do a couple things this first week:

1. Post an introduction in the *Introduction* folder. What are your interests? Do you have experience traveling overseas? What do you hope to learn in the Global Modules? Also, take the opportunity to greet your fellow students and find out more about them. Be sure to include contact information such as your e-mail address or IM.
2. Post any questions that you might have in the *Question* folder. Some of you are probably quite experienced in working online, and might even have participated in Global Modules before, and could help out your classmates if they have any concerns.
3. Check out the *Water Cooler* folder. This folder is designed to allow students within our Global Module to talk about anything of interest (as if you were standing around the water cooler at work chatting) – current events, movies, books, technology, etc. This will help us continue to get to know each other, and we'll keep this folder open throughout the Global Module. Feel free to introduce a topic or post questions. Keep in mind that you should always feel free to contribute to the *General Discussion* folders found elsewhere on the site.

Thanks, and I'm really looking forward to getting started.

Week 2:

We are going to discuss the status and perception of women. Our text will be Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. You will be reading the Introduction: Woman as Other. Follow this link and read her introduction: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm>

By reading and discussing the *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir we will not only learn about her views, but this will also allow us to introduce the topic of the status of women.

Once you have read the assignment, we will answer a series of questions. You will be required to post answers at least *twice*, although you can contribute more often if you wish. You can either post an original answer to a question or comment on the posting of another student. Either way, your postings should be detailed and analytical. If you are late posting for the week do not simply answer a question that has already been answered by another student – contribute in a new way. Build upon your fellow students' answers. Think of it as the class as a whole answering the questions.

1. Who was Simone de Beauvoir and what was her reason for writing *The Second Sex*? Do you find her arguments convincing? Are her points still valid or has the world changed dramatically since de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex*?
2. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir makes the point, "But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: 'I am a woman': on this truth must be based all further discussion. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex." What point is de Beauvoir making here?
3. In a famous quote, de Beauvoir proposes that, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other." What does this mean? Is woman "the Other?" If she is "the Other," what are the consequences?

4. Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "Why is it that women do not dispute male sovereignty? No subject will readily volunteer to become the object, the inessential; it is not the Other who, in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One." Do you believe this argument? Maybe more importantly, why "is it that women do not dispute male sovereignty?"
5. If we believe de Beauvoir then a good question to ask would be – was the creation of "the Other" a conscious or unconscious decision? That is, were women deliberately given a supporting role?
6. de Beauvoir states, "If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change. Proletarians say 'We'; Negroes also... But women do not say 'We'..." Is this true? She also points out that women "have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest..." Why would women have trouble organizing to bring about change?
7. Simone de Beauvoir suggested that, "The bond that unites her to her oppressors is not comparable to any other." What does she mean?
8. de Beauvoir proposed that "woman has always been man's dependant, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality." Is she overstating her case? If it is true, then what has stood in the way of women achieving equality?
9. "To decline to be the Other," wrote de Beauvoir, "to refuse to be a party to the deal – this would be for women to renounce all the advantages conferred upon them by their alliance with the superior caste." Would there be advantages for women to be "the Other?"
10. Let's assume that de Beauvoir is correct, that woman is "the Other." Let's bring in examples from our different countries of instances where women are "the Other."
11. Or, is de Beauvoir wrong? Can you cite examples from your country that prove that woman is not "the Other," or at least is no longer "the Other?"

Week 3:

By now your professors have divided you up into groups. Contact your fellow group members, both the ones at your school and also your international partners. As a group, work on the following questions:

1. In what ways are the lives of women in your two countries similar? Provide *two* examples. Do these similarities tell us something about the universality of the female experience?
2. In what ways are the lives of women in your two countries different? Provide *two* examples. How can these differences be explained?
3. Is life getting better or worse for women in your countries? Provide *three* examples. Why might it be getting better or worse in one country as compared to the other?
4. As a group, provide *four* specific suggestions for ways to improve the status of women around the world.

Week 4:

Each group should post their answers for the questions from Week 3 in the appropriate folders. So, answers for Question #1 should go in Folder #1, etc.

Now, let's read the different group presentations and critique them. What have we learned? What similarities have we discovered? Could we make a list of common suggestions for improving the status of women?

Each student should post at least *twice* this week.

The material above is drawn directly from the actual website. Whether or not the professors are creating their own Global Module theme or using one of our master modules we provide all of the technological support. Our goal is to create an environment that promotes dialogue, not one that provides professors with more technological work.

An example of how a Global Module unfolds can be seen in excerpts drawn from student work from a Global Module between Bouziane Zaid from Al Alkawayn University in Morocco and Robert Mayer from Champlain College. If we examine student postings from Week 2 we can see the students both getting to know each other and grappling with some key issues. In response to the second question, which deals with the necessity of women defining themselves, a Moroccan woman wrote,

"By defining herself firstly as a woman, I think that the message Simone de Beauvoir is trying to pass is that women are not just a subcategory of mankind but a real part of it, equal and complementary to men. In a way, I would say that there is not only mankind but also a "womankind". As a matter of fact, it is rare to hear a man defining himself by his sex, maybe because he considers himself in the norm. As William said in his answer to question 3, men have always been dominant in history while women were relegated to the background, that is why men may not need to affirm themselves. On the other hand, in order to affirm the fact that they are individuals, women always need to recall their individuality in front of men."

The Moroccan student answered the question and began the process of helping the students come to grips with the bigger issues raised. As the discussion progressed another Moroccan woman made the point,

"Simone de Beauvoir is totally right in her definition of women as "others" in many societies. In my country Morocco, for instance, women are seen in different way from men. Women do not have the right to laugh or speak loudly. They should come back home at an early time and respect certain rules. In other words, they have to talk, behave, interact in a special way completely different from the male."

Her point was important because she was making the progression from a general theoretical discussion to using specific examples from her home country to back up her argument. It is this exchange between students from different countries that is the core of the Global Module project. Another Moroccan student built upon these earlier points.

"In that case of Moroccan women, more than "Others", women are "inferiors". The word "other" include the idea of a second part but here, in those country where women are very depreciated, and we can say that, in a way, they suffer of a lack of freedom. However, even if this example of Moroccan women is quite true, it exits some exceptions. In big cities like Casablanca for example, it is striking to see how women seem free and open, particularly in their way of dressing. They look like western women. However, men's behavior towards women in Morocco always remind us that we are more considered as an object or a property than as a full human being. (But it's just a very general observation, of course there are a lot of different cases and not all Moroccan men treat women as objects!)."

This posting is interesting because we have now added another layer of analysis. The student is providing information about her home country, but is also drawing distinctions between the urban and rural positions of women. It is enlightening that, despite her freedom that the Internet provides for interchange, the student felt the need to throw in the qualifying remark at the end about Moroccan males. Another Moroccan student, this time a male, then proposed,

"I don't think that the "specific" situation of women which makes them "the Other" does concern only Arab, Islamic or underdeveloped societies. I always wonder why through the History of leader countries in domains of human rights and gender equality, such as USA and France, there was no woman in the position of the President. I am interested in discussing that point."

Here the male Moroccan student has taken the step of actively asking questions of his American peers, but also, in the process, challenging assumptions about the superiority of the American treatment of women. This is exactly the type of give and take that we are looking for in the Global Modules.

Once the individual discussion has laid out the main parameters of the topic it is time for the Week 3 group work. In this case the groups were half-Moroccan and half-American and carried out their discussion through e-mail exchange or postings at the website. One of their group assignments was to come up with specific assignments for improving the plight of women, both in their home countries but also around the world. Here is an example of one group's proposal:

"I think the best way to improve women's situation in Morocco is through education. About 52% of the Moroccan population is illiterate, and about 80% of Moroccan women (or even more, not sure about the stats) are illiterate. This is alarming, because from the start, there is an uneven distribution of skills and capabilities. We should educate the Moroccan population if we want anything positive to this country, and especially women, because they represent, at least, half of the population and can highly contribute to the development of the country. Besides, we should set realistic goals; while 80% of our women are illiterate, and probably as many if not more, ignorant of their rights, how can Moroccan feminists give priority to Urban women who are, let's admit it, a very small minority. Through associative work, and with the help of the government we

should educate the population first, and also change the image of women in Moroccan media because what we need most in Morocco is a change in mentality."

Another student group spoke of the potential positive impact of globalization on the status of women:

"I have learned plenty of crucial points: For instance, globalization is an important influential phenomenon on societies' structure, in term of behavior, ethics, and culture, which contributes in the assimilations of cultures. Consequently, women are also affected as any part of society by the diffusion of new cultural aspects. In other words, Moroccan and American women share more similarities than differences. Then, we got to the conclusion that women are getting better situation in term of defending their rights and to face the taboos of society that prevent them to make their voices heard."

Another group spoke of the need for greater international participation:

"There is a necessity of creation of NGO's and international organizations that promote women's rights and follow their applications because in some countries, especially in under developed ones, the reforms are still myth and concretized. Women should never suffer from the sexual harassment either physical or psychological by the protection of rigid law. Government should spread moralities that make end to prostitution which make women as commodity or "sexual objects" as social theorist Durkheim stated. Women should first know their rights to defend themselves and should have the freedom to express themselves according to their perspective not societies' ones."

Political participation was the theme of another group's proposal:

"One of the suggestions that I would propose from all the discussions is to try to encourage women's political participation in this sphere. The government should try to encourage gender equality in all of its programming. In an effort to demonstrate women's capacity to participate fully in Morocco's political life, nongovernmental organizations and other international institutions should help train women potential candidates in campaign techniques. In the long run, this might increase the number of women holding seats in Parliament and have positive repercussions on decisions taken for women's rights."

Finally, a group suggested that real change had to start closer to home:

"I believe that we need to start with women themselves. The most important thing to evaluate is the way they perceive themselves as "women". A woman who thinks that she is worthless without a man or that the he has a better status or abilities than her in any field will never be equal to him even if given the conditions of this equality. The mentality is the most important, and the most difficult, thing to change. In our society, there are still women who think that their husbands have the right to hit them and who believe that if it happens it is their fault. This is dangerous and sad, and this is what should be changed. Women need to be aware of their rights and of the injustice they live in daily."

This student work, including the progression of their discussion, is very typical of the Global Module approach generally – and in this case the Woman as "the Other" topic specifically.

One of the advantages of the Global Module approach is its flexibility. For example, here is a slightly different approach to the topic of women's inequality that was constructed by Rula Quawas of the University of Jordan and Debra Picchi from Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire in the U.S. (Franklin Pierce College is the first domestic American college that has been brought into the Global Module network). Up to this point our efforts have focused on expanding the network internationally. Instead of centering the discussion around an article written by a western writer they chose a Saudi sociologist, Fatina Shaker. At Champlain we always encourage our international partners to take an active role in choosing a topic and reading, so this was a very welcome occurrence. He is an example of the reading assignment and questions:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/saudi_arabia/saudi_shaker_full.html

Above is the address for the interview of the Saudi woman sociologist Dr. Fatina Shaker. If it does not open when you click on the address, try going to www.pbs.org and in the search box type Fatina Shaker. Her interview should come right up.

After you read the interview post a reaction to one or all three of the following questions. Hopefully differences of perceptions and ideas will emerge as students in Jordan and in New Hampshire discuss their views. Click on New Thread to post an answer, but if you want to ask a question of someone or make a point about their post, then click on Reply after you read their contribution. Good luck!

Question 1: Fatina points out that some women "cover" in Arab countries, but that we all wear "masks" so why do Americans (and I might add, the French!) make such a big deal over wearing a veil. What is she saying here? Do you agree? For students in Jordan, why do women there say they "cover" (if they do so)?

Question 2: Fatina is a second wife. She believes that men taking multiple wives is superior to men divorcing and remarrying. Why does she say that? Do you agree with her point? For students in Jordan, do you know any women who are or would be second wives? If so, how do they view this tradition?

Question 3: Fatina discusses terrorist acts against the US. For the students in Jordan, how are these acts viewed by Jordanians? Also do you notice a difference in how the men and women you know view the acts against the US?

Here the two professors used the topic of the hijab as a instrument for discussing deeper issues of societal expectations. Just as we witnessed in the Woman as "the Other" Global Module discussion there was a definite progression in the dialogue. The first postings dealt with the basic issue of what the hijab represents.

"Many women choose not to wear the hijab, but they know deep inside that they are not following the religious dictates, which make it clear that if a woman does not wear the hijab she goes all the way to hell. They feel guilty and talk about wearing the hijab all the time. Still, they feel that it is not easy to make that commitment at an early age. You should know that wearing the hijab is a big responsibility. You are held accountable

for every single action that you take and for every single move you make. The hijab should be worn for religious reasons, but many wear it for cultural ones too. Women who come from lower classes wear the hijab because it is much cheaper and they do not have to go to the hairdresser's often to have their hair done. Also, they wear the jilbab (a cloak) over their clothes so they do not have to go shopping every now and then for new clothes. Wearing the hijab also provides women with protection. The ones who wear the hijab are not approached by young men and they are not harassed. Let me give you an example. If you get on a bus and you are wearing the hijab and there are no empty seats, a young man will immediately get up and offer you his seat. But if you are not wearing the hijab, you remain standing up and young men give you a very hard time. This happens every day on buses, believe it or not. To conclude, the hijab is a MUST for all Muslim women. The Holy Quran says that in Surat al-nisa. Some women wear it for religious reasons and others for cultural ones. At the university where I teach most of the young women wear the Hijab. Some take it off when they leave school. I have forgotten to mention that it is easier for a woman to get married when she is wearing the hijab. Men like to fool around, but when they want to settle down and tie the knot they settle for traditional women who wear the hijab."

Granted, this information is general and would not seem particularly newsworthy to a student from the Islamic world, but it has a greater meaning to students outside of the Middle East because it is heartfelt and comes from a fellow participant in the Global Module. Later posters delved more deeply into the topic. In this case a female student fleshed out the discussion with more personal observations.

"To add to what [was] said, although the hijab is a must in Islam, it is forbidden to force a girl to wear it, so when she is ready, she can put it on. My host mother didn't start wearing the hijab until after she had her first child, but her oldest daughter started wearing it much earlier (when she was 14 or 15). A speaker that we heard at the beginning of the semester responded to a question about what she thinks about women who only partially cover, or who treat the hijab as a tool of fashion by saying that she has no right to judge what they do. She said that maybe they leave some of their hair out, but in turn do other good deeds. Although hijab is required by the Koran, I think that educated Muslims understand that it is a personal choice."

To which another student added another layer of complexity.

"One thing that I would like to note is that the hijab around campus is also a fashion statement. Just because a girl wears the hijab does not mean that she wears modest clothes. A young woman might be wearing skin tight jeans and a skimpy top and then a perfectly matching hijab to top it off. I think that among younger girls the hijab might have developed into a fad which allows them to wear skimpier clothes because their heads are covered. Of course, this is just something I have observed on campus and not scientifically backed!"

The analysis then grew deeper. This is a great example of active learning where the students are pushing each other to delve more deeply into the topic.

"Just as Ryan mentioned about Jordanian culture being at the crossroads of tribal society and urbanization, women face conflicts on both ends of the spectrum, especially with Western influences juxtaposed with an Arab identity. While Western women often encounter cat-calling and suggestions of promiscuity, women in hijab also face accusations of closed-mindedness and uber-conservatism. It seems to me that each social group wants to categorize the "other" while allowing themselves freedom from criticism. Self-proclaimed "open minded," and often Westernized youth evaluate the hijab as a symbol of backwardness while the conservative faction sees tank tops as a rejection of Arab identity by succumbing to Western style."

From a seemingly simple discussion of the significance of wearing the hijab, the students quickly moved on to an analysis of Jordan's role in the modern world. A different student then turned the discussion into a more personal and spiritual direction.

"Well, though I am an arabic muslim 20 year old, hijab still puzzles me. Is it about being modest? being conservative? and if the case is either, why the hijab in specific? why can't we just dress properly and humbly?? However, I have come to the conclusion that it's not the most important issue in Islam. Islam is a religion of values and morals, and it seems that most people have forgotten that, girls now think that if they wear the hijab only then that's it, many of them do dress extravagantly even more than unveiled girls, because they want to express the point that the hijab is not a sign of poverty. I truly believe that all muslims should study their religion, and their holy quran instead of being blind followers. If you want to do something, then do it for the right reasons."

As educators, we do not want our students to simply repeat what they have been told. We want them to question, to think critically and creatively. The exchange above displayed a group of students working collectively to address a complex question. One way to think about a Global Module is to compare it to a successful classroom discussion where the students were engaged and ended up doing most of the work themselves with minimal prodding from the instructor. A Global Module, if designed and run correctly, should have the same dynamic, along with the addition of an international presence.

One of the interesting aspects of the Global Module approach is that it reflects a series of differing degrees of intercultural understanding. On the one hand you will see students who have opened their eyes to different societal norms. Here is a posting from an American student who has grown frustrated with the limited views of some of her fellow Americans.

"I have to say that, as an American Woman, I have never been more embarrassed by my culture's inability to understand and appreciate the richness of such a diverse and intriguing area of the world. For me, the Hijab is a symbol of not only cultural identity, but an image of pride in one's beliefs and the pure love for faith. I see nothing "wrong" with the

idea of covering, and believe that Western cultures need to open their eyes and understand the reasons behind it, rather than being antagonistic and narrow minded.

And although I am an advocate for equality of genders, I do not believe that it is acceptable for personal beliefs and issues to be compromised for the sake of mutual comfort. This is why I believe that Stephanie makes a wonderful point in her post – not only the fact of societal differences, but personal preference/belief plays a huge role in the rationality behind "covering". Though I admit to being rather ignorant about Islam, I do feel it is necessary to also point out that a lot of Western individuals have a prejudice towards Muslims, and largely believe that they assume a negative ideology behind "covering" on the basis of their own ignorance. One thing that I will always remember from the study of Queen Noor is her advocacy of women and their rights, which serves as ample proof, for me, that many Muslims believe equality for the sexes."

On the other hand you will see students who have gone further and reached a stage that is often identified as Committed Relativism. At this stage they have opened their eyes and learned a lot about the world around themselves, but in the end have focused in on a set of core values. It may be the set of values that they came into the class with, but now they have reached that point through careful analysis and not simple habit. Below you will find a couple postings from Jordanian students who, while recognizing the shortcomings of their own culture, have also defended it articulately. Here a student responded to another student who had used the term "veiling of the mind" when discussing wearing the hijab.

"Hey Cassie, I just want to say that I deeply respect your point of view, and I believe that the expression "veiling of the mind" is unfair to many muslim women. However, using the word "covered" should stop, because it is offensive. i say this despite the fact that I don't wear the hijab myself, and I don't think I ever will, but still it's a choice for many women, not all, but many."

Another student echoed the same sentiments.

"As far as Hijab goes, I know I feel more comfortable in Hijab or some type of scarf or hood when I'm in public. I feel sort of protected, but that could be from years of wearing Hijab so much. There is a comfort in knowing that you're not always being judged by how you look, but when its hot and I feel like being a "bad" muslim I reserve the right to not wear it. Also, in order to be taken seriously or to not be judged, muslim people in America have to assimilate, I know have in more ways then just this."

One of the many important factors displayed here is that although the students disagreed with each other they did so respectfully. Some of our early assessment, as will be discussed later, indicates that after participating in the Global Module the students feel more comfortable when dealing with students who disagree with them. This is, obviously, great news and probably reflects both the careful choice of a topic and the active presence of the professors in the discussion process.

Professors Quawas and Picchi took a different approach a different semester, and, instead of a tightly structured discussion based around a single text, they directed the students to come up with the main challenges facing women themselves. Once the students had laid out the main problems they then came up with a systematic approach to solving them. This approach throws the work more clearly back on to the students themselves. For example, one student proposed that the biggest single problem that women face in Jordan related to a lack of dependence.

"Seriously, the other day I went to renew my national ID, and the guy wouldn't let me because my dad, husband, or male sibling should sign the paper. Imagine! I'm an adult and I still need a male relative to help me get my ID. The idea of a women's autonomy sparks a lot of debate in our society. People can not think of a female moving out to live on her own, and sometimes traveling on her own would start a massacre at home. Another interesting point is when people tell you that earning an MA/PhD would diminish your marriage prospects. I've heard people a lot of times, during the whole matchmaking process, ask for a lady who's preferably young, without a BA, and of course a virgin. A lot of my classmates actually mention that point, that they're not gonna apply to Grad school because they'll lose their chances of getting married and having kids."

Another student proposed that the emphasis on female appearance was a tremendous problem for Jordanian women. The conversation then broadened to an exploration of this problem for all women everywhere.

"Hey again, another important point that you've mentioned is the fact that women are always judged by their physical appearance, wearing the hijab or not, fat or skinny, ugly or beautiful, things like that, for example here in the university I've noticed many people when criticizing a male professor, they would call him mean, stupid etc, but with a female professor it's always a bitch, ugly, fat, witch. etc and I think that is a worldwide issue."

Another student stressed the fact that too many women, both in the Middle East and beyond, suffered from a lack of freedom of expression.

"A women is never treated as an entity, a whole complete person, but rather someone who needs to be completed, or rather controlled. Let me explain to you what I mean with a small example. Young girls who are rather opinionated or have certain thoughts and ideals often hear things like "One day you'll get married and change your mind, or rather your husband will change your mind"."

The challenge of maintaining a "good" reputation was a popular choice.

"Hey, I wanted to point out an obstacle that I think huge number of females face in this society. People here care a lot about one's reputation, and it is gained by your deeds. for example if you're a female who is married which means you have done something your society approves on and expect you to do, you are a good person, hence u have a good reputation. But lets say that you are a female who travels a lot to study or

work and you don't want to get married now, people start talking about you and your family. They start assuming that there is something wrong, even building up huge pressure on you, even your family. I know one could say I don't care for what they think or say, what matters is the people I love, but it does bother, one can never live alone surrounded by few number of people or just family, and if you are not bothered by it the older generation of your loved ones are, because that is the way things have been going for them. And it bothers also when they judge women ONLY, men can do what ever they want and no one will say a word. but one single deed done by female without listening to what society wants a big question mark is drawn not only by males but females too. People always jump to bad conclusion when it is related to a female but never when it is a bout a male.

For me I'm trying my best to change such thing, and I hope males would see that it is unfair, they do say they love us right? Don't they love their sisters, mothers, girlfriends, etc..."

Discrimination, its many forms, was also addressed by the students, both Jordanian and American.

"[I] want to talk about some problem that face arab women. the first thing discrimination between boys and girls. how the parent be very happy when they get a boy, how they -not all of them-be sad when they get girl. the second thing how the society look at women as a weak person they can not do any thing without supporting from men .in some families, they do not allow to the women to speak, when they talk about women future .all these things happened .because we do not follow the islamic rules. when we follow it no woman can be forced to do anything without her freedom .about me i do not feel any of these problems in my family because my father is a wise man and he dose not believe in these superstitions."

The topic of equal work for equal pay was widely discussed, especially America's well-documented failing in this area.

"One of the major women's rights issues in the US right now is equal work for equal pay. Women do not make the same amount of money as men in many jobs (in which they do the same amount of work). Is this an issue in Jordan, too? Are there restrictions on what kinds of jobs women can hold? Just curious...."

Finally, the students discussed the all too common problem of physical abuse directed towards women.

"The term physical is so expanded; it includes beating, bullying, and molesting. Sexual abuse can also be included. Fathers beat their daughter, also brothers beat their sisters, but I guess these things are mostly spreading at rural societies. It is somehow related to honor and principles and people relate it to religion. Other than that, it is common that many women and girls are beaten by their husbands and boyfriends; this is a universal issue, as long as females are not physically powerful as males."

The next stage involved focusing in on a limited number of problems and attempting to draw up plans for addressing them. What became very apparent in this Global Module was that the students had clearly found their voice – they felt comfortable discussing their lives, both their hopes and their frustrations, and this freedom also allowed the participating students to learn from them.

It is important to keep in mind that these discussions are never designed to be merely a critique of non-Western cultures. The students are always attempting to learn from each other and to make connections. Part of this relates to finding out ways that the different participating cultures are similar or different. This means that American culture is examined with the same critical eye. The Jordanian and American students examined the high divorce rate in the U.S. Here are the comments of an American student when talking about marriage and divorce in the U.S.

"In America, the institution of marriage is becoming somewhat of a farce in many places (like Las Vegas, perhaps?). Something like 50% of marriages in America end in divorce (what is the divorce rate in Jordan??), and divorce is so prevalent that no one really looks at it as being anything other than "too bad" for the parties involved. Some celebrity women who have gotten divorced even throw 'divorce parties' for themselves – as if it were a happy occasion! People here seem to, on the whole, get married quickly and make rash decisions. Many marriages end within a year or so because the people did not really think carefully about their compatibility or their values and how they would work together.

Another point that goes along with what someone else said about graduate school and its effects on marriage is that, in the US, divorce rates are lower among people who have college degrees and those who waited to get married until they were in their mid to later twenties (and later) rather than their late teens and early twenties. At what age do most women in Jordan get married? At what age does it become 'late' to get married???"

As part of the discussion a couple students asked the interesting question about whether or not polygamy might not actually be a more humane approach than simply divorcing the first wife. Here is a Jordanian student's critique of the pressures put on American teenagers by their own culture.

"Well, I think that it's the American culture that makes young girls at a really young age practice sexual intercourse, but I think these young girls are also victimized by their society, because it's also so much pressure for them if they were virgins, they get criticized and made fun of, and that they hadn't much experience at a young age... I have this American friend who lives in one of the villages here in Jordan, and the first thing he asked me whether I was a virgin or not... my response doesn't really matter, but for what it's worth it was yes, and he was actually surprised and asked me why? My reasons were of course first of all out of religious purposes and the fact that it's my body and my choice, he was really surprised and really didn't understand what I meant. My reply was that we have a different culture than yours and we do deal with things differently."

Obviously, there were few topics off limits during these discussions. That said, the discussions were always carried out both seriously and collegially. The students appreciated the opportunity to exchange ideas with students from another culture and were universally enthusiastic and civil.

4 THE ROAD AHEAD

Potential partnerships can be as varied as the topics since the discussions take place in a virtual forum which allows for asynchronous dialogue between the participants. The main objective when designing the technology to use is that it must provide a communications portal that anyone in the world with internet access can use. Champlain College originally designed a custom built message board with minimal features. The message board offered simple threaded discussions, which provided ease of use for the student to follow the discussion, particularly if English is their second language, as well as ease of use for the instructor to follow the discussion and track postings by individual students. As the Global Modules project has expanded, Champlain College has invested in vBulletin, a specialized commercial bulletin board package that is highly customizable and flexible. This technology was chosen over a similar commercial bulletin board package, phpbb, because it was able to offer several structures to the discussions- flat, threaded or a hybrid. vBulletin also offers an effective way to easily maintain the current and growing volume of modules being run simultaneously each semester, as well as the ability to archive desired discussion material. As we have chosen to increase the sophistication of our technology, Champlain College is always mindful to balance that against potentially limiting participation due to bandwidth constraints.

Internally, Champlain has amassed a wealth of assessment data to support the validity of the Global Modules approach, based on a simple twelve question survey given to every domestic and international participant. Here are the results from five key questions from the Spring 2007 semester:

1. I am now aware of a greater number of perspectives on the topic we covered than I was before participating in this Global Module.
 - Strongly Agree - 60.5%
 - Agree - 39.5%
2. I will probably try to find out more about the cultures that I encountered during this Global Module.
 - Strongly Agree - 35.1%
 - Agree - 54.1%
 - Disagree - 10.8%
3. I feel more comfortable communicating electronically with people from other countries or cultures than I thought I would have before participating in this Global Module.
 - Strongly Agree - 42.1%
 - Agree - 52.6%
 - Disagree - 5.3%

4. I believe that I will now feel more comfortable communicating face to face with people from other countries or cultures because of my participation in this Global Module.

- Strongly Agree - 34.2%
- Agree - 57.9%
- Disagree - 7.9%

5. I believe that I will be more tolerant when others have trouble accepting or understanding my view on a particular topic.

- Strongly Agree - 37.8%
- Agree - 59.5%
- Disagree - 2.7%

While the numbers from all twelve questions were overwhelming positive, these five questions in particular were representative and also very encouraging. Almost ninety percent of the respondents in question 2 stated that they would try and find out more about the other cultures that they had encountered in the Global Module. Questions 3 and 4 are interesting in that they suggest that while the exchange was virtual, it at least had the potential to apply to face to face collaboration as well. Question 5, because it focused on toleration in general and not specifically about involvement in a future Global Module, provided very encouraging results.

Participation in Global Modules has enriched the educational experience of the American and international students involved. The Global Modules have internationalized the curriculum, fostered critical thinking, and inspired much needed dialogue between students and faculty members from different parts of the globe. Champlain College is so dedicated to the approach that it became a key element in the institution's new Core Curriculum starting Spring 2008. The first core curriculum course that the Global Modules will be embedded in is entitled Concepts of Community. We are actively preparing a number of community-based topics that will give participating professors a variety of options. However, we will still provide professors the option of choosing a different topic relating to the general theme of community and helping them develop it. As part of this launch of the Global Modules in the new Core curriculum five hundred first year Champlain students will link up with five hundred international students from universities in Ghana, Kenya, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, India, Sweden, Hungary, Sweden, Australia, Hungary, Spain and Morocco. As might be imagined, putting together Global Modules with this many students can be a logistical challenge. Consequently, we have had to engage in a great deal of contingency planning. For example, we are also bringing in hundreds of other international students who will be participating in Global Modules in history, literature and sociology classes. These students will engage in Global Modules relating to a series of topics, but will also be available to take part in the Concepts of Community project if an opening arises.

The potential for expanding the Global Module approach is extraordinary. Embedding the Global Modules in the Concepts of Community courses for spring 2008 is only the first step in a much more ambitious plan. We are currently designing Global Modules that will be embedded in courses for the second, third and fourth years. In the second year there will be required Modules in courses called Capitalism & Democracy and Spirituality & Belief. The goal would be to design

Global Modules that would be increasingly more challenging in the later years, forming a progressive, integrated series of international discussions spread over the entire university experience. This will be especially true in the third year, which is the year in the new Core curriculum designed provide students will a true global perspective.

It is Champlain's belief that the best approach for facilitating this expansion would be the creation of a smaller inner circle of linked universities. This does not diminish Champlain's vision of acting as the facilitator of a much larger network of interested domestic U.S. and international universities, but in the short term a more cohesive smaller network would make curricular planning more manageable. Champlain is currently in active discussion with a number of universities to explore areas of common interest. Smaller universities might be the more natural fit, both because their students bodies would be closer in size to that of Champlain but also because they might be able to bring about holistic curricular redesign more readily. However, our hope would be to bring in larger universities by focusing on specific divisions or departments. Either way, the first step in the process would be to identify universities that have a tradition of innovation and a definite interest in international education. Running a few experimental Global Modules will then allow us to determine our level of cooperation.

The goal would be the creation of an integrated consortium of eight to ten universities with a partially integrated curriculum. The advantages to this approach are obvious. First off, the existence of this inner core of universities would make planning much easier. For example, these universities would hopefully take the same approach as Champlain and embed Global Modules in certain key courses. That way we could work together to plan out years into the future, making both staffing and professional development more efficient. Secondly, this approach provides a lot of opportunity for related co-curricular activities. Plans are already in the works on an experimental project for Fall semester 2008 that would combine sixty first year Champlain students with sixty students from Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates and another sixty students from Al Akhawayn University in Morocco for broader co-curricular discussions about issues relating to university life. Thirdly, initial discussions have been held centered around the notion of combining the eight or ten core universities together in a virtual, shared universe. The hope would be that if a student logged onto their university webpage they would automatically be logged onto a shared virtual space with all the other universities, allowing for the sharing of information and the creation of an entirely unique educational environment.

Amy, a Champlain College student who participated in a Global Module, wrote, "The experience of this Global Module was probably the best experience that I have ever had while attending Champlain College. I hope that the school continues to provide this opportunity to students in the future." Currently, Champlain is the process of implementing Amy's dream. The Champlain College Global Modules project offers a simple, innovative addition to study abroad as part of a systemic reappraisal of global education. Study abroad can be financially daunting, both for students and institutions, which limits its participants greatly. It also faces the challenges of a lack of diversity in destination countries, and these mostly Eurocentric

experiences are often singular, isolated events with no incorporated reflection or assessment. Global Modules can be run anywhere that has access to the internet, ensuring campus-wide participation in structured, meaningful, assessable international discussions. As we implement Global Modules across our new core curriculum, it will allow us to start students' awareness of other cultures early, and keep that conversation fully integrated and ongoing in the curriculum.

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