

What Being Human Means: Integrating Global Learning Through Lived Experiences

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Proficiencies in global knowledge are essential to student growth and preparation in any career, and individual courses have the capacity to achieve important global learning benchmarks. With international students on the decline at institutions of higher education in the United States, and the predicted delay in returning to study abroad after Covid-19, domestic classroom experiences that privilege global perspectives are even more imperative. Courses that demonstrate connections to real world experiences are decisive for successful graduates in a multicultural, globalized world. Based on formal and informal student assessment, this research on the scholarship of teaching and learning reveals how purposeful course development can augment global learning, even in a domestic setting. Although one course cannot adequately achieve every aspect of global learning, this integrative learning class underscores the critical connections between theory and practice by highlighting the human experience. Assessment outcomes reveal student growth in benchmark, milestone, and capstone categories of the Global Learning VALUE Rubric, and demonstrate student investment in developing nuanced and broad understandings of race, ethnicity, and gender. This course reaches several VALUE goals because of its explicit and deliberate inquiry into global systems, multiple perspectives, and connections among numerous societies and the challenges they face. Through attention to global learning gaps, student identities, and structural racism, this research shows how endorsing a humanistic and integrative approach to understanding race, ethnicity, gender, and racism results in student achievement in multiple components of global learning.

Global learning is a vital and indispensable component of undergraduate education in the 21st century. And yet, evidence suggests that achievements in and resources for global learning are far from adequate. Only 16% of undergraduate students in the United States study abroad, and still only a minority of students benefit from institutional attempts to promote global learning (Fezzey, 2017; Institute of International Education, 2020). With fewer international students matriculating at institutions in the United States, and Covid-19 temporarily halting international travel and study abroad, domestic classroom experiences that privilege global perspectives are even more imperative. These essential building blocks are cardinal, especially since global exposure often exists as discourse rather than reality, in spite of augmented conversations about globalization and multiculturalism. Carol Geary Schneider (2015) argues that “if we look ‘under the hood’ of contemporary global fervor, we see troubling evidence that ‘global’ is more invoked than ensured as a framing theme for college student learning” (p. 2). In spite of evidence that global learning has the potential to shape truly worldly outlooks, the response of policy leaders “has been to double down on fostering literacy in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), while giving no attention to fostering literacy about the diverse peoples and cultures for which (and with whom) we need to provide STEM-anchored solutions” (Schneider, 2015, p. 2). These disconcerting trends are part of larger shifts in higher education away from liberal education toward “pre-professional and economic aspirations” which resist “opening the personality to change and questioning, to the possibility of moving out of the

security of one’s own comforting habits” (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 47).

Proficiencies in global knowledge are essential to student growth and preparation in any career, and classrooms have the capability of realizing global learning benchmarks. Global learning encompasses

curriculum-based learning that shifts the focus from counting numbers of courses and participants to the examination of global issues from diverse disciplinary perspectives. The global becomes an integral part of a course’s framing due to the adoption of clearly articulated, intentional course outcomes related to global learning. (Whitehead, 2015, pp. 12-13)

Global learning also embodies the practical values of the liberal arts—such as the humanities—that are witnessing a retraction of financial and other forms of institutional support. Hovland (2009) noted, “By linking global learning and liberal education, institutions can overcome the mistaken view that liberal education is only ‘learning for learning’s sake,’ disconnected from the practical skills and needs of work” (p. 4). Hovland continued, “On the contrary, they will demonstrate that liberal education attends to work life, civic life, and personal life in a dynamically shifting, globally integrated environment” (p. 4).

Although no one universal definition encompasses global learning, at its core it requires inquiry into the implications of global inequities and attention to the unjust factors that constitute economic, political, and other types of institutions. As higher education is

charged with producing students as citizens, it inevitably “has a vital role in expanding knowledge of human and natural systems, privilege and stratification, and sustainability and development to foster individuals’ ability to advance equity and justice at home and abroad” (American Association of Colleges and Universities [AAC&U] Global Learning VALUE Rubric, Framing Language Section, 2014). Central components of undergraduate global learning include global self-awareness, perspective-taking, personal and social responsibility, global systems, and knowledge application. The Global Learning VALUE Rubric produced by the AAC&U is both broad and deep, necessitating inward and outward foci that reflect on the internal and the external without otherizing. Courses that center global learning must teach inquiry, critical thinking, and analytical skills that connect content to the structures that oscillate between and among individuals and institutions. They must address systems of power and oppression and the forces that contest these structures, and encourage students to connect theory to practice, facilitating their connection to real-life dilemmas and problem-solving.

How does one approach such a lofty list of principles and goals with the immediate attention that they deserve? One way of entering global learning is through the intentional construction of courses that centralize past and present human events and practices. In this approach, underscoring the expansion of students’ worldviews and experiences through the consideration of embodied experiences is paramount. Through the process of connecting theory to practice, such courses can illuminate the three comprehensive outcomes as defined by the Global Learning VALUE Rubric: (a) sensitivity and attention to diversity; (b) understanding how behavior impacts community; and (c) considering problems in a collective and equitable manner. This commitment to the entirety of the human, lived experience must be embedded in course methodologies and measurable outcomes (Definition, 2014). In this approach, prioritizing diverse and globally-oriented outcomes becomes the foundation of higher education learning. Courses employing an integrative, global learning framework are critical to building student skills in connectivity, equity, and sophisticated worldviews.

Based on formal and informal student assessment, this article reveals how individual course development leads to the attainment of several goals from the Global Learning VALUE Rubric. It shows how intimate connections to the human experience through local, national, and global events promote global language attainment. Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and the Caribbean is an integrative learning course that gives prominence to human diversity and global engagement as core components, with a focus on broadening student perspectives and development through the study of lived

experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regardless of their point of entry, students emerge from the course with an unambiguous awareness of the connectivity between discourse and practice, an appreciation of how behavior impacts global structure and vice versa, and a heightened, developed sense of self and self-identity. Intentional integration of global themes, sources, and pedagogy provides a springboard through which students undergo transformative change. The framing language utilized in the Global Learning VALUE Rubric from AAC&U (2014) notes that “global learning cannot be achieved in a single course or a single experience but is acquired cumulatively across students’ entire college career through an institution’s curricular and co-curricular programming” (Framing Language Section). Although one course cannot ensure a mature mastery of the entire Global Learning Rubric, individual courses and experiences can meet the engagement and growth criteria outlined in the Global Learning VALUE Rubric language through benchmark, milestone, and capstone proficiencies.

Curriculum, Methodology, and Assessment

Although Global Learning and Integrative Learning are not new concepts in higher education, Muhlenberg College in Eastern Pennsylvania recently revised its curriculum to more centrally incorporate these into its general curriculum. Like many small, predominantly white liberal arts institutions, Muhlenberg has developed several steps toward increasing diversity in its student, staff, and faculty bodies, and in curricular and co-curricular programming. The 2014 Diversity Strategic Plan addressed student critiques reported in the HERI, NSSE, and HEDS surveys between 2008 and 2014. Data revealed that students of color were less satisfied with diversity experiences than white students, and that “students, in general, were not satisfied with the current diversity levels” (Muhlenberg College, 2014a, p. 11). In response to this feedback, the Diversity Strategic Plan outlines comprehensive strategies for student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention, and ambitious goals that advance the mission of the college: support inclusion, justice, and social equality; increase student, staff, and faculty representation from historically underrepresented and marginalized identities; a renewed commitment to the depth and complexity of diversity offerings; and the coordination and oversight of diversity initiatives (pp. 16-19). These initiatives led to a revised general curriculum map that includes two Human Diversity and Global Engagement courses and the migration of former “cluster” courses into Integrative Learning courses.

The language adapted by Muhlenberg College for its Human Development and Global Engagement General Academic Requirement (2017) parallels the Global

Learning VALUE Rubric engendered by AAC&U. Courses must address point (a) or (b), or (a) and (b):

- a) Understand the multiple contexts (e.g., cultural, ethnic, racial, national, socioeconomic, religious, biological, etc.) that shape our constructions of human differences
- b) Recognize how hierarchies and disparities shape and are shaped by institutions and social relations

Additionally, courses must “substantially meet” at least one of the following six guidelines:

1. Develop knowledge of how social differences are created, maintained, and challenged, with emphasis on questions of social power
2. Explore how the construction of difference is often linked to histories and experiences of injustice in the United States and global contexts
3. Offer sustained insight into the social and cultural practices, or modes of artistic expression, of different states or regions
4. Enhance student understanding of different religious traditions and the philosophic underpinnings of different global cultures
5. Foster global awareness by focusing on social practices, structures, and histories of cultures and nations outside of the United States
6. Empower students with the theoretical frameworks, intellectual tools and learning experiences to critically reflect on their own participation and action in a diverse and interconnected world (pp. 2-3).

As a historian whose courses intentionally focus on underrepresented content and people at a predominantly white institution, this course easily meets points (a) and (b), and realizes the first, third, fifth, and sixth guidelines to a large degree. Although borderlands, migration, and immigration are discussed toward the end of the course, the focus of the class is less on “injustice” in the United States than across the Americas and the Atlantic World. Additional goals articulated in the syllabus include tracing the ways that ideologies rooted in race and ethnicity emerge and shift over time throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of the region, and an extensive focus on indigenous and Afro-Latin American and Caribbean populations and their descendants. In general terms, Latin America and the Caribbean is a geographical region that experiences high levels of social stratification that are often, but not exclusively, drawn along racial, ethnic, and gendered lines; it is also a region that is generally prone to endemic poverty. Thus, while the class is entitled “race and ethnicity,” class and gender are centrally encompassed in the course and constitute important units of analysis. This course serves as an elective for the History Department and

supports minor programs in Africana Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies. There are no prerequisites; thus, its draw is wide, and students may be taking it for any number of reasons, including one of two Human Diversity and Global Engagement (HDGE) requirements, or the humanities or integrative learning (IL) requirements.

I first designed and taught *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and the Caribbean* in 2009, later revising it to intentionally meet global learning guideposts, and I have taught it six times. I selected readings that focus explicitly and implicitly on achieving the six guideposts established by the Global Learning Rubric, sources that unequivocally advance the rubric’s fundamental definition of “critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies and their implications for people’s lives and the earth’s sustainability” (AAC&U, 2014). Rather than use a reader or textbook, I chronologically and thematically position articles and chapters that introduce the nuanced and complex concepts of race and ethnicity, while gradually complicating these concepts over time and focusing on geographical case studies and individual subjects. I incorporate two texts: historical fiction that elucidates the impact of foreign economic, political, and social ideologies on nineteenth century Peru; and a testimonial novel underscoring the lived experiences of an Afro-Cuban woman in Revolutionary Cuba. These materials are aimed at illustrating how theory is experienced in lived realities, and advancing student engagement with global systems, contexts, and cultural diversity. They also illuminate individual, communal, national, and global lived experiences, imploring students to engage in global self-awareness and personal and social responsibility while developing the ability to engage with and converse about multiple perspectives.

The first two times I taught this course (spring 2009 and fall 2011), I did not conduct assessment of the integrative learning or global learning language. In fall 2013, although the course fell under the previous curriculum at Muhlenberg College, I began to assess student learning along the language of diversity engagement and global learning. The conclusions in this piece are based on student assessment of four different iterations of this course: fall 2013, fall 2018, and two sections taught in fall 2020. The 2018 version was the first to exist as a HDGE and IL course at Muhlenberg, and I assessed student learning in accordance with the Global Learning VALUE Rubric and did this again during the fall 2020 semester. Assessment of student outcomes took place in two forms: formal and informal assignments.

Throughout the semester, students evaluate their individual growth in meeting global learning goals and the Muhlenberg College General Academic Requirements (HDGE, IL) through informal written

feedback. Prior to the initial class meeting, students engage in self-reflection through an open-ended poll about their knowledge on race and ethnicity more broadly, a poll that is repeated two additional times throughout the course. During the first part of the semester, students are asked to provide self-assessments about their comprehension of the theory presented in primary and secondary readings, which include the structural study of colonialism, social and biological approaches to race and race-thinking, movements of abolition, and independence. These assessments are coded for language embedded and associated with the learning rubrics provided by the American Association of Colleges and Universities within the benchmark, milestone, and capstone level performance, and the learning criteria of Muhlenberg College. Assessments in the second half of the semester ask more directed questions about learning perspectives, global self-awareness, and personal and social responsibility while reflecting on the case studies of the Caribbean, the Andes, and Brazil. This feedback is similarly measured against the rubrics of Muhlenberg and AAC&U, with particular attention to individual student growth in the benchmark, milestone, and capstone level performance. In the final reflective assignment, students cogitate not only the ways in which theory, discipline, and practice overlap, but they also consider the important course themes and their learning in a global context.

In formal assessments, students work on a primary source and theoretical framework analysis (sometimes referred to as a response paper) during the first half of the course. This requires students to consider and evaluate global systems and contexts as well as cultural diversity within the theory of race and ethnicity. Over the course of the semester, students engage with research in the form of an unessay that asks students to compare literary and historical representations of lived experiences in Modern Latin America. Through this scaffolded assignment, students further their global self-awareness and personal and social responsibility while advancing their ability to engage with and converse about multiple ways of knowing. They analyze foundational, interdisciplinary primary and secondary sources and present them in multiple kinds of mediums. This is followed by a research assignment in the form of a final cumulative essay that invites students to analyze constructions of race and ethnicity and how integrative approaches have shaped our global knowledge.

Although this one course cannot be adapted to meet all of the factors outlined in the Global Learning VALUE Rubric, assessment outcomes reveal achievement in three of the learning goals: perspective-taking, an understanding of global systems, and knowledge application (Glossary Section, 2014). Through the intentional selection of themes and materials, students develop knowledge about cultural relationships on

regional and global levels, primarily through the experiences of underrepresented voices. An intentional focus on the structures of colonialism that continue to impact contemporary Latin America prompts students to explore how global systems are constructed, how they influence human relationships, and how people modify such structures. Through the direct integration of multiple types of sources from representative time periods and regions, students gain insight into the relationships between the present and the past and comprehend how people and societies have navigated and solved challenges locally and more broadly. A focus on the contemporary development of national identities and nation-building leads students toward embracing multiples perspectives about the relationships that people form with their social environments. As such, students acquire knowledge about their surroundings and the ways in which their home societies compare to a world region previously considered “the other.” Additional evidence reveals benchmark, milestone, and capstone growth in both self-identity and global self-awareness. In sum, students are exposed to and learn to appreciate the holistic educational endeavor of this course through multiple guideposts toward global learning.

Uncovering Global Learning Deficiencies

Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and the Caribbean presents a thematic and chronological coverage of these themes, along with gender, from native empires and societies to the present. Students are asked to analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources while evaluating knowledge production and individual, community, and national orientations and perspectives. By selecting abundant material from the region in translation and encouraging students with some language exposure to read and write in the original languages, I aim to educate my students that global learning and global citizenship are “choice[s] and a way of thinking” involving “the cultivation of principled decision making” (Green, 2012, pp. 1-2). My explicit focus on problem-solving, individual and collective behavior, introspective reflection, and exposure to terms in original languages is geared at preparing my students for life and work in a global age. This approach educates the “whole person” by calling attention to the multiple, complex, representations of lived experiences through the lens of global learning. This is particularly important because recent NSSE data among graduating seniors “indicate a rather basic level of achievement of global learning outcomes” (Kinzie et al., 2017, p. 34).

Similar to Colonial and Modern surveys of Latin America and the Caribbean, Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and the Caribbean is a cornerstone of my teaching repertoire; one simply cannot understand the

region without lengthy inquiry into the complexities of racial and ethnic constructions and lived experiences across this enormous region. At the heart of this course are emphases on the social, political, economic, and other contexts that continue to inform and shape racial, ethnic, and gendered hierarchies over time. An important starting point for the semester is an explicit focus on colonialism, power, and replication of power over time. At the beginning of each semester, the vast majority of students disclosed that their prior education had circumscribed the topics of race and ethnicity to a “great” degree, and a small minority had previously taken a course focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean. Initial representative statements in response to why they enrolled in the course indicated elementary to intermediate exposure to this area of the world and a dearth of content and/or disciplinary knowledge. For example:

- I didn’t know there was racism in other parts of the world.
- I have only learned about race in the American context.
- I enjoy exploring other parts of the world, historically, culturally, and socially.
- I have no educational foundation for these things.
- It is important to analyze each of these subjects to gain a fuller, and perhaps more accurate understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean.

More advanced students had received some education about colonialism in the American context; however, the majority overwhelmingly confessed their inexperience with concepts of power, race, ethnicity, and gender. They disclosed having exclusively learned about history through the lens of “the winners.” Interrogating the structures that perpetuate systems of power is a central focus on this class. This approach is critical to meeting global learning goals, as “understanding concepts, recognizing complexity, and imagining possibilities become key considerations” in the time devoted to global learning (Scoffham, 2018, p. 142).

My approach necessitates inquiry into how and why certain systems—discrimination, racism, and sexism, and social, racial, and gendered hierarchies—exist and are perpetuated. Illustrative reflections unveiled the centrality of these themes and how the selected sources illuminated them in the context of perspective taking, global systems, and knowledge application. During the semester, students grappled with race, ethnicity, and gender over 400 years across Latin America and the Caribbean. Mid-semester reflections uncovered the extent to which students were learning content,

articulated as “much more” than anticipated given a previous lack of knowledge:

These ideologies around race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc., have their roots in colonialism, yet we never actually dig into what those roots are and how those roots are able to persist. I think that is why it is crucial to encounter how these different themes and ideas and ideologies come in different formats because then you are able to see how a long list of things come from the same womb; they have the same vein.

By the end of the semester, even students who had entered without background knowledge or previous exposure to this region and these topics, were able to express at least benchmark knowledge acquisition in three Global Learning VALUE Rubric categories. In the words of one student, “I had no prior historical or academic lens with which to analyze my own experiences, so I ended up learning so much because, although I had a base, it was not strong or specified in the slightest.” Another proclaimed, “I have a much broader understanding of how race, gender, and ethnicity play an integral role in Latin American/Caribbean nations.” As evidenced in the next two sections of this article, this learning process has multiple consequences, especially in terms of student relationships to themselves, a central component of individual and conceptual development. As Scoffham (2018) argued,

while cognitive learning is fundamental to education, affective responses also need to be taken into account. Finding out about the wider world (decentering) helps students to understand themselves in new ways as part of the global community but it serves to disrupt their existing notions, which can be a disturbing process. (p. 137)

Student Identity and the Global Landscape

My approach in Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and the Caribbean prioritizes global learning skills and tools and takes into account students’ vulnerabilities and personal identities. An integrative learning approach necessitates an understanding of which “problem-centered experiences challenge students’ intellectual and personal capacities without overwhelming them so that they become resilient, adaptable, creative, and confident about their futures” (Ferren et al., 2014/2015, p. 4). Interdisciplinary course modules that privilege intercultural competence reveal multiple successful dimensions, including self-awareness, open-mindedness, empathy and intercultural sensitivity as well as understanding prejudice and discrimination, and power and privilege, among others

(Smith & Paracka, 2018). Doscher and Landorf (2018) contended that

identity influences the kinds of education and life experiences people seek, and societal norms, policies, stereotypes, and biases influence the opportunities open to them. Page provides a succinct metaphor for society's role in tool formation: "Just because someone slips and falls does not mean that she is clumsy. It could mean that her front porch is icy. (pp. 6-7)

My methodology incorporates students as learners in process, and I routinely suggest they detect, discover, and identify multiple perspectives, and be open to change. In this sense, they securely adapt to the fluidity of ideas and concepts in a "form of practiced mimicry, where students incorporate perspectives, overcome challenges, transcend differences, and seek answers collaboratively" (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 58). This complex process takes place without threat, since students are experiencing such shifts in tandem and are learning in a collective. In essence, the classroom parallels the world outside; it "mirrors the interconnected world in which one lives and learns and demonstrates how ideas, communities, and practices intersect and cross borders. As such, [global learning] recognizes the shifting yet situated nature of identities, whether personal, ethnic, racial, or professional" (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 54).

Maintaining a comprehensive approach to complicated situations, and underscoring students' perspectives in navigating and applying problem-solving skills, is essential to achieving connections to and understandings of the circumstances facing communities. As Newell (2010) wrote,

integrative learning experiences bring students into contact with people who are *inside* the complex situation. Since these people are situated in different social locations, they look at the complex situation in which they find themselves from different angles, experience it differently, and come to different understandings of it. (p. 8)

Student reflections at the end of the semester show that, in addition to gaining breadth and depth about how race, ethnicity, and gender operate in Latin America and the Caribbean, they also expressed an emotive connection and commitment to the material and the communities studied. In order for me to better comprehend student familiarity and dismantle preconceived notions, foregrounding discussions of these difficult topics and student relationships to

them was fundamental.

These moments were particularly revelatory and personal as students contemplated how course presentation and content affected their personal investment in the course and vice versa. They began to speak about the local and the global and the ways in which systems of difference affect constructions of identity. These ranged from the more general to the more specific, though at the end of each semester they disclosed individual comfort in speaking about difficult subjects. For instance, touching upon the categories of global systems, perspective-taking, and knowledge application as outlined by AAC&U, a more general declaration exuded compassion for people systematically excluded from the benefits of structural support:

Now that I have completed the course, I feel as though I have a deeper appreciation for the struggles faced by individuals who have been accustomed to racial, social and ethnic segregation. This segregation and racism based merely on their phenotypic traits stems from inaccurate genealogical assumptions in the early colonial era, which plagues individuals of Latin America, Caribbean, and African descent today.

This assessed outcome reached all of the goals embedded in the course, particularly in the connections between the colonial to the present, culminating in the kind of associations that historians appreciate. In evaluating the degree to which integrative, global learning inspired students to accomplish this goal, reactions similarly highlighted personal ties to these populations through multiple approaches and perspectives. For example, students concluded that

using several different kinds of sources has amplified my understanding of race and ethnicity because I have been able to see themes transcend across so many different forms and still maintain its importance and historical integrity. All these are important in understanding perspectives of human experience from a historical lens.

These same lenses further intensified student identity shifts and their absorption of the experiences and identities of people in different spaces and times. For some students, that meant reflecting on their heritage: "It taught me a history that is a part of my heritage and helped me understand the influences of race thinking in the creation of Latin America, and how it is still to this day prevalent in the systems of these countries." For other students, the journey prepared them "to apply what I had learned from historical pieces and interpret it through the personal sentiments of an individual who

actually experiences them.” That emotive attachment to the experience of the people living through significant historical moments is unique to a class whose sources “provide real history that readers can relate to characters, but also does a better job of explaining racial and ethnic segregation.” The structural and the personal are both amplified, with the legacies surrounding colonization, slavery, and systemic racism emerging in global, local, personal, and identifiable ways.

Toward the end of the semester, the course highlights race, ethnicity, and national and transnational identities across the Americas. Readings capture articulations and conceptions of the modern frontier through translations of primary historical and other disciplinary accounts of borderland experiences. These themes inspire participants to display connections among multiple perspectives, talk and write about how global systems perpetuate inequalities, and display their comprehension of these over space and time. Although student sentiments varied along benchmark, milestone, and capstone proficiencies depending on point of entry, final reflections revealed sincere and measurable changes. For example, in reading Carlos Fuentes’ short stories from *The Crystal Frontier*, a student shared,

These stories are a tough read for some but shows the reality of what people go through. One of the stories reminded me of life at home. While it wasn’t my exactly [sic] neighborhood, places around me were in conjunction with the story of Serafin Romero. Mr. Stud, as he was called, lived in a terrible place and just wanted better for his future. This is one reason I am grateful for where I am in life; I’m improving my situation and go out of the comforts of home.

This larger perspective change echoes Whitehead’s (2015) interpretation of global learning as life-altering: “While global learning is a part of campus internationalization, a laser-like focus on student learning has the potential to provide students with perspective-changing, real-world experiences across the curriculum” (p. 13). It also aligns with Kahn and Agnew’s (2017) depiction of identities as “complex and relational. Relational thinking is part of the movement in higher education that, rather than emphasizing knowledge as a *product*, defines knowledge as *processes* and transformations” (p. 55).

Moreover, students began to see and identify with the personification of individuals and ideas related to the themes of the course and global learning. The readings

helped personalize a lot of the ideas. Reading and knowing that people favored lighter skinned children is different than reading about someone’s own childhood in which they were ignored,

forgotten, and belittled by their parent. It also helped me better understand how individual people reacted to the ideas of race imposed on them by their society.

Additional students reaffirmed this, while contemplating individual abilities to negotiate complicated circumstances in their lives, in this instance, an Afro-Cuban woman defying the odds in Revolutionary Cuba:

the fact that Reyita managed to live a full and successful life made me better understand how agency is utilized. While she might have been born into a societally doomed position, she was still a person who existed outside of race, and outside of what that meant for her.

Although the last part of this comment evoked disagreement in class, by this part of the semester, students had learned to be respectful and charitable in their diverging philosophies. This broadmindedness echoes global learning outcomes at Virginia Commonwealth University in which “students perceive themselves becoming more open-minded and understanding of their identity and of cultural differences—even when they disagree with other students” (Blondin & Gable, 2018, p. 23).

These assessment reflections also uncovered the ways in which students became proficient in making associations between their individual attachments to the material, and how the concepts of race and ethnicity affected their views of global interconnectedness across the Americas. For example, the similarities and differences of race construction incited students to think about personal and national identities in national, transnational, and global perspectives:

It is compelling to consider how marginalization of certain bodies changes once you cross country borders. Which is why I think, if at all possible, it is imperative to see yourself outside of the way your body maneuvers and bends when you aren’t a focal point in national identity. Furthermore, for privileged bodies, specifically American white men and women, it is paramount in understanding how their privilege extends beyond the weight that their whiteness holds in American society; it shapes and fuels the way that certain countries, particularly in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, shape their national identity.

Capstone levels of analysis seen here reveal students’ abilities to connect theory to practice, to see the impact of discrimination on individual bodies, and confirm the importance of shared knowledge in understanding how global systems of power are created,

endorsed, and performed. Students recounted a sophisticated understanding of patterns and changes in identity and race-thinking; they comprehended the dynamic nature of the categories themselves and the ways structures and individuals can stimulate transformations. Various forms of knowledge inspired these diverse and broad worldviews on how race and ethnicity shape human relations and relationships, even in benchmark categories. For one student,

what has been my greatest takeaway is that race is not an adequate trait to characterize an individual. Racial and social classifications are synthetic categories that predominantly white individuals have developed over time to subjugate those they consider inferior to them, such as Latin American, Caribbean, and African individuals.

Structural Racism and the Human Experience

Race, ethnicity, gender, and structural racism are central themes in this class, and nowhere is the latter more apparent than in our examination of state reliance upon the contemporary myths of racial democracy in legitimizing rule and perpetuating stereotypes about people of color. This became particularly evident when studying the cosmic race and exoticism in Mexico, the experience of Dominicans in the Dominican Republic and the United States, and how the official doctrine of the Cuban Revolution has subverted the language of race in favor of class-based semantics. Students were able to grasp regional differences and observe the structural influences embedded within national discourses and their contemporary influences in multiple types of texts. Students displayed growth and maturity from basic statements about race at the beginning of the semester, to more sophisticated arguments about relationships among structure and individuals, and the past and the present.

Our learning, students declared, begins “with the obvious similarity of sharing history through human experience.” And yet, students observed the larger structural and global implications, as in this declarative statement about how knowledge production and interpretation foster necessary connections to the human experience:

It is important to realize that most people who are not historians see historical writing as a place that mainly consists of pairing dates to events, but in reality it is about the emotions and reactions of people who are oppressed by certain institutions of power.

Consequently, while students shared that the Cuban Revolution in particular enhanced their

perspectives and understanding of racism on a global scale, they subsequently observed that (im)balances of power between systems and individuals perpetuate discriminatory practices:

An example would be how, in *Reyita*, she explained both her subservience and defiance towards her husband. The fact that she can simultaneously embody the following of gender norms via her role as wife within her household, while also being self-made and pushing back on the limits imposed on her is confusing conceptually, but makes perfect sense when seen through the lens of a person’s life.

Student development and progress in understanding the impact of international and national discourses on the personal is evident in their reflections about sources from the region itself. The translation of José Vasconelos’ 1925 *La raza cósmica*, for example, “helped me understand how and why other racial categories, like black, have effectively been erased in places like Mexico, and that it was a conscious decision made by the intellectuals and government leaders at the time to do so.” Multiple types and multidisciplinary sources from Brazil and Cuba “showed how social concepts of race converge to form a different reality,” one informed by contradictions, a multitude of perspectives, and an enhanced appreciation of how problem-solving can take place within a system of oppression through a focus on individual lives. For example,

Concepts that seemed entirely contradictory through the historic and academic readings made more sense when shown through a person or character’s daily life. The ways in which characters chose to talk about race, or chose to remain silent, gave me a better understanding of how race affected the smallest interactions between people. It helped portray the grey areas of race, since definitions of race themselves have contradictory ideas, and are full of tension.

The struggle between systematic oppression and the ways individuals resist this was at the heart of many discussions in class. Students commented that selected sources facilitated their roles as witnesses to inequality:

This type of systematic oppression that was fed into by race relations and performance is difficult to explain in its full scope without observing all the moving parts at once. As they affect different individuals based on their gender, race, and socio-economic class, it is clear what intersections are more at a disadvantage than others.

The ability to observe and witness the direct and complex impacts of structural racism resulted in heightened comprehension and compassion about these topics. These outcomes are in line with end results at institutions committed to global learning for all graduates, where outcomes indicate: “increased empathy, speaking and listening skills, observational habits, and ‘culture brokering’ practice as chief translatable skills that help them in job interviews and with their coursework outside the program” (Blondin & Gable, 2018, p. 23).

As we moved through the semester reflecting upon the overlay of global learning and multidisciplinary sources, students began to exude more confidence in their understanding of the intricate and dialectical relationships between structure and the human experience. From traditional historical approaches, to biological sources examining classifications and hierarchies, student approximation to these multifaceted topics through an intersectional, integrative lens, gave light to heightened understandings of knowledge and its social relationships to worldviews. One student noted that

during our course possibly the most important sources that we have used were actually the non-historical sources. Stephen Jay Gould [*Ever since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History*] is one that I felt was foundational to our class’s understanding of how conceptions of race work in a social fashion and not in a scientific one.

Students of disciplines outside of the humanities and social sciences found this particularly illuminating after conceding their previous understanding of race as a biological (read “scientific”) phenomenon. Describing their astonishment about disciplinary approaches to race, students transitioned into appreciating race and race theory as lived, social experiences that reflect the damaging legacies of colonialism. Stephen Jay Gould was a “foundational” text because

it is particularly important in the United States where much of our understanding of biology is in some way tainted by scientific racism. Acknowledging those factors through sources about eugenics, biology, and race theorizing was very helpful for having a full understanding of the issues as they related to our class and our country.

One of the most important aspects of learning about global systems is gaining an understanding of the role of one’s own nation and educational system in perpetuating structural injustices. This is a complicated and in-depth process in which students cogitate how national and international narratives inflect value into lived situations.

On the one hand, global learning goals may include “an understanding of how other countries and societies interpret U.S. values,” while at once incorporating “an understanding of how the United States interprets the value of other countries and societies” (Hovland, 2009, p. 6). This reckoning can be destabilizing, as global learning unlocks the reality of colonial legacies deeply engrained in the national education system. “Realizing on an emotional level that Western prosperity (both past and present) is predicated on exploitation and violence—the dark side of capitalism—is no easy matter” (Scoffham, 2018, p. 143). After a lengthy reflection on colonialism’s lasting legacies, students engaged in such reflection:

Throughout all the literature for this course, black and brown bodies were subjected to dehumanization and oppression which often led to self-hatred. Without the heavy influence of the United States and European powers, those who are people of color in Latin America would not have to suffer internally with their identity. Members part of Latin America should feel free to embrace their identity and history, yet instead face hardships and disadvantages with that desire to claim who they want to be.

Laying the groundwork for comprehending the unevenness of cultural, political, and other influences on global systems, a transformation occurred in student understanding of the role of the United States in the world. Students reflected on the uncomfortable realization that the United States and Western Europe were active agents in “perpetuating racism,” including institutional racism and how “laws are made to keep people of color down” across the Atlantic World. Students commented on their discomfort due to the fact that the “class has opened my eyes to what is happening in the world in regard to its active racism and discrimination.” The conversation eventually turned to critiques of the academic structure (“why didn’t I learn this in high school”) and larger canonical and structural constraints on learning.

Pontificating on the potential dangers of global learning, Scoffham (2018) warned against “reinforc[ing] binary perspectives and encourag[ing] feelings of guilt that are liable to be counterproductive in educational terms” (p. 140). Global and integrative learning in this course encouraged critical approaches to global systems that focused on the complicated nature of hegemony, knowledge production, structure, and agency. This was, for many students, a newfound understanding of the problematic roles of the United States and Europe on populations around the world. In avoiding the binary, however, this course urged students to reflect on their individual actions and ethics, particularly as we

concluded the semester with classes on borders, migration, and immigration. Beyond the limited scope of “whitewashed U.S. history,” this material engaged students with the complex interplay among race, gender, and ethnicity through the particulars of multiple types of sources, and through student understandings of their own power to participate and advocate. These sentiments about examination of self and country with regard to race propelled them to navigate uncomfortable themes, structures, and discussions about immigration, labor, political discourse, legal history, and race and racism. The global focus also embraced the integrative learning challenges laid out by Braid et al. (2011): “to think differently about familiar topics, and to think deeply about unfamiliar, even uncomfortable ones” (p. 12).

Concluding Thoughts: Global Education and the Humanities

Global learning reifies the important values of a humanistic approach to student learning. Central to comprehending lived realities and to shaping young adults’ perspectives, “the humanities help us make sense of the complexity of the world we inherit—including our histories, values, and cultural traditions” (Schneider, 2011, p. 1). Additionally, “[the humanities] help us to explore competing visions of the past and future, and to probe what it means to be human” (Schneider, 2011, p. 1). A global focus, according to Schneider (2011), is “one of the academy’s most fundamental responsibilities” because “it is absolutely impossible to provide students with the benefits of liberal learning absent a strong grounding in humanities questions, disciplines, and perspectives” (p. 1). This grounding leads to the achievement of fundamental, transferable skills that are critical to student development. Roth (2012) argued,

in our time, it is more crucial than ever that we not abandon the creative, humanistic foundations of education in favor of narrow, technical forms of teaching intended to give quick, utilitarian results. Those results are not substituted for the practice of inquiry, critique, and experience that enhances students’ ability to appreciate the understand the world around them—and to innovatively respond to it. (p. 4)

Globally engaged humanities courses are essential to identity development, mindfulness, meaning-making, and critical, relational forms of thinking.

Along with other aspects of humanities education, [it] has a key role in helping students to understand themselves and others in relation to place, time, belief, identity, and culture [...] Crucially, [global

learning initiatives] all involve recognizing connections and relationships, and the impact they have on self-awareness and identity. (Scoffham, 2018, p. 136)

Courses that explicitly connect the individual and collective experiences of people from disparate and diverse backgrounds foster student self-awareness in several ways. Students envision—or begin to envision, depending upon entry point—themselves as global citizens, thereby experiencing “multiple levels of citizenship” in which they “do not give up their national identities when they take on a global identity; neither does the global identity necessarily supersede national identity” (Rusciano, 2014, p. 19). Their concurrent interrogation of education received within the home country obliges a confrontation with embedded ethnocentrism. In this specific foundational course, I prioritized meeting students where they enter by learning about their previous knowledge and education, and familiarizing myself with their identities and experiences as individuals in a global society. Doing so ensured an opening into the VALUE rubric developed by AAC&U to achieve several aims of global learning, and deliver shared, sustainable focal points through the semester. A variety of studies about race and ethnicity through a global lens framed the essential student experience as integrative and globally centered, and provided a lens to better understand global structures and one’s potential for impact upon them.

In spite of the many successes of this student experience, more avenues of research and assessment are necessary, and consistency in the student experience with global learning in the undergraduate experience is indispensable. This course is an optional elective for the history major and minor, and it is open to any student on campus. Thus, the entry points for students are wide and disparate in terms of educational backgrounds, demographics, and personal identities. It is not entirely clear where or how this course fits into a student’s course map with other global learning or integrative learning courses, or within the history major itself. Taking all of this into consideration, along with the advanced material of this 300-level course, it is challenging to predict the endurance of measurable gains once the semester concludes. At the same time, however, assessment data reveals that every student achieved at least the milestone level performance, which demonstrates (a) growth and the ability to explain, articulate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate global problems and systems and formulate solutions; (b) understanding the impact of human actions on the world; (c) embracing a variety of perspectives; and (d) identifying the consequences of individual and national decisions and responsibilities. These practical and active outcomes are substantiated in student assessment outcomes and are in line with national

guidelines from AAC&U, as well as Muhlenberg College.

At the institutional level, data and assessment on when and how students complete their two required HDGE courses, and comparative data between these two courses, would amplify instructors' abilities to facilitate student capstone level performance achievement. Conversation among instructors would also allow faculty to generate solutions to student resistance to global learning and perspective development. Courses on race and ethnicity at predominantly white institutions can breed aggressions, deliberate attempts to sabotage, and resistance to the decolonizing principles and anti-racism that guides this course. In my own courses, student resistance takes place in written work, necessitating one-on-one meetings, or in the classroom, where it is mitigated by students with capstone level performance ability, or (most often) by me. I have developed several strategies for resistance, including discussion about the particular issue or theme that a student is grappling with, or moving into reflective writing with the intent of better understanding a student's confusion. The measured success of these courses is rooted in both the selection of the materials and course content, as well as the teaching skills and investment of the instructor. Institutional support for faculty teaching diversity and global engagement courses, however, is a fundamental aspect in striving for capstone achievement.

Global learning remains a critical component of undergraduate education that requires institutional and individual commitment to prioritizing student development across the curriculum. The potential for positive outcomes necessitates an intentional global orientation; "there is an increasing recognition that the mere inclusion of international or global content is insufficient" (Fezzey, 2017, p. 140). Nor it is feasible for any one program, discipline, or instructor to meet the multiple triumphs associated with global learning. Institutions of higher learning must provide students with ample opportunities to engage with global learning contexts that contribute to diverse, student-centered learning experiences. "With more intentional and inclusive course design, more students will have opportunities to engage in global learning at home and away, and this engagement will prepare them for the challenges of today and tomorrow" (Whitehead, 2015, p. 13). Ultimately, Race and Ethnicity in Latin America and the Caribbean serves as a successful model for meeting several essential elements in the Global Learning VALUE Rubric. Assessment outcomes show this individual course is foundational to the development of student worldviews, perspectives, knowledge application, and an enhanced understanding of global interdependence and citizenship. My purposeful investment permitted students to develop more nuanced and broad understandings of race, ethnicity, and gender

through individual experiences and larger disciplinary frameworks. In making sense of the world, one student concluded, "this course taught me an understanding of what being human means."

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