

GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING COURSE

Creating a virtual classroom for international understanding



- A. Description of the program** This project is a world cultures course taught in a shared virtual classroom with students and faculty from 28 universities in 20 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, South America and Europe. Real-time videoconferencing, chat, email on a daily basis among student partners provide a direct personal experience. Internet tools allow for partner countries anywhere in world.
- B. Why we do this** The world is increasingly interconnected yet only 3% of American students have the chance to study abroad. This program provides direct, individual international experience for the other 97% of students.

C. Advantages of the program

- Multiple cultures provide culturally diverse, direct international experience
- Students develop working relationships and even friendships in 3 diverse cultures
- Program is beneficial to students in partner countries, not just to American students
- Complements traditional study abroad program and helps recruit international students
- Can be expanded to discipline specific undergraduate and graduate courses
- Provides opportunity for faculty research partnerships
- Affordable and sustainable in developing nation partners through use of regular internet



D. Essential details

- Regular, 3 SH, Global Understanding course team taught in real time with 3 cultures.
- Meets 15 week semester T/T or M/W with connection most days, 5 weeks of connections per culture.
- Credit/tuition: Each university enrolls students locally & teaches course. No money or credit changes hands.
- Students must be committed and diligent throughout
- Student and faculty partnerships are formed before class and engage in e-contact throughout course
- Collaborative projects teach students how to work with people from other cultures
- Small group discussion and live chat sessions during each meeting. Local sessions provide understanding
- Topics such as college life, family, meaning of life and stereotypes & prejudices discussed w/ each culture
- Traditional world culture information provided via lectures from each culture and handouts
- Each faculty mentors one or two other faculty in order to grow the program
- “Plan to fail” organization provides ongoing activities under any circumstances

E. Technology

- 256K IP bandwidth, Upload & Download.
- \$500 videoconferencing unit and one Internet connected computer projector
- 1 computer for backchannel communications and coordination
- 8 student computers co-located to classroom for in-class, real-time partner chat



F. During our visit to International partner campus

- Presentation to President, Vice-President & Lead Teacher to explain details of the program
- Meet with tech expert to try video link with East Carolina University at least two times
- Meet with Lead Teacher to discuss details of course
- Check out classroom and help with set up (chairs, lighting, etc.)
- If possible, meet with students and other interested faculty

F. What is required

- Ongoing and substantive CAO support for faculty time, technology, facility & unanticipated issues
- One faculty and one technical support person to teach Global Understanding course in the fall and spring

H. Contact Information: Dr. Rosina C. Chia chiaro@ecu.edu or Dr. Elmer Poe poe@ecu.edu

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