ILRIC 4260: India Global Service Learning Course

Donna Ramil, Program Coordinator II
School of Industrial and Labor Relations

What makes this an internationalized curriculum? Please describe the experience abroad and how you internationalized the curriculum at home.

The India Global Service Learning Course, ILRIC 4260, is semester-long, 2-credit course designed to prepare students academically, culturally and personally for their summer field experiences at the Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM), in Mysore, Karnataka State. SVYM is a community development, non-religious, non-political organization working for the benefit of indigenous and rural people in southern India through effective education, accessible healthcare and sustainable empowerment initiatives. The organization has several academic initiatives, including a Master's degree in Developmental Studies offered through a local university, as well as housing a grassroots policy research institute (GRAAM).

The India field experience provides the students the opportunity to apply their academic learning to solve a problem in a cross-cultural, real-world setting. At the beginning of the semester, SVYM submits a list of summer projects based on their current needs. A student is matched to a project based on his/her interests, academic background, prior experience, and career goals. Throughout the semester, the students work on a US-India comparative research paper related to their summer projects. At the end of the semester, students present on their projects and submit research papers. In addition, the final papers are sent to their SVYM project mentors.

A sample of a few of 2015 SVYM projects:

- Nonprofit management and fundraising.
- Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives related to the employment of people with disabilities.
- Labor markets in Karnataka and accessing the skills-gap in rural communities.
- Education-needs assessment in an indigenous community.
- Assessment of hospital activities and the integration of new initiatives.
- Health status of students at a school for the visually impaired.

Other international components of the course include guest speakers from India, as well as modules on Indian culture, cultural dimensions, intercultural competency, ethical dilemmas, and power & privilege. During the semester, the students write four reflective papers and engage in classroom discussions. These exercises provide them the opportunity to explore and understand academic, cultural and personal dimensions prior to departure. During the summer, they submit weekly reflective papers and take part in oral reflection sessions, then, once back in the US, write a final reflection on their India experience.
How has the international experience been integrated into the curriculum?

Post experience, ILR students are encouraged to enroll in Richard Kiely’s course, *Leadership and Global Service Learning, ILRIC 3210*. Students in the Global Health Minor are required to enroll in the fall capstone course, *Exploration in Global Health, NS 4600*. In addition, some ILR students further develop their SVYM projects into an honor’s thesis.

What are the intended student learning outcomes of the internationalized curriculum related to knowledge generation, changed attitudes, and developed skills, and how do you assess them?

The learning outcomes for *ILRIC 4260* are:

1. Describe important country- and region-specific factors relating to geography, culture, religion, history and labor systems of India.
2. Identify and navigate major locale-specific health and safety risks that they might encounter while in India.
3. Demonstrate reflective practices (oral and written), especially related to cultural diversity, professional development, academic and personal growth, and collaboration.
4. Understand concepts and models of intercultural competency as related to working and living in a cross-cultural, resource-limited environment.
5. Develop an understanding of the evolution, philosophy, and structure of the host institution.
6. Interact, build rapport and understand and appreciate the diversity within the GSL team.
7. Demonstrate appropriate and respectful communication skills while engaging with the GSL team members, the course instructors and guest speakers, and the SVYM mentors/supervisors.

In addition, students develop their personal learning goals that they intend to accomplish during the course and during their summer field experiences, and outline a plan to accomplish them. This process helps the students manage expectations of the course (the intended course learning outcome versus what the student wanted to learn about, for example more about religious practices, modern politics, current affairs, etc.) and inspires a sense of personal responsibility in being an active learner. It also lends intentionality as the students prepare to travel to India.

The research paper and presentation, reflective papers, participation in classroom discussions, and feedback from the mentor are used to assess the outcome.