PSFA 550 International Studies Capstone Syllabus 3 units
Tuesday and Thursday (see Syllabus for dates): 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM
PSFA 413

Fall 2013
Class Meeting Dates: This class is being taught primarily online via Blackboard Collaborate
Office Hrs: Mondays, 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM; Tuesdays, 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM
Instructor: Vinod Sasidharan, Ph.D.
Office: PSFA 447
Phone: 619-594-4726
Email: vinod.sasidharan@sdsu.edu

Prerequisites:
PSFA 350, and PSFA 501 and PSFA 502 or their equivalent

Course Description:
This course is the culminating experience of the PSFA Interdisciplinary International Studies Minor. It takes a problem-based approach through which students describe, analyze, compare and contrast the ways the visited culture/society/nation addresses a problem or issue relative to approaches to the problem taken in the US.

Expanded Course Objectives:
The capstone project affords students the opportunity to synthesize their international research and experience in relation to their own indigenous cultural experience and to enhance this by their research focused topic that compares specific phenomenon in two different cultures (typically the destination country of their study abroad and their home country, the United States). Through the project students become sensitive to the wider global context of the phenomena, institutions, and practices that they study and, by directly engaging at a grass-roots level in institutions or policy through a research project, they are able to demonstrate a wider awareness of global citizenship, cultural diversity, and identity. Specifically, they become aware of the ways policies and practices reflect the wider socio-cultural context in which they are embedded. In particular, the course is designed to move students from whatever stage of cultural awareness they currently have, to a raised level through their analytical comparative and reflective emersion in other cultures. The objective is to have students move through Bennet’s (2003: 159) three ethno-relative stages of cultural awareness: (1) Acceptance in which one’s own culture is experienced as one of many similarly complex worldviews; which develops curiosity and respect for cultural difference; (2) Adaptation – involves perception of cultural difference through other’s perspectives and through different eyes, adjusting behavior to more effectively communicate; and (3) Integration – that incorporation of cultural views into one’s own identity with the resulting transformation of awareness and sensitivity.

Throughout the interdisciplinary international studies minor this process will have begun, not least by pre-selecting students interested in study abroad. By the end of the capstone course the aim is to have maximized this level of development by progressive movement through the various stages, each incorporating appropriately reflective learning activities.
Student Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of this program students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate comparative methods of research/inquiry, analytical skills and integrative skills.
2. Comparatively evaluate practices, processes or institutions from a local and global perspective
3. Demonstrate the implications of: global citizenship, awareness of cultural diversity, the context and consequences of an integrated cultural awareness for identity
4. Describe and explain how policies, practices and processes reflect the wider context in which they are embedded
5. Create an interdisciplinary synthesis of the different disciplinary approaches through collaborative team work (or where the course is taught online, through collaborative discussion with other students in the class)
6. Effectively communicate the results of their comparative study to other students (when taught in class) and to the instructor (when taught online).

Required Reading

Academic publications related to the issue, topic or problem developed in PSFA 350 and studied while abroad.

Course Requirements

The course requirements are integrated and contiguous with the requirements of PSFA 350. Toward the end of PSFA 350, you will have prepared for your study abroad experience, prepared a literature review of your topic from a U.S. perspective and explored research on the topic in your prospective country of destination. In this course you will supplement the initial findings with new and/or additional research now that you have visited the country and conducted research on your topic while abroad. During the travel study portion of your program you will have focused on your chosen topic by collecting and reading local materials and documenting your reactions to the ways you experienced the phenomenon being studied. You will have maintained these descriptive summaries throughout the trip in order to accumulate a significant body of information, ideas and documented interaction.

While in your destination country you will have arranged, in collaboration with your host university or other institutions, visits to conduct interviews with professionals and practitioners working in the area on your topic/problem of interest. Information from your notes and interview data will then be drawn on in preparing the subsequent capstone project.

In the PSFA 550 capstone course students will develop ways to analyze this data, will arrange to conduct interviews with professionals, practitioners, and community participants involved/working in the area of their topic/problem in the U.S.
In-Class Meeting Dates

Tuesday, Aug 27
- Introduction to class, Syllabus review
- Instructions for Reflections papers
- Instructions for Part One (Plan of Action) papers

Thursday, Aug 29
- Discussions of International Experiences

Tuesday, Sept 3
- Discussion of Reflections papers

Thursday, Sept 5
- Discussion of Part One (Plan of Action) papers
- Instructions for Final Projects

Tuesday, Nov 12
- Discussion of Findings

Thursday, Nov 14
- Discussion of Conclusions and Final Project

Tuesday, Dec 3
- Presentations of Final Projects

Thursday, Dec 5
- Presentations of Final Projects (cont’d)

Online Consultation Sessions

The instructor will hold online one-on-one consultations by appointment. After booking an appointment with the instructor via email, on the appointment day/time, students should click on the Online Consultation tab (then click on PSFA 550: International Capstone) on Blackboard to meet with the instructor in real-time and discuss topics relevant to the course.

Evaluation and Grading System

All written projects must be typed, double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 pt font and submitted to the instructor via email (vinod.sasidharan@sdsu.edu) by midnight on the due date. Your work will be assessed on the following criteria: following style instructions, submitting on time, grammar & punctuation, thoroughness of content and how well you addressed the purpose of the assignment.

I will grade the work in a timely fashion, and provide you comments in the document when appropriate. These comments and areas needing improvement must be corrected prior to submitting your documents as part of the final project in order to achieve the maximum points on the final project.

If you have issues with your score on any assignment you must come see me prior to the next due date in order to share your perspective.

Assignments – all assignments are due by midnight of the due date. Submit to the instructor via email (vinod.sasidharan@sdsu.edu). We will be following the standard rules of APA style.
For information on this citation style, see this helpful set of links from the library’s website: http://library.sdsu.edu/guides/sub2.php?id=258&pg=231

Papers:

You will write two separate papers for this class. Specific details regarding each paper can be found in the Task List at the end of this Syllabus.

Paper Two entails most of the work for this course and, when completed, will be a research paper of approximately 25 pages in length, not including the concluding reference list. While each paper will vary in length, based upon the topic in question, all papers must be a minimum of 22 pages in length and no more than 30 (excluding references).

Paper Two (aka “the Final Paper”) compares specific phenomenon in two different cultures (typically the destination country of their study abroad and their home country, the United States). The paper is comprised of the following sections:

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Reference List

Grading:

The instructor has the final authority on all grades, and reserves the right to deviate from the various point values listed below when appropriate. Your final grade will be based on **400 points. Do not be confused by anything else that appears on BlackBoard.** At the end of the semester, the standard SDSU grading scale will be used to determine a specific letter grade:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>100 – 93</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>92.9 – 90</td>
<td>A -</td>
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<td>89.9 – 87</td>
<td>B +</td>
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<tr>
<td>86.9 – 83</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>82.9 – 80</td>
<td>B -</td>
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<tr>
<td>79.9 – 77</td>
<td>C +</td>
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<tr>
<td>76.9 – 70</td>
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Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as any use or representation of the ideas of another as your own. It is the ultimate academic violation and will not be tolerated in any form. It includes direct quotes without quotation marks or attribution to the source, paraphrasing the words of another without citation to the source. One of the major sources of plagiarism is from the web; it is also one of the major ways plagiarism is caught. Any student found to be plagiarizing will fail either the section or the class, depending on how severe is the violation. In extreme cases students may be expelled from the university. I follow the university’s academic dishonesty policy.

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| **Paper One: Reflections** - This is a four – to – six page paper that summarizes your overall study abroad experience, focusing on what new insights you acquired. These insights could pertain to your topic of research, yourself as a person, the country you visited, or the United States. The best papers will be ones that touch on a combination of these areas.  
*Did traveling abroad teach you anything about yourself, about the United States? Was there anything unexpected that you encountered, or that differed from your expectations?* | 50 pts | Sept 3   |
| **Paper Two: Part 1 (Plan of Action):** In this paper, which must be at least 3 pages but no more than 5, outline what kind of information you obtained during your study abroad experience. Then, provide an outline as to how you will gather complementary material from the United States for your comparative study. (This document will not be part of your Final Paper, and is only for planning purposes. This is a small, but particularly important part of your final paper.) | 30 pts | Sept 5   |
| **Paper Two: Literature Review + Initial Reference List** – This paper, which must be at least 4 pages but no more than 7, will summarize the prior research into your specific topic. A good starting point would be to build upon the proposal that you created for PSFA 350. You should look for the most definitive, reliable sources of information (and Wikipedia is strictly forbidden). Additionally, provide a separate reference list (written in APA Style). I will provide feedback and perhaps some suggestions as to how you could strengthen your references. | 30 pts | Sept 19  |
| **Paper Two: Introduction + Methodology** – This section actually comprises two separate sections of your Final Paper. In the introduction, explain your particular research problem and its significance. You should attempt to make your research relevant to a wide range of readers, rather than those who are already interested in your specific topic. | 30 pts | Oct 10   |
your conclusions. The length of your introduction & methods section will be relatively brief (given the length of other sections of your Final Paper), and the length will vary from student to student

| Paper Two: Findings & Discussion | This is the “meat” of your paper and will entail a considerable amount of work. In these two sections, you will first detail what kinds of results and information you obtained from your research. Then, you will discuss and analyze your results, referring back (where ever possible) to the information that you presented in your literature review. Are your findings consistent with prior research, or did you uncover something new and distinct? How can you explain the results that you found? | 100 pts | Nov 20 |
| Paper Two: Conclusion | - 1-2 pages conclusion. Your conclusion should reflect on what you gained from the whole comparative project. | 30 pts | Nov 26 |
| Paper Two: In-Class Presentation | Every student will prepare an approx. 10 minute presentation to share their experience, insights, and research with the other students. Visual aids (such as PowerPoint) are not required. Attendance is mandatory on these days, and your in-class behavior (when you are not presenting) is factored into this portion of the grade. | 30 pts | Dec 3 Or Dec 5 |
| Final Paper | The final version of the research paper for PSFA 550 should be approximately 25 pages and together with the paper from PSFA 350 constitute a capstone thesis or mini-thesis. You will need to correct (fix) comments from previous assignments prior to submitting this final composite project. The paper will include the following sections: Introduction / Literature Review / Methodology /Findings / Discussion Conclusion / Reference List | 100 pts | Dec 17 |
Sample structure for your final report of the research project:

I. Introduction
   A. Introduction of the topic/issue/problem for the study – you need to select a topic of your interest and be willing to explore while you’re abroad as well as in the U.S.
   B. Significance of the topic for study – provide a rationale for your study by stating the significance of the topic/issue. Why is it significant to others, to the community, to the discipline? What triggered your interest in studying it?

II. Literature review
   A. Background information the country/society/region, including history, political system, societal structure, etc. (topics that are relevant to your study).
   B. Cultural characteristics of the country as compared to the U.S.
   C. Literature on the specific topic you’re researching – what has been done related to the issue you’re proposing?
   D. Methods used and main findings by previous scholars.
   E. RQ: Phrase a general research question about your focus in this study. You may also have sub-questions regarding the layers of information you wish to find through this study.

III. Research method
   A. Identify a selected research method for this particular study. Discuss why this is most suitable for your study.
   B. Propose specific steps of your data collection process, e.g., for interviews, how many subjects you wish to contact, how many interviews you will conduct, how many times you want to meet them, for how long, what kind of settings in which the interviews will take place, etc. Give a description of the anticipated subjects you will target.
   C. What measures will you take to ensure anonymity and risk-free from taking part in this study?

IV. Research results/findings and discussion
   A. Report on major patterns and trends of your findings. Main finding #1. .
      1. Findings from abroad
      2. Findings from the U.S.
      3. Cross over patterns based on similarities or differences. .
   B. Discuss what the findings mean.
      1. Pattern 1. .
      2. Pattern 2. .
      3. .

V. Conclusion
   1. Summary of your main findings
   2. Implications of your findings.
   3. Concluding remarks/statements.