



The Global Classroom in American Politics



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The problem:

Only a small proportion of students get to undertake an 'international experience' (a semester or year on exchange) for a variety of reasons – prohibitive costs, environmental concerns, physically unable to travel.



The solution?

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) attempts to bring the international exchange to the student, using a virtual learning environment to share content, classes and assessments, and to build learning networks across institutions.

Professor Richardson Dilworth

Department Head,
Department of Politics
Drexel University

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Course: PI3074
American Politics

Level 3: Honours Option in
Politics and International
Relations

Two 1-hour lectures and one
2-hour tutorial per week

Course: PSCI110 American
Government

Level 1: Introductory course in
Political Science

Two 2-hour lectures/ tutorial
hybrid per week

Shared Formative Assessment:

Email exchange between
students paired across
cohorts debating the merits
of the US Electoral College.

Mirrors *The Federalist Papers*
and letters of Founding
Fathers promoting the
constitution.

Rationale

- Learned from experience as an International Exchange tutor the value of exchange experiences.
- Wanted to find ways to extend this opportunity to those who cannot participate in physical exchanges.
- Considered COIL a good fit for my American Politics course.

Plan

- Secured a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship in Philadelphia.
- Identified an enthusiastic COIL partner at Drexel University – Professor Richardson Dilworth.
- Discussed how to merge our individual courses (both were due to be revised).

Development

- 'Zoomed' several times to consider options on course content, textbooks and assignments.
- Re-organised our content and decided upon delivery sessions.
- Synchronised lecture times to allow for dual-delivery.

Execution

- Alternated lecture delivery between Aberdeen and Drexel, with opposite cohort joining via Zoom.
- Professor Dilworth provided more depth and detail on specific elements of American Politics.
- Included more comparative elements and an international perspective to my classes.

Evaluation

- Students called for *more* interaction between cohorts, both in class and in assessments.
- PIR has bid for 2040 funding to equip a lecture theatre to allow for more interactive classes.
- Planned a more significant shared assessment and a shared VLE for 2022 course.

Proposed Summative Assessment:

Cross-institution group work
on a briefing document
focusing on strengths and
weaknesses of one of the US
branches of government

Aberdeen cohort feedback:

"A unique experience – I've
never had a class like it!"

"It was great to hear an
American professor talk about
these issues."

Drexel cohort feedback:

"Nice change to the dynamic
in the classroom."

"Beneficial... gave me
perspective on American
politics from abroad."

