Course Outline

Why Travel to the Dominican Republic

Travel broadens the mind and expands the self. Imagine a virtual study abroad pilgrimage to the beautiful Island of Hispaniola, The Island Nation of the Dominican Republic. During this three-week virtual trek in a land with great dichotomy, students will be able to take a life changing cultural plunge. The DR is known for its cultural wealth and heritage. This course will be based primarily in the Dominican Republic in the Capitol city of Santo Domingo and surrounding cities. Students will learn via Live Synchronous Zoom classes, webinars and interactions with service providers from several NGO’s (non-governmental organizations) who work with at-risk women focusing on the elimination of gender-related violence, discrimination and other hidden inequalities.

This will be a Virtual study course that will offer students an opportunity to gain international and professional experience. This course will build on years of experience in the Dominican Republic and engage our extensive network of partners to provide opportunities with local organizations in fields such as public health, social change, LGBTQ+ rights, sustainable human rights, and women’s empowerment. This course will help you gain experience in remote work, develop your international professional network, and build intercultural skills. Virtual study will offer the chance to do substantive, empowering tasks that will allow you to explore different career paths and enhance your resume.

Instructor

Motié Haskins is an Instructional Track Professor at the University of Iowa, School of Social Work. He received his degree in Social Work from Syracuse University. He teaches courses on Discrimination Oppression and Diversity, Social Justice and Social Welfare, Organization and Community Development, Individual Families and Groups, Human Behavior and the Social Environment and Integrated Theory and Practice. He is the former Coordinator of the Critical Cultural Competence Certificate Program and the former Director of the BSW Program. Professor Mo was born in Harlem, New York and has traveled and studied in several countries including (India, Europe, South America, Africa, and The Middle East). Professor Mo is an experienced faculty director with prior travel to The Dominican Republic.

The Course

This multidisciplinary elective course is designed to prepare students to understand and address the complex issues associated with women’s empowerment, dealing with cross-culture issues, and working with marginalized and at-risk young women. Students will engage with non-profit organizations, virtually visit local government offices, and explore the geographic and sociocultural context. Students will experience and be exposed to the most respected organizations serving Women throughout the Dominican Republic.
Students will be working with and supporting vulnerable children, families, and impoverished women. They will also get hands-on experience. In this course we will visit, participate, and learn village development which includes the inner growth of people as well as the outer development of the community.

Students will learn directly from several organizations, and experts in the field of, social justice, cultural competency, community development. Each employing a diverse variety of techniques to address gender equality, by means of providing a diverse range of curriculums, tools and services on topics such as anti-violence, and the economics of female wellbeing as well as addressing intersecting issues of poverty, healthcare for the poor, illiteracy, discrimination, and oppression.

Why a Virtual Experience in the time of COVID?
This course will offer a series of live online “virtual learning” sessions on Zoom focusing on different sites around the Dominican Republic. Students will be able to listen and participate in discussions with experts in the field of Women’s Empowerment that will cover everything from the history of the Island of Hispaniola to the history of the French and Spanish colonizers to studying the important contributions made by powerful women from the Dominican Republic. These Virtual lecturers will be the same experts that travelers might hear while on an Immersion trip to the Dominican Republic.

Objectives and Goals:
- Reflection- connect to experience.
- Application of knowledge- practice, test, and apply.
- Leadership- community building, team dynamics.
- Civic Identity- how your abilities help development.
- Cultural Identity- understanding of self.
- Social Justice- sources of power and community assets.
- Values Clarification- clarify own ideals and values.
- Critical Thinking – viewing situations from various perspective and thinking of solutions to benefit the whole.

Our Host Organizations

1) ENTRENA (https://entrenadr.com/en/)
Entrena- is a renowned social entrepreneurship firm in the Dominican Republic specializing in social development, sustainability, education and training since 1982. With a portfolio of high-profile clients from governments, private sector, NGOs and international organizations, Entrena has implemented projects in eight countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region.
*Specialized projects may be negotiated with Entrena. (Instructors approval required)

An NGO in the Dominican Republic dedicated to protecting and supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families. Caminante is an educational project that works with children that are living and working in the street. Children that have been victims of abuse or sexual exploitation and works with the communities of Boca Chica and San Andres to raise awareness and prevent further cases of abuse.

The Dominican Republic is home to the Wine to Water ceramic water filter factory, which produces innovative clean water solutions for local communities. Despite the thriving tourist market, much of the population still lives in poverty, a situation that was worsened by the 2010 Haiti earthquake that left many thousands displaced. Without clean water, many families on the island suffer from water-related illnesses that take the lives of 1,300 Dominicans and 5,700 Haitians each year, many of them children. In the coming year, Wine To Water will produce 4,000 ceramic water filters that will benefit an estimated 20,000 people.

5) USAID Dominican Republic YOUNG PEOPLE LEADING THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS
Alerta Joven project, has focused on the protection of at-risk youth (particularly at-risk females) for them to take an active leadership role in decision-making and promote the rights of the LGBTI community. This includes the implementation of technical courses, in which 20 young people from the LGBTI community have participated, and 30% of the participants have been placed in work internships, allowing them to improve their living conditions and obtain employment.

This initiative will increase the income of women participants and their families, producing a positive impact on local economy and giving them the power of improving their living conditions. There efforts can lead them to new roles as major contributors to family income and ultimately transform their position and status within the household and community at large. Decent work is fundamental for the development of personality, for social integration and for the well-being of families.

7) **More NGO’s to be announced.**

A **collaborative learning** approach will be used. That is, a philosophy to learning not just a classroom technique. The students will come together as a single group. This approach suggests a way of dealing with people which respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions. There will be a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the group’s actions. The underlying premise of this collaborative learning is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, in contrast to competition in which individuals best other group members.

**Student Conduct**
A primary goal of The University of Iowa Office of Study Abroad is to promote understanding among people from different parts of the world through a commitment to mutual learning and respect for others. Students become an integral part of a community striving toward these goals, which can only be realized if individuals honor all community members and take responsibility for their own actions.

The Office of Study Abroad maintains a code of conduct and clear institutional policies regarding student behavior. The OSA has a multi-step disciplinary process for policy violation that may include verbal warning, written warning, probation, and dismissal.

This course is designed to increase cultural awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills to cultivate cultural competence and Cultural Humility. Student conduct is an important indicator of cultural competence. As students in a new cultural context, we encourage you to notice, observe, and ask questions around the critically important values and norms of the host community. Remember that student behavior in a host community including virtual study may have long-term impacts on future students.

Experiential programs & learning is intimate and peer groups are likely much smaller than students are accustomed to on their home campuses. Additionally, each student is moving through the cultural adjustment process at their own pace. This is an opportunity to compassionately learn with students who may be very different from you in many ways. Our course will establish group norms that engage students, encourage listening for understanding, and make space for all voices to be heard as students learn with and from one another.

This course will foster an environment of mutual respect for all program participants. It is incumbent upon each student to work through disagreements with peers. If a student is struggling in the group, they are urged to approach The Faculty Director (Prof Mo) or our host organization (Entrena’s) staff leader’s (Jonathan Soto & Mariela Vazquez) to assist in resolving disagreements or processing various dynamics.

**Course Requirements**

**Prior to Beginning of the course**
- Attend Two (2) mandatory orientation meetings. To be held on Zoom
- Watch the Video “Borders” Part 1. Divided Island: How Haiti and the DR Became Two Worlds. (YouTube)
- Watch “America's Backyard: The Dominican Republic” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8HOeEq_jFE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8HOeEq_jFE)
Required Reading

- Various articles and readings located on ICON
- Available from eBay or Amazon.com.

Course Grades

Grades for the course will be based on the following elements:

- 25% 500-word paper on the most important part of your experience with your partner organization, due (TBA)
- 30% Active engagement and discussion with fellow students, the instructor, our hosts, and the sponsoring organizations. (On-going).
- 20% Individual presentation to the group and host organization (TBA). *See below.
- 25% Participate in daily reflection groups,

*Individual Presentations

We strongly encourage students to choose from one of the following three types of projects:

1) **General evaluation:** provide detailed background (statistics, theories) on the issue of Women’s Empowerment, critically evaluate the efforts of your chosen organization to address the problem and based on your experiences with the organization and background reading, suggest potential (general approaches) ways of improving such efforts.

2) **Project plan:** work with one of the host organizations to learn in detail about their operations. Design a project that will help improve the organization’s services to Women or take the organization in a new direction and develop a draft plan to implement your project.

3) **Other projects:** In the past, students have come up with project ideas that fall outside our own categorizations. We encourage you to discuss your creative ideas with Prof Mo.