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GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE: PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES TO GLOBAL LEARNING IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Global learning skills are becoming increasingly valued in contemporary institutions of higher education and in the labor market. The ability to critically assess and relate to "complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for peoples lives and the earths sustainability" is tantamount to future success for students both professionally and personally (AACU). Graduates engaging in global learning are able to understand and conscientiously consider diverse populations and perspectives, relate individual actions to larger global phenomena, and address increasingly urgent challenges surrounding topics such as the environment, politics, the economy, poverty, development, exploitation, and inequality. At the same time, organized sport provides an ideal platform for global learning and exploration across borders and cultures. It touts intense competition. lucrative outcomes, global popularity, and economic and political underpinnings. Furthermore, within organized sport, martial arts-based combat styles are experiencing rapid growth in number and size of contests, promotion, participation, media coverage, investment, and fandom across the world. This paper explores the pedagogical challenges of teaching an upper division honors course on martial arts and culture in Southeast Asia to U.S. university students. The issues which arise with implementing global learning strategies and internationalization of the curriculum in the college classroom are discussed as a result of the development of this course. Drawing on qualitative data gathered during the course, observations, and student feedback, insight into the utility of organized sport as a platform for teaching global learning in the classroom, student engagement with material and subsequent global learning outcomes, and emotional and ethical issues which arise for students when considering alternative cultural perspectives are gleaned.
