



# Getting Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable: Pedagogical Challenges to Global Learning in the College Classroom

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# Introduction

- u Increasing importance for U.S. students to think globally (contrasts with current nativist political climate, cutting university requirements for foreign language, funding issues, etc.).
- u **AACU** (Association of American Colleges & Universities) **Global Learning VALUE rubric** items: 1) Global Self-Awareness, 2) Perspective Taking, 3) Cultural Diversity, 4) Personal & Social Responsibility, 5) Global Systems, 6) Knowledge Application.
- u Organized sport an ideal platform for global learning as it spans multiple facets of a society: natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political, etc.. Utilizing a **sociological** lens, Rowe (2016) argues said analyses utilizing theory and methods transcend space (*global to transnational to national to local*), time (*pre-modern to modern to postmodern*), and social location (*individual to institution, private to mass audiences*).
- u Growing academic literature on martial arts and particularly the relatively young sport of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) which involves a number of fighting arts rooted heavily in cultural traditions such as muay thai (Thailand) and Lethwei (Myanmar). Ages 18-30 the strongest demographic for MMA and thus topic appeals to traditional age college students.

# The Class: Martial Arts & Culture in Southeast Asia

- u Designated honors course elective in sociology program, spring semester 2018, 10 students enrolled, 6 female, 4 male (\*not full)
- u FGCU: 1/12 state universities, 15,000+ enrollment, located in SW Florida where major industry is tourism and service
- u Students ranged from 2nd semester freshmen to graduating seniors across a variety of majors. None of the students had completed a study abroad or traveled outside of the USA.
- u Self-reported reasons for taking the course were: lack of knowledge about the region and world, interest in martial arts, desire to learn more about the cultural traditions of martial arts and how they relate to organized sport in the U.S..
- u All students were Florida residents and the majority White-Anglo with little to no experience with or knowledge of Southeast Asia or the cultural arts of the region. Two female students of color, one from a Guatemalan background and one from a Jamaican background (both grew up in US).
- u Focus on muay thai (Thailand) and Lethwei (Myanmar) as well as the surrounding cultural and political contexts and, environmental and social issues.

# Pedagogy

- **Learning centered classroom: Assignments and Activities**

1. **Local connection/Hands on instruction** (students learned the two cultural arts throughout the semester in weekly sessions with qualified local instructors, met with local Thai and Burmese populations in the area (and university) to discuss relevant cultural issues, differences, and topics based on class readings)

2. **Interdisciplinary collaboration**

- Students incorporating southeast asian focus in projects for other classes, ex. sustainability-University colloquium & gender-gender studies minor

2. **Critical thinking**

- Child fighters (writing from perspective of various diverse personas, taking the role of the other, constructing arguments)

3. **Cross cultural exercises**

- Online discussions with key stakeholders, participants at various levels in Thailand, Myanmar, and MMA in the U.S..

4. **Mind mapping**

- After covering various economic, social, cultural, political, environmental, and religious segments of Thai, Burmese, and American culture, mind maps created around and between Muay Thai (Thailand), Lethwei (Myanmar), and their connections to MMA in North America

5. **Reflection**

- Students completed multiple in depth reflections throughout on course readings, assignments, and activities and several debriefing sessions were held after activities.

6. **Culmination: Student film** highlighting muay thai and lethwei as they symbolize Thai and Burmese culture as well as MMA as it symbolizes US culture.

# Outcomes/Results

- Students were given a pre- and post-test assessing knowledge of the SE Asia region, specific countries, history, and martial arts.
  - \*Improved knowledge in all aspects
- Assignments and activities (including multiple reflections and debriefing sessions) in the course were used to assess 6 components of the AACU Global Learning VALUE rubric (students performed peer assessment on various assignments & program faculty): Mostly benchmark (1) to milestone level (2-3 scores)—\*\*\*
  1. **Global Self-Awareness:** Connection making between individual experiences and larger local and global issues (\*sociological imagination). Analyze the way human actions influence natural and human world. Evaluate global impact of individual and local actions. Address significant issues based on articulating one's identity in the global context.
    - Mostly aware of their role as sports tourists (or general tourists) to SE Asian destinations such as Thailand for muay thai and the larger environmental, economic, and social impact. Also, through interactions with local Thai and Burmese people students became more aware of how U.S. culture and citizens are viewed by as well as the experience of those immigrating to the country from these areas.
  2. **Perspective-taking:** Identify multiple perspectives while maintaining a value preference for own. Identify, maintain, and synthesize multiple perspectives when explaining subjects. Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to complex situations.
    - The assignment asking them to argue from a viewpoint and take an opposing side on the issue of child fighters seemed to be most impactful in this dimension. Students struggled to take another perspective outside of their own cultural or moral ideas regarding the subject. Also, the need to take the perspective of a child fighter, a parent, a gym owner, a professional gambler, a promoter, a sport organization official (WMTF, SAT), etc. in the different cultures provided a challenge but increased understanding of the different views and arguments each might make.

# Outcomes/Results (cont'd)

3. **Cultural Diversity:** Describing experiences of others mostly through one cultural perspective. Explains and connects two or more cultures. Analyzes substantial connections. Deep understanding of multiple world views, experiences, and power structures while initiating meaningful interaction.

—Identified power differentials along religious, ethnic, and social class dimensions of populations in Thailand and Myanmar (as well as U.S.) as they relate to fighting arts. Also cultural values as they are illuminated among participants (collective v. individual), promotions, and social media/technology were clearly identified by students. Globalization and its effects on the sports and corresponding cultures was highlighted in student work.

4. **Personal and Social Responsibility:** Identifies basic ethical dimensions of some local or national decisions that have global impact. Explains ethical, social, and environmental consequences of global systems and identifies a range of actions. Takes informed and responsible action and evaluates the local and broader consequences.

—Focus on sustainability (university focus as well) applied to social, physical, and other components of the sports and countries as well as sports and other types of tourism in the region. While students clearly identified exploitation in the sport, the economic plight of the poor in both Thailand and Myanmar, the low status of women, and the genocide of the Rohingya (and other ethnic and religious conflicts) to be problematic several still expressed the question of “How does this affect my life?” Lack of direct feeling of personal responsibility. Students also reported frustration at not knowing enough about the issues in the countries or larger region. Not really sure what they could do or why it would be important for them to get involved on a personal level.

# Outcomes/Results (cont'd)

5. **Global Systems:** Identifies the basic role of some global and local institutions, ideas, and processes in the human and natural worlds. Examines the historical and contemporary roles, interconnections, and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems. Analyzes major elements of global systems to pose elementary solutions to complex problems in the human and natural worlds. Uses deep knowledge to develop and advocate for informed, appropriate action to solve complex problems.

—Globalization, tourism, sports tourism, economic systems, politics, technology, gender issues, religious and racial or ethnic group conflicts were identified as issues which connected the global and local. Problems and actions were superficially addressed but rarely offered or thought out in any depth. Increasing education and opportunities outside of the sports were pointed out as important to addressing the key problematic issues.

6. **Knowledge application:** Defines global challenge in basic ways, including a limited number of perspectives and solutions. Formulates practical yet elementary solutions to global challenges that use at least 2 disciplinary perspectives. Plans and evaluates more complex solutions. Applies knowledge and skills to implement sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions.

—Few actual plans or action items to address the issues were offered by any of the students. They seemed to garner the knowledge to a point but were less successful when asked to articulate action items regarding viable solutions. Lack of tools necessary and only a superficial understanding in the one class for one semester were offered as reasons why.

# Challenges

- Lack of preparation/isolation
- Difficulty relating beyond experience/lack of interest in thinking beyond
- Difficulty in assessment/lack of clear assessment tools for discipline specific courses
- Budget/resource issues
- Frustration at lack of knowledge about current events in the region as they relate to U.S. policies and news
- Questions of utility of the knowledge gleaned (most students aspire to work locally, etc.)
- Issues with advising in terms of relevance of the class (age of tracking, etc.)
- Need for more discipline specific rubrics and assessment tools on global learning (sociological, martial arts studies)
- Difficulty connecting how the issues illuminated through an analysis of cultural martial arts pertain to the daily lives of the students and the “Why should I care and what can I do?” question. Inundation with news of problems worldwide. Tendency to identify domestic issues as more pressing and a lack of time and interest in what is happening in larger Asia or SE Asia in particular.

# In future semesters....

- u Coordinated email exchanges and assignments with university students in other countries, possible SOTL research collaborations
- u Increased use of online and digital technology to bring the world into the classroom
- u Increased coordination of global learning components ACROSS classes within the university
- u Arguments for administration as to the importance of internationalizing the curriculum from a budgetary/monetary standpoint? Study abroad limited as it is due to issues with paying faculty salary & inaccessibility of SA programs to financially stressed students
- u Ways to manage professor expectations and engage students—increasing passion and desire to learn and understand

## GLOBAL LEARNING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact [value@aacu.org](mailto:value@aacu.org)



### Definition

Global learning is a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students should 1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, 2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and 3) address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

	Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
		3	2	
<b>Global Self-Awareness</b>	Effectively addresses significant issues in the natural and human world based on articulating one's identity in a global context.	Evaluates the global impact of one's own and others' specific local actions on the natural and human world.	Analyzes ways that human actions influence the natural and human world.	Identifies some connections between an individual's personal decision-making and certain local and global issues.
<b>Perspective Taking</b>	Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to complex subjects within natural and human systems in the face of multiple and even conflicting positions (i.e. cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).	Synthesizes other perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when investigating subjects within natural and human systems.	Identifies and explains multiple perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when exploring subjects within natural and human systems.	Identifies multiple perspectives while maintaining a value preference for own positioning (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	Adapts and applies a deep understanding of multiple worldviews, experiences, and power structures while initiating meaningful interaction with other cultures to address significant global problems.	Analyzes substantial connections between the worldviews, power structures, and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts, incorporating respectful interactions with other cultures.	Explains and connects two or more cultures historically or in contemporary contexts with some acknowledgement of power structures, demonstrating respectful interaction with varied cultures and worldviews.	Describes the experiences of others historically or in contemporary contexts primarily through one cultural perspective, demonstrating some openness to varied cultures and worldviews.
<b>Personal and Social Responsibility</b>	Takes informed and responsible action to address ethical, social, and environmental challenges in global systems and evaluates the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions.	Analyzes the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of global systems and identifies a range of actions informed by one's sense of personal and civic responsibility.	Explains the ethical, social, and environmental consequences of local and national decisions on global systems.	Identifies basic ethical dimensions of some local or national decisions that have global impact.
<b>Understanding Global Systems</b>	Uses deep knowledge of the historic and contemporary role and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems to develop and advocate for informed, appropriate action to solve complex problems in the human and natural worlds.	Analyzes major elements of global systems, including their historic and contemporary interconnections and the differential effects of human organizations and actions, to pose elementary solutions to complex problems in the human and natural worlds.	Examines the historical and contemporary roles, interconnections, and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems within the human and the natural worlds.	Identifies the basic role of some global and local institutions, ideas, and processes in the human and natural worlds.
<b>Applying Knowledge to Contemporary Global Contexts</b>	Applies knowledge and skills to implement sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions to address complex global problems using interdisciplinary perspectives independently or with others.	Plans and evaluates more complex solutions to global challenges that are appropriate to their contexts using multiple disciplinary perspectives (such as cultural, historical, and scientific).	Formulates practical yet elementary solutions to global challenges that use at least two disciplinary perspectives (such as cultural, historical, and scientific).	Defines global challenges in basic ways, including a limited number of perspectives and solutions.

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### Framing Language

Effective and transformative global learning offers students meaningful opportunities to analyze and explore complex global challenges, collaborate respectfully with diverse others, apply learning to take responsible action in contemporary global contexts, and evaluate the goals, methods, and consequences of that action. Global learning should enhance students' sense of identity, community, ethics, and perspective-taking. Global learning is based on the principle that the world is a collection of interdependent yet inequitable systems and that higher education has a vital role in expanding knowledge of human and natural systems, privilege and stratification, and sustainability and development to foster individuals' ability to advance equity and justice at home and abroad. Global learning cannot be achieved in a single course or a single experience but is acquired cumulatively across students' entire college career through an institution's curricular and co-curricular programming. As this rubric is designed to assess global learning on a programmatic level across time, the benchmarks (levels 1-4) may not be directly applicable to a singular experience, course, or assignment. Depending on the context, there may be development within one level rather than growth from level to level.

**We encourage users of the Global Learning Rubric to also consult three other closely related VALUE Rubrics: Civic Engagement, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence, and Ethical Reasoning.**

### Glossary

*The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.*

**Global Self-Awareness:** in the context of global learning, the continuum through which students develop a mature, integrated identity with a systemic understanding of the interrelationships among the self, local and global communities, and the natural and physical world.

**Perspective Taking:** the ability to engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one's own and to understand how one's place in the world both informs and limits one's knowledge. The goal is to develop the capacity to understand the interrelationships between multiple perspectives, such as personal, social, cultural, disciplinary, environmental, local, and global.

**Cultural Diversity:** the ability to recognize the origins and influences of one's own cultural heritage along with its limitations in providing all that one needs to know in the world. This includes the curiosity to learn respectfully about the cultural diversity of other people and on an individual level to traverse cultural boundaries to bridge differences and collaboratively reach common goals. On a systems level, the important skill of comparatively analyzing how cultures can be marked and assigned a place within power structures that determine hierarchies, inequalities, and opportunities and which can vary over time and place. This can include, but is not limited to, understanding race, ethnicity, gender, nationhood, religion, and class.

**Personal and Social Responsibility:** the ability to recognize one's responsibilities to society--locally, nationally, and globally--and to develop a perspective on ethical and power relations both across the globe and within individual societies. This requires developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action.

**Global Systems:** the complex and overlapping worldwide systems, including natural systems (those systems associated with the natural world including biological, chemical, and physical sciences) and human systems (those systems developed by humans such as cultural, economic, political, and built), which operate in observable patterns and often are affected by or are the result of human design or disruption. These systems influence how life is lived and what options are open to whom. Students need to understand how these systems 1) are influenced and/or constructed, 2) operate with differential consequences, 3) affect the human and natural world, and 4) can be altered.

**Knowledge Application:** in the context of global learning, the application of an integrated and systemic understanding of the interrelationships between contemporary and past challenges facing cultures, societies, and the natural world (i.e., contexts) on the local and global levels. An ability to apply knowledge and skills gained through higher learning to real-life problem-solving both alone and with others.