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Learning Abroad in Action:
A Case Study of Sport in England

Jacob K. Tingle

Abstract

Many universities have moved toward the faculty-led short-term study abroad model to maximize the student experience and also to be intentional about including student populations who may not study abroad because of some hesitation or barriers. Specifically, these programs are an effective way to provide students an opportunity to explore international learning in a way that is more accessible. This chapter presents a case study of a successful short-term study abroad model and includes syllabus language and recommendations for faculty who want to create a short-term class. Specifically, information is presented about four distinct elements a short-term class should include: 1) learning objectives, 2) pre-travel preparation, 3) trip implementation, and 4) post-travel processing.

Keywords: reflection, digital storytelling, sport management, global awareness

Learning Abroad in Action: A Case Study of Sport in England

“If I could speak for everyone who took part in this unforgettable program, I think every single person would say it changed their outlook on life for the better. If one day you decide to embark on this journey, I promise it will change your life as well.”

- Drew Butler, student in Sport in England class winter/spring 2016

In the last decade there have been ever louder calls for higher education institutions to better prepare students to work and live in a global community (Weese, 2020), and research indicates that study abroad can have enhance global competencies (Springer et al., 2020). If the goal is to enhance the intercultural awareness and/or global mindedness of students and to globalize the university community, access issues must be at the forefront of decision-making. As Nguyen (2017) and others (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; LeCrom et al., 2015) found, some study abroad is better than none. These studies showed that even in a short-term class, intercultural competence, intercultural awareness, and functional knowledge (Lewis & Nisenbaum, 2005) all increased. Considering that for some student populations, a study abroad program lasting longer than six weeks is unrealistic (Jenny et al., 2019), it is incumbent upon higher education institutions to broaden or expand the forms of study abroad offerings if they want to achieve their goals associated with internationalization so that more students can obtain the associated benefits (LeCrom et al., 2020; Weese, 2020).

Many universities have moved toward the faculty-led short-term study abroad model to maximize the student experience and also be proactive about populations who may be selecting this option because of some hesitation or barriers (Nguyen et al., 2018; Nishikawa et al., 2019). Specifically, these programs are an effective way to provide students an opportunity to explore international learning in a way that is more accessible. This, allows student-athletes, first generation, economically disadvantaged students, those from tightly prescribed majors or subdisciplines, and those who are more cautious about spending six weeks to one semester away

from their home campus the chance to participate (Mills et al., 2010; Navarro et al., 2020). For some students, overcoming the initial culture shock can be difficult; in a short-term experience, that risk of pushing students into their zone of danger is even more important to carefully consider.

As such, it is paramount for faculty to specifically link activities to course learning outcomes. As Gaia (2015) indicated, pre-departure orientations are essential, and ideally the study abroad class will require a prerequisite class to better ensure students are prepared for the experience. Others have indicated that intentional design is essential for short-term study abroad classes to be most effective (Mills et al., 2010; Springer et al., 2020). Furthering that notion, Nguyen (2017, p. 111-112) made a strong case for backwards design: “While full year study abroad has a more sustainable and significant impact than other programs,” short-term classes can result in significant growth when designed intentionally. The learning will not happen *just because* and students must be pushed beyond their zone of comfort, but not into a zone of danger. For short-term programs, indeed any study abroad experiences, to be considered deep learning opportunities, they must include intentional and directed preparation (Mills et al., 2010). As much of the research highlights, the pre- and post-travel elements must be integrated into an international class experience (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; LeCrom et al., 2015). Jackson (2008, p. 357) indirectly makes the link to study abroad class design by indicating that “intercultural learning is a challenging process that students need to work on before, during, and after a study abroad experience, no matter the length of the sojourn.”

In an effort to provide insight to faculty wanting to teach a short-term course in an international setting, this chapter provides a description of a faculty-led class I helped design and have co-taught on three occasions. I hope it can serve as a blueprint of a well-designed short-

term study abroad class that sport management faculty can refine for use in their own programs and in the context of their own student learning goals. As detailed in Chapter 8 a well-designed short-term study abroad course can have positive effects on both students and faculty¹, and can be an important contributing factor to help colleges and universities internationalize their campuses. As scholars indicate, when developing a study abroad class, faculty need to be intentional and thoughtful about their design (Gaia, 2015; LeCrom et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2017). Table 1 includes four specific elements a short-term class should include: 1) learning objectives, 2) pre-travel preparation, 3) trip implementation, and 4) post-travel processing. The table also includes representative sample syllabus language from Trinity University's *Sport in England* class.

Table 1. Short-term Study Abroad Class Requirements

Task	Definition	Sample Syllabus Items from Sport in England
Learning Objectives	Preparing a course syllabus that provides an academic anchor and helps to set the focus for the course.	Gather and evaluate information from scholarly sources concerning the perspectives and values of the peoples of regions outside the United States. Display growth and development in at least two of the following areas: Autonomy/self-direction, confidence, tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility.
Pre-trip Preparation	Meeting or meetings involving all faculty and students in areas such as team building, preparation of key sites to visit and related academic / experiential activities, and expectations regarding behaviors for serving as ambassadors of the university.	PRESENTATION Students will be assigned to small groups and will deliver a 20-minute class presentation addressing key themes of interest pertaining to our program and particular to one of the sport sites that we will visit. The topic will be assigned to you on our second pre-departure meeting so you will have the opportunity to begin exploring your site before you leave for London. This is worth 10% of your grade and you will be evaluated on: your presentation skills, your ability to research the assigned topic, and how well you can generate a rich discussion among your peers. This is due PRIOR to you leaving for London.
Trip implementation	Use of time to the fullest extent possible to explore historical, political and cultural attributes of the country and end-of-day group meetings for discussion and self-reflection of the day's activities.	1) Group lunch and interview with British college student (you'll use the interview guide provided by professors. Be prepared to take notes, as you'll need detailed information for your first paper)

		<p>2)Guest Lecture “Sport in England: From folk games to public school to the Premier League”</p> <p>3)Reflective Journal – Students are required to keep a daily journal documenting your in-country experiences, the places we visit, the individuals we meet, and your impressions.</p> <p>4)End of Day Group Reflective Discussion [Intercultural Awareness session]</p>
Post-travel Processing	<p>Upon returning to the home country, students and faculty need to meet and process how the international experience can be applied to the end-of-trip formal self-reflection paper and ways the skills and experiences from the program can be related to career goals.</p>	<p>DIGITAL STORYTELLING</p> <p>An important element of this class is developing a team and us becoming a family. To facilitate that you will complete a digital storytelling assignment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A digital story is a multimedia product combining visual content (images, short videos) with an oral narrative (audio and written). Think of it as a video in which you use your own voice (maybe even music) and a collection of pictures or short videos, as vehicles to tell the audience about something you learned during your study-abroad experience in England. If you think about it this way, then it should be relatively easy to see that a digital story is made of three layers: visual, audio, and narrative (written script). • While in London we will review some concepts and examples of these digital stories with the purpose of define and illustrate what you are expected to deliver upon returning home.

Sport in England is a sport management course that carries a *global awareness* designation by the university. As a global awareness class, among other learning objectives, it aims to have students gather and evaluate information from the perspectives and values of the peoples of regions outside the United States. Specifically, the class explores the cultural, economic, political, and social forces which shape English sports as a way to compare the United States sport model to the global landscape. The class begins in London over two weeks during Winter Break, and upon returning to the United States, meets once per week for ten weeks into the Spring semester. The following course description specifies why the location has been selected and identifies important learning objectives for the course (Nguyen, 2017):

England represents an ideal location because it gave birth to a multitude of sports which are popular globally and because the notion of amateurism as a counterpoint to professionalism stems directly from the English class system. This class introduces students to the major historical themes in English sport, acquaints students with the English systems of organized sports organizations, and compares the American and English sport models.

As a prerequisite (Gaia, 2015), students must complete a sport sociology course. *Sport in Society* provides students an understanding of socio-cultural elements of sport, such as: gender, race, sexuality, athlete development, political and economic impacts, and the relationship between sport and the education system, with an emphasis focus on those factors in the United States. The lessons from that course are used to frame the readings, activities, and deliverables for Sport in England. Substantially more than a pre-program meeting, this prerequisite course addresses those scholars who highlight the importance of intentional pre-trip course design (Springer et al., 2020).

In addition to completing the pre-requisite *Sport in Society* course, to qualify for Sport in England, students must submit an application packet, which includes: 1) a transcript with detailed academic information; 2) an essay detailing how the class fits into their personal and professional goals and what strengths they bring to the cohort; and 3) a faculty letter of recommendation. Two of the course faculty review application materials, looking both for evidence of academic preparation, and complementary skills to ensure a diverse cohort. After students have been accepted into the course, they attend four pre-trip meetings with the faculty. One of these is led by staff from the Study Abroad Office and focuses on health and safety protocols, risk management, trip logistics, and high-level cultural differences. Subsequent

meetings focus on preparing students for historical, political, and cultural elements of England and how those relate to the United States (Doring et al., 2010). Prior to the second meeting, and based on criteria such as extracurricular involvement and comfort with international travel, students are placed in teams of two or three. Additionally, these meetings focus on team development (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009) and provide students with details about their pre-departure readings and assignment (see Table 1 for examples). Lastly, a few days before departure, students are emailed links to two pre-class British Broadcasting Corporation podcasts, one which is sport related and the other focuses on popular culture. Both the readings and podcasts heed Döring et al.'s (2010, p. 246) call for "students to use a variety of sources to gain information in advance about the host country, including: television, Internet (Facebook), newspapers, journals/magazines, books, educational institutions, and personal conversations."

While in London, each student team is responsible for preparing the class for the learning activities on a specific day. They make a short formal in-class presentation related to locations and venues the class will visit, and they also are responsible for navigating the class to those venues. This activity presents an excellent challenge, as students are responsible for leading their peers using an unfamiliar transportation system. It helps students develop personal autonomy (Black & Duhon, 2006), intercultural awareness (Anderson et al., 2006), and leadership skills (Tingle et al., 2020). Because it requires vulnerability and expertise from the student presenters, the assignment also helps strengthen the class as a team by enhancing and developing trust between and among students and faculty (Tingle, 2016).

In order to meet the specific learning outcomes, venue tours and guest lecturers are selected with a focus on specific historical and cultural elements related to English sport (e.g. Lord's Cricket Ground and Wimbledon). Additionally, the class attends a theatre production in

London's West End and visits important non-sport locations (e.g. Stonehenge and Westminster Abbey) with an aim to intentionally develop greater levels of global mindedness (LeCrom et al., 2015). Two other important aspects of the class are included based on the research on experiential education (Kosnik et al., 2013) and global learning (AAC&U, n.d.). For the two weeks in London, students are required to keep a hand-written reflective journal, and there are daily reflective conversations; both of these are important elements of the experiential learning cycle (Kosnik et al., 2013; LeCrom et al., 2020).

Upon returning, students use their journal entries as field notes to: 1) guide reflective conversations, 2) complete their final paper, and 3) produce their Digital Story. During the first week back on campus, students and faculty take a digital storytelling workshop and begin work on creating their Digital Story, which “relies heavily on participants’ senses, concrete experiences, and symbolic representations of learning” (Jacobs et al., 2020, p. 116). This specific assignment was developed by another Trinity University faculty member and is used extensively in other short-term study abroad classes at Trinity. The Digital Story is a multimedia product combining visual content (images, short videos) with an oral narrative (audio and written); while it serves as a vehicle to tell the audience what students learned during their study-abroad experience in England, the true value is in the student’s reflection on their experience and creation of the artifact. The story must be between 3 to 5 minutes and should explain how the time in England and the overall course experience shaped, changed, or redefined the student’s understanding of sport in the United States. The assignment is one way for students to demonstrate self-efficacy and cultural intelligence (Nguyen et al., 2018), along with cognitive (Springer et al., 2020) and interpersonal growth (Navarro et al., 2020), and a better sense of what it means to be a global citizen. Burgeoning research on the use of digital stories as a performance

assessment in short-term study abroad found a significant positive difference in continuous learning and hardiness for students who completed a digital story compared to those who did not (Nishikawa et al., 2019). As a culminating experience created by the individual and shared with the group, the digital story was a powerful way to end an intense group experience and helped reify Scoffham and Barnes' (2009, p. 250) comment that "truly effective teaching involves engaging not only the mind, but also the heart and the soul."

According to Gillespie et al. (2020), students and faculty who participate in study abroad programs do so because of:

[their] innate curiosity about the world, a desire to experience other cultures, an interest in seeing academic concepts come to life in an experiential setting, a yearning to break out of their daily routines, or an eagerness to learn about themselves (p. 155).

Teaching Sport in England on three occasions has allowed me to reflect on my own learning and what students learn in the class. As a fellow traveler and a fellow learner, study abroad has taught me to: 1) be authentic, 2) be vulnerable, 3) build rapport, and 4) maintain a heightened sense of awareness. Through hearing daily reflective conversations, reading final reflection papers, seeing group presentations, and viewing Digital Story assignments, coupled with reviewing pre-post student responses on the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES), I know that Sport in England positively impacts students' continuous learning and interpersonal engagement. Though gains in pre-post interpersonal engagement scores are present, the biggest growth for Sport in England students is in the two continuous learning dimensions: 1) *Self-Awareness* (an awareness of personal values, strengths, and behavioral tendencies and how those elements impact others), and 2) *Exploration* (openness to ideas, values, norms, and behaviors that are different from one's own, which manifests in inquisitiveness, curiosity, and an inner desire to

learn). In addition to the high post-class scores as measured by the IES, the students' final reflection papers and Digital Stories indicate perceived "gains in self-efficacy, learning, independence, and maturity" (Gillespie et al., 2020, p. 154).

Conclusion

For faculty leaders looking to develop a program, I encourage the use of the AAC&U *Global Learning Value Rubric* to both design the specific course outcomes and activities, and to assess the level of transformative learning experienced by each student. Specifically, short-term sport management classes could focus on the *Global Self-Awareness*, *Perspective-Taking*, and *Understanding Cultural Diversity* competencies to assess whether students: 1) become more informed, open minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences; and 2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities" (AAC&U Global Learning Rubric, n.d.). Furthermore, as Jacobs et al. (2020) indicated, framing short-term study abroad classes in an experiential learning framework "that fosters reflective practices . . . and allows for quality opportunities to practice leadership" (p. 116) would enhance and strengthen student learning and positively impact their global mindedness (LeCrom et al., 2015).

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¹ A nascent line of research is exploring faculty as global learners. For those interested in understanding how teaching study abroad impacts faculty members, I recommend Gillespie, J., Jasinski, L., & Gross, D. (2020). *Faculty as global learners*. Lever Press.