Assignment Sheet for Self-Reflective Paper -- Study Abroad Honors Seminar Substitution

Specifications: 5 to 10 pages, typed, double-spaced

Your goal is to critically analyze your study abroad course experience through the lens of learning goals.

First, we must acknowledge that taking a course in another country, with students of other cultures, will be different from the course experience you have had at Marist. This assignment requires you to embrace this aspect of your learning experience. It is less about the course topic itself and more about the cultural experience – the idea of your becoming a global student – than in the exact topic or theme of the course.

Therefore, for this assignment, through this lens, there are several learning goals for the Study Abroad Course Experience:

- to deepen the understanding of another culture while learning the course topic
- to develop leadership, self-management, negotiation, creative problem solving, and decision-making skills
- to understand intercultural communications and the effect they have on values and beliefs
- to understand the nature of cultural stereotyping and how to address these issues more productively in everyday life

For your self-reflective paper, consider what goals you have for your study abroad course experience. Which of those listed above do you hope to achieve? What other goals do you have for your learning experience?

Once you know your goals, consider how you might best achieve them.

EXAMPLE:

Perhaps your learning objective is to understand the nature of cultural stereotyping and to address these issues more productively in your own life.

Therefore, your self-reflective paper might discuss the various cultural stereotypes that you heard about people in your host country (The professor? The other students?) It might also discuss cultural stereotypes that arose about students in your class who were from other countries and cultures.

- Did you find yourself judging people against those stereotypes?
- Did you hear stereotypes about Americans while you were abroad?
- What are the reasons that stereotypes are used to define people?
- How did you combat your inclination to judge people by these cultural stereotypes?
- Were any of these values confirmed or denied during your study abroad experience?

Something that you might find helpful in completing the self-reflective paper is to keep a log of experiences and thoughts throughout your study abroad experience. As you should already have a basic idea in mind of your learning goals, your entries can be somewhat specific to what you will be writing at the end of the term.
For instance, if you were focusing on the learning objective about understanding cultural stereotypes, you might keep a log of incidences of cultural biases that you identify with as an American in an international setting. Specifically, you might write about a particular incident while traveling that made you aware of your own cultural biases and describe the incident in detail.

- How was your thinking and reacting particularly “American”?
- Explain the importance of flexibility and refraining from judgment.
- How did you deal with the situation?
- How did you re-contextualize your values?
- If this situation came up again in the future, would you handle it differently?

Finally, you might consider how these cultural stereotypes (and your reactions to and feelings about them) impacted your learning.