

CESI/GIDS GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

IDEV*3300 Course Development and Delivery

May 2020

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Experiential Learning Through Remote International Partnerships

Course Research and Design

Driven by the desire to provide students with more hands-on practical experience and know-how in the field, Samantha Blostein was hired by the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI) and Guelph Institute of Development Studies (GIDS) as Global Engagement Specialist to increase understanding of best practices in global community engaged learning, as well as research and design the first ever community engaged experiential learning course with the International Development Studies program. Leveraging her networks and expertise as a social research and evaluation consultant working with hundreds of organizations and collaboratives within the community development, private, and public sectors across Canada and abroad, Samantha created and has taught IDEV*3300 Engaging in Development Practice since 2018.

The course is now regarded as a favourite among International Development Studies students. Developed in collaboration with CESI and GIDS, the aim of Engaging in Development Practice is to provide an opportunity for students to engage with development practitioners in a real-world context. The course explores the challenges associated with engaging with development practitioners in the real world and equips students with the necessary skills for successful engagement.

There were a series of initial research and consultations for the course design and development, which consisted of:

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- ▶ Assessing 20+ development program structures and learning outcomes for institutions throughout Canada
 - ▶ Consulting with 8 representatives at University of Guelph: ICON, Student Life, Certificate in Civic Engagement and Global Citizenship, Project Serve, Peer Helpers, and Centre for International Programs
 - ▶ Consulting with 7 interdisciplinary development program leaders across Canada: University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, Trent University, University of New Brunswick, Algoma University, Dalhousie University, and Carleton University

Through the best practices garnered from these consultations, the course format was structured to provide an opportunity for students to engage with local and international development practitioners by implementing team-based community engagement research projects determined in consultation with community partners. The focus of engagement opportunities is on the analysis of development issues and defining related policy and practice options.

At the end of the course, students share key learnings from engagement projects and invite input from partners, peers and other relevant community stakeholders.



Since Winter 2018, Samantha and Liz Jackson, Director of the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, have been conducting research to document course impacts for IDEV*3300 students as well as highlight outcomes for university stakeholders and community partners. These findings will be published as a journal article, and also used to inform the ongoing development and adaptation of course activities.

Course Partnerships and Virtual Engagement

Samantha has brought her passion, experience and professional skills in advancing social justice and equality into the classroom by partnering with local and international organizations on projects focusing on equity issues. For two semesters the course has partnered with Cuso International through a remote partnership model. In the Winter 2020 semester the class partnered with Cuso International Colombia on two research projects looking at best practices for effective campaign strategies for grassroots, women-led organizations to combat machismo culture and femicide in rural Colombia, and best practices for effective strategies for youth-led campaigns to promote sexual and reproductive health rights in Colombia.

In Winter 2019 the course partnered with Cuso International Ethiopia on two research projects looking at best practices, challenges, risks and success factors for introducing Women Owned Homestead Production initiatives as infant and family nutrition interventions, as well as best practices, challenges, risks and success factors for women to bring Women Owned Homestead Production food commodities to market as a means of income generation.

Despite physical distance, evaluation research data from students, university stakeholders and international partners for remote exchanges suggests that the course is meeting learning



outcomes and having positive community impacts. Students indicate that the course helps them to be career-ready for entering the development field and is a valuable addition to the International Development Studies program. The course success hinges on providing mutual benefit for student development as well as meeting community partner research needs.

Opportunities for Students

To date 87 students have partnered with 9 local and international organizations through IDEV*3300. In this course, students discuss the application of development theories in a real-world context. Samantha has shared learning and resources from many of the organizations she has worked with over the years such as YWCA Canada, Ministerio de Educación Nicaragua, Community Foundations of Canada, Escuela Adelante, Intergovernmental Strategic Indigenous Alliance, Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, White Ribbon, Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County, Huron County Health Unit, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and many others. She has also brought in speakers from community development organizations to talk about intersectionality, anti-oppressive frameworks, and the impacts of social inequity. Through the course partnerships students get first-hand experience and knowledge of global social issues as well as engage with innovative solutions to advance inclusion and equity.

The course work closely mirrors the contexts, processes and practical experiences of international development specialists, policy analysts and research consultants. Learning to be adaptable to carry out emergent research projects and communicating effectively to be responsive to the needs of community partners increases the capacity and employability of students.

Institutional Support

The Global Engagement Specialist is a co-appointed position with CESI/GIDS within the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences. The benefit of having the position at both CESI and GIDS allows the opportunity to leverage the support and expertise of the faculty and staff in each unit, as well as the support at the College level. The position increases expertise and capacity to support global community engagement, contributes to scholarship and methodological innovation in the field, and creates deeper collaboration between the two units.

Additionally, there is benefit to Samantha being both the Instructor of the course and manager of international partnerships so that IDEV*3300 is well positioned to ease students' transition to the workforce by providing an opportunity to apply and advance international development skills in a professional domain.

