

The December 4, faculty fellows meeting will focus on the topic "*Internationalizing the Curriculum: Its Value.*" Below please find three articles. The first two articles are http links and the third article is annexed below.

Article 1

Locating Curriculum Studies in the Global Village

<http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=3958655&db=aph>

J. Curriculum Studies, Vol 32, No. 2, 2000, Noel Gough

Article 2

Changing Higher Education Curricula for a Global and Multicultural World

<http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=3792821&db=aph>

Higher Education in Europe, Vol 25, No. 1, 2000, Ann Intili Morey

From the issue dated May 3, 2002, The Chronicle

What Students Don't Learn Abroad

By BEN FEINBERG

Over the past two decades, many colleges and universities, including my own institution, have created study-abroad programs for their students. The theory is that in today's interconnected world, it is more important than ever that students be attuned to the nuances of cultural difference. But what, exactly, do students feel that they learn from studying abroad? Doubting that a professor could elicit sincere responses from students, I invited one of my favorite undergraduates to work as my research assistant, interviewing 30 or so of her peers who had recently returned from courses in Central America, Europe, and Africa.

The responses from Peter, who had spent 10 weeks studying and working on service projects with a group in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho, were representative. When asked what he had learned from his African experience, Peter used the first-person pronoun seven times, eliminating Africans: "I learned that I'm a risk taker, um, that I don't put up with people's bull, uh, what else? That I can do anything that I put my mind to. I can do anything I want. You know, it's just -- life is what you make of it."

Peter didn't mention that Zimbabweans live in an impoverished dictatorship where 25 percent of the population is HIV positive, and thus they cannot do anything they put their minds to -- a lesson he evidently didn't learn. Instead, like so many other traveling young people, he claimed to have learned about himself, and talked about group dynamics; students' transgressive behavior, like drinking too much; and bungee jumping at Victoria Falls --

rather than southern Africa's cultures or social problems.

And what he learned about himself sounded suspiciously familiar. After reading through transcript after transcript of stories of self-discovery by a heroic individual or a team of heroes, I recognized the not-so-exotic source -- Nike commercials and the other televised exaltations of the "extreme" lifestyle, in which advertisers encourage us to play extreme sports and consume extreme hamburgers.

Thomas Frank, the author of *One Market Under God*, has pointed out that recent graduates of leading programs in anthropology and cultural studies write many of the current television commercials. Perhaps that helps explain the anthropology and cultural-studies icons we see so much of -- members of exotic tribes and rebellious youth, for example -- and the apparent emphasis, in some commercials and programs, on valuing diversity and on blurring borders.

In any case, subtle and not-so-subtle images of America's relationship with the rest of the world permeate the televised landscape and provide potential travelers like Peter with a ready-made language for understanding their studies abroad in ways that may undermine the plans of the programs' designers.

One type of commercial model shows us exotic humans in all their tribal finery, but, in a multicultural twist, they -- Masai warriors, Sicilian matrons, Tibetan monks, Irish fishermen -- are revealed as strangely prescient consumers with a quirky knowledge of luxury cars or Internet stock trading. In one commercial, we witness an Inuit elder teaching his grandson about tracking by identifying marks in the snow. "That," he says, "is a caribou." Then, after a pause, during which the wise man stares at the snow, he reverentially intones the single word "Audi." From ads like those, astute students like Peter learn that foreigners are obsessed with us -- our commodities and displays. What we may learn from them pales in comparison with the glories that they see in our consumer lifestyle.

Other commercials reduce distant lands to images of animals or nature, and imply that nature can be thoroughly dominated by SUV's or swaggering, extreme-sports youths. Athletes and Nissan Pathfinders fight bulls in a ring, giant outdoorsmen tap the miniaturized Rockies, a hiker butts heads with a bighorn sheep. And, of course, sophisticated viewers like Peter know that all those animals are the creation of technology.

In one commercial, a driver -- insulated in his fully self-sufficient cocoon -- is able to program both the road and the various beautiful and exotic settings it passes through. Not only is the technologically empowered American greater than nature, we create nature to suit our whims. There is no outside world anymore, no dark places of mystery yet to be seen. Our SUV's do not travel to an unknown world so much as create different options from a well-known list. Television's emphasis is on how the actor -- whether a contestant on a reality-TV show or the driver in a car ad -- is seen and manipulates how she is seen. Even when outsiders exist, everyone is looking at us.

Reality shows like *Survivor* that are set in exotic, faraway locations create a world that is hermetically sealed off from reality (from real locals and the real effects of prolonged physical hardship) while playing with the most essential signs of the real -- thinning, wasting bodies and the ingestion of grotesque creatures.

When a promotional piece for the reality-TV program *The Amazing Race* shows an American

woman in a clearly foreign space -- perhaps India -- she is not troubled, confused, or interested in her environment. Instead, she strips down to a bikini emblazoned with a U.S. flag to get directions to the next challenge from a bug-eyed and eager native. "Will I wear this if it helps me get home?" she says. "Hell, yeah!" That young woman clearly did not travel to broaden her horizons. For her, India becomes, as much as Salt Lake City or Kandahar, a place for aggressive performances of her American identity -- unwrapping herself in the flag, so to speak.

In that model of globalization, where the outside world is no more than a fantasy playground whose only real inhabitants are obsessed with our commodities, it is no surprise that students like Peter ignore the presence of real foreigners and fill their travel stories with images of personal growth or bad behavior.

We now are the world, to be looked at, admired, or despised; what is important about the activity of others is their response to our display. It impresses them or -- in the case of Bush's description of bin Laden as sullenly looking at us from his dark, satellite-equipped cave -- angers them to see how free we are and how much fun we have.

Students like Peter talk about interactions with outsiders only in vague abstractions, while expostulating brilliantly about the nuances of American students' interactions with one another. Even the few individuals who left their peers to engage the outside world explained that move as an individual rejection of the group and still found it easier to discuss their fellow students than the generically defined "friends" they met at bars.

One young American who traveled to Guatemala bragged that "I have a surprising ability to relate to almost everyone," but "everyone" turned out to mean members of preconceived categories of human-rights workers, Indians, and children, whom she described as objects of more first-person sentences. She specifically excluded less exotic, fast-talking city folk who were "just different" and not worth mentioning.

Students return from study-abroad programs having seen the world, but the world they return to tell tales about is more often than not the world they already knew, the imaginary world of globalized, postmodern capitalism where everything is already known, everyone speaks the same language, and the outside world keeps its eyes on those of us who come from the center.

The question for colleges and universities is, can our programs challenge that perception of the world, instead of allowing it to sink in more deeply? The answer is probably not.

But at least we should avoid pre- and post-travel orientation sessions that focus on group dynamics and individual growth. Instead, those sessions could be used as opportunities for students to learn how to question the way that we tell stories about our travels, and to discover for themselves how those stories share features with commercials about men who play football with lions and reality shows where contestants dare each other to swallow centipedes.

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