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Pedagogy or pedagogues in the first year critical thinking classroom: helping students connect the global to the local by creating a sense of community, place and purpose

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I. Introduction

The question of whether teaching is an art, a craft, or a science is a staple of debate on topics ranging from classroom ice-breakers and clickers to social justice and equity. In “What is Pedagogy?” Mark K. Smith reminds us of the ancient lineage of the role of the *pedagogue* as a caretaker, protector and guide (in contrast to the usual fare that assumes pedagogy as simply an answer to the question of *how* to teach). As he points out, not only the Greeks and the Romans, but many other societies created a distinction between an educator as one who draws out personal learning vs the schoolmaster or teacher of specific content. Smith sees this as indicative of the differences Johann Friedrich Herbart outlines, between ‘education’ (Latin: *educatio*) and ‘teaching’ (Latin: *instructio*). Smith uses this delineation to support his argument that we need to increasingly fulfill our role as pedagogues and “act alongside” or “walk with” students, giving them time for discovery of themselves and their world because, as he puts it, education “is concerned not just with knowing about things, but also with changing ourselves and the world we live in” thus making “...education...a deeply practical activity.”¹

Smith also makes a distinction between art, science and craft that seems timely in relation to current discussions about “reimagining the first year” and particularly apt in the context of the 2017 California State University (CSU) Chancellor’s Executive Order 1100 on Area E (life-long learning and self-development) from the upper- to the lower-division (see Appendix 1 for a full definition). Apt, but also perilous because, in the headlong rush to quickly develop the plethora of courses to meet this directive we are in danger of losing sight of the opportunity to take seriously the real goal of life-long learning and self-development. If we persist in the effort to load students with more content, we are likely to fail in the creation of learning environments that *educate* students for life beyond the classroom.

Yet, truth be told, a great deal of what is talked about in discussions of pedagogy are things that were developed in front of a class, and often based in nearly equal measure on what is defined by Smith as the art (the responsive, creative, intuition) and the craft (skills and practice) of teaching. Further, it is often only after we have developed a new exercise or approach that we have the time to step back and examine the science (research-based findings).² Thus, Smith’s breakdown also serves as a reminder of the alchemy of education and reveals the commonality between the artist and the scientist in that they must both use their powers of observation to develop their craft and thereby change their methods, mode of inquiry, and sometimes even the starting premise. I suggest here that teachers must increasingly balance our goals of *educatio* and *instructio* through an active daily practice if we are to support the reality of the students sitting in front of us.

In that spirit, this paper began as a ‘case study’ of the development of an International Studies Area A critical thinking course (*INTL 100 – Thinking Critically about Globalization*). The course was initially developed to offer an internationally focused General Education (GE) course while

¹ Mark Smith, “What is Pedagogy?”, *The encyclopaedia of informal education*. <http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-pedagogy/>. (2012) Retrieved: 28 May 2018.

² Smith, “What is Pedagogy?”, 7.

also attempting to address the challenges of resilience and persistence through a practical approach to college preparedness. Exploring the development of this course has become even more relevant as discussions of the new Area E requirement emerged and merged with ongoing issues of retention and graduation. Above all, the course evolved in the light of feedback from students provided via coursework as well as other mechanisms, some designed with foresight and intention, others more “on the fly”.

Through this process, this paper has become less a formal case study and something more akin to “confessions from a classroom” as it charts the journey already traveled and looks for evidence as to why some things seemed to work, and others did not - always with the intention to consider ideas for the future. As such, it hopes to help address the research gap in student transition to college as identified by Briggs, Clark and Hall while recognizing, with them, that it shares the issue common in much of this work by being “small scale.”³

Unfortunately, for those looking for exciting new developments, the two main conclusions of this paper are not particularly startling. However, the process of reflection does reinforce the fact that the implications are potentially both deep and wide.

The first conclusion is the simple observation that upper classmen in INTL 100 were often more enthusiastic about the different support mechanisms on offer than the freshmen or first time students. Their respective comments reveal this logic as freshmen (or transfers) just arriving on campus, often felt they had no basis of comparison. They could not “miss” an element they did not know about and some felt reluctant or ill-equipped to even make suggestions as to what might be “more” helpful. They certainly seemed unclear how to fully exploit the resources on offer. As faculty, it is easy to forget the starkness of this fundamental difference in perspective and serves as a salutary reminder that freshmen (particularly first generation or URM students) simply cannot know what they do not know. They may not take up the opportunities afforded to them - not because they don’t care, but because they are simply unaware of the need for the skills and tools being presented. In contrast, many upper classmen were emphatically positive about the resources offered and consistently wished they had had similar courses/support structures. Of course, it would require perfect hindsight to answer the question of whether their younger selves would have, in fact, taken up such help. However, even if we understand this reality on some level, too often it is not reflected in the way we approach students online as they investigate and apply to the university, the things we do when they arrive on campus, and the way their first year classes are organized (or not). The consequences of this observation ripple across the university community and, I would suggest, affect the students’ expectations and relationship with the community even beyond campus.

³ A.R.J. Briggs, J. Clark, & I. Hall, “Building bridges: understanding student transition to university” *Quality in Higher Education* 18:1 (2012): 4.

The second conclusion is more about depth and the need to put the *educatio* back into General Education, particularly the courses known as the 'golden four' that students should be taking in their first semester or at least their first year e.g. Communication, English, Math and, I would argue the cornerstone of them all, Critical Thinking. If the first observation tells us that the challenge is not always about building new, or *more* structures, the second conclusion is that we need to be better at enabling first time students to recognize their own needs and ensuring they feel they can take advantage of the resources we are offering.

The implications for implementation of this approach can be profound. Rather than talking about pedagogy as teaching tips or even inclusivity, we need to reclaim the role of pedagogue and "walk with" students by focusing on the practical skills that will empower them to become resilient and self-reliant. I hesitate to use the word "consumer", but part of student resilience is their ability to reach out, engage, and request the support they need. Research clearly points to this disconnect, including a specific example at HSU of food insecurity. There is a widespread problem of the affordability of food and, we have found, a high basic awareness of the food pantry etc. among students. Unfortunately, a relatively low take up of those resources persists. Such challenges reinforce the idea that having a guide, particularly in the first six weeks, to help students make the transition to college is more than offering them information or an instructor. Whereas, the literature suggests that, if students can see and feel the connections between their pre-college life and their new world, they are more likely to want to become a part of their new community. I would go further and argue that this engagement must be two-way so they are not only empowered to seek out the support they need, but see how they can make their own contribution to the community. However, that requires them to be able to decode the rules and norms of college, reflect on areas of strength and challenges in order to develop their student/scholarly identity, and connect to their new community both on, and, I argue, off campus.

This paper argues that the new requirement for Area E to be placed in the lower division offers a unique opportunity to approach these issues systematically. However, we will need to recognize that the implications of such an approach will require high levels of coordination and collaboration across many university units and structures while potentially challenging habits that run deep in campus life.

To make this case, this paper will begin by outlining the course, its goals, and the context at HSU. The paper will then outline the three content areas of the course: critical thinking (framed here to include topics often considered 'college preparation'), globalization (localized in the state of California, but overtly connecting Humboldt County and California to the rest of the world), and service/community (as both the idea of community and how and why service learning are important).

The paper will then go on to offer a discussion of three core structural elements: a rotating group format, a writing intensive approach (based on a class-developed rubric) and again service as it was both content/theme and a significant structural component. Finally, the paper will examine two specific aspects, namely tools and resources. These include first, the practical

exercises done under the broad umbrella of self/career/ major/college readiness and second, the pilot scheme of a student classroom assistant or “SCA”.

Given that the evaluation process is key to this reflection, the process of feedback and assessment will be addressed separately, but the students’ own words and insights are considered key and will therefore be referred to throughout the paper. Many such exercises often rely heavily, if not exclusively on the traditional end-of-semester online course surveys whereas this paper has sought to draw on a broader range of material. In anticipation of this relatively unorthodox “assessment”, additional tools were included and/or developed especially for this course. They include: short, in-class writing assignments; the design of the prompts used for written assignments and the take home essay final; and index feedback card opportunities mid- and end of- semester (Fall 2017) and end of semester (Fall 2016). Given my specific interest in the optional service learning component added in Fall 2017, the addition of an anonymous online survey of the community partners was also helpful.

However, the most useful source of information was undoubtedly the formal focus group sessions held at the end of Fall 2017. Both of these final feedback tools were initiated by the instructor, but planned with, and generously conducted by the staff of HSU’s Academic Career and Advising Center and the Center for Community Based Learning (IRB # 17-093). Students were offered 5 points (the equivalent of one class exercise) to participate. Nearly half the class participated with 20 students divided between 5 groups. Due to schedules, the first group was conducted by a single staff member while the rest were conducted by a combination of two staff. All of the focus groups were transcribed by the staff member(s) who facilitated.

The views and insights gathered via this range of feedback mechanisms are integrated into each section as primary source material and the foundation for the main argument and conclusions of the paper. The ultimate goal is an honest and pragmatic examination of specific elements of a course designed for freshmen and an assessment of what seemed to work, what could and or should be revised, and what should remain under review or changed in the future as the course attempts to continue to respond to student need.

II. Background and Context of INTL 100

The CSU System, comprised of 23 universities and with 470,000 enrolled students, is the largest in the nation, but in recent years it has been experiencing a trend of low graduation rates compared to the national average.⁴ The persistence rate, defined as the percentage of students who return to college at any institution for their second year, for the CSU system is 82.3%, while the graduation rate is 57%.⁵ Humboldt State University (HSU), a small (~8,000 students), rural campus and the northernmost CSU in the system, has also been affected by this general trend, compounded, some would argue, by changing student demographics.⁶

⁴ Jacob Jackson and Kevin Cook, “Improving College Graduation Rates: A Closer Look at California State University,” *Public Policy Institute of California*, 2016.

⁵ “CSU Undergraduate Outcomes Report.” *The California State University*. April 1, 2016.

⁶ Humboldt State University dashboard – [HSU Student demographics](#)

Fall 2017 First Time Undergraduate Profile

Fall 2017 First Time Undergraduate Ethnicity				
	Female	Male	Total	%
American Indian	9	3	12	0.9%
Asian	15	6	21	1.7%
Black	35	23	58	4.8%
Non Resident Alien	12	7	19	1.6%
Pacific Islander	3	1	4	0.3%
Two or more	58	31	89	7.4%
Unknown	35	16	51	4.2%
White	271	159	430	35.5%
Totals	774	436	1210	100.0%

Fall 2017 - First Time Undergraduate - Other Characteristics			
	Female	Male	Total
First Generation	58.7%	53.7%	56.9%
Low Income	56.2%	50.2%	54.1%

Origin			
	Female	Male	Total
Local	6.5%	7.6%	6.9%
Northern California	11.9%	8.5%	11.7%
San Francisco Bay Area	15.6%	13.8%	14.9%
Sacramento	4.7%	5.5%	4.9%
Coast	2.2%	3.2%	2.6%
Central California	7.8%	7.1%	7.5%
Los Angeles	37.8%	39.2%	38.1%
San Diego	7.5%	9.9%	8.4%
WUE State	4.7%	3.4%	4.2%
Other State	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Foreign	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%

In response, HSU has been experimenting with a range of strategies including pre-semester immersion, major and/or place-based themes, and cohort scheduling. At the College level, there has also been some discussion on ways to address the differential success rates in the traditional “golden four” of English, Math, Critical Thinking and Communication as well as other lower division (LD) GE courses. More recently, campus attention has shifted to Executive Order 1100 requiring GE Area E (life-long learning) courses be moved to the lower division.

The focus here is a General Education Area A, critical thinking course, *INTL 100: Thinking Critically about Globalization*, first conceived in 2014. Unlike many other LD GE offerings, the course was not used as a way to double count a GE course as part of a specific major, but as part of an effort to support internationalization on campus. While ensuring the course met the state-mandated learning outcomes, the course’s intention, as stated in the course description was the “Development of critical thinking through an understanding of the principles of reasoning and tools of evaluation and argumentation with application to questions of globalization concerning economics, politics and culture.”⁷

The course was created under the auspices of a campus faculty development workshop with a view to creating an approach to critical thinking that would not only cover the basic learning outcomes, but help first year students transition to college both in terms of the skills and their connection to the campus and community. Specifically, it was intended as an alternative to the Logic course that tends to dominate the critical thinking offering from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences but had, at the time, a relatively high rate of Ds, Fs or Withdraws (DFW rate) as well as an achievement gap between different segments of students.

CAHSS GE/Institutions Repeated 2014/15 through 2016/17 (at least 25 repeats or repeat rate of at least .2) Report generated: 08-JUN-17*							
Subj	#	Title	Takers	Repeats	% repeat	Once	Twice
'Golden Four' in CAHSS							
ENGL	102	Composition & Rhetoric A	1,841	59	3	59	
ENGL	103	Composition & Rhetoric B	1,609	48	3	47	1
COMM	100	Fund Speech Comm	3,640	164	5	156	8
ENGL	104	Accelerated Comp & Rhetoric	1,597	98	6	94	4
PHIL	100	Logic (Area A)	1,501	123	8	118	5
Institutions							
PSCI	110	American Government	3,257	225	7	214	11
HIST	111	U.S. History Since 1877	1,774	128	7	117	11
HIST	110	U.S. History to 1877	1,055	88	8	84	4

*Each category is organized in ascending order of % of repeats.

⁷ [INTL 100 Catalog Copy](#)

Subj	#	Title	Takers	Repeats	% repeat	Once	Twice
Other GE courses in CAHSS ‡							
RS	105	World Religions (GS-C)	1,432	50	3	50	
SOC	104	Intro to Sociology (GE-D)	1,026	33	3	31	2
MUS	104	Intro to Music (GE-C)	818	33	4	33	
ANTH	104	Cultural Anthropology(GE-D)	610	30	5	27	3
ART	103	Intro to Art History (GE-C)	593	27	5	27	

‡ All of the courses in this section are GEs but also required for that major.

Designated as a lecture course, INTL 100 meets three times a week (MWF) for 50 minutes. Unlike the other golden four courses, which are capped at ~25, critical thinking is capped at 45. This course has consistently been full (often with a wait list) and the majority of seats filled by freshmen. Anecdotally, some upper division students reported they had already failed another critical thinking class (often logic) though some also reported they had intentionally “saved” a lower division class for the end of their college career.

Fall 2015	
Freshman	28
Sophomore	14
Junior	1
Senior	2
TOTAL	45

Fall 2016	
Freshman	27
Sophomore	6
Junior	7
Senior	4
TOTAL	44*

*There was a drop in the first week – too late for the wait list to fill the slot.

Fall 2017	
Freshman	26
Sophomore	12
Junior	4
Senior	3
TOTAL	45

While the course was created to be an addition to international content on campus, the first two years of the course demonstrated that students not only needed a course on formal critical thinking skills, but perhaps more urgently, they needed support on the practical day-to-day skills of college life. It was also clear that new students had little concept of the demographics or issues in the local area - a crucial point that, in turn, affected their expectations of both the university and the surrounding community. The hope was to help them be rooted in our community while still reaching for the world.

III. Course Content: Critical thinking, Globalization and Service/community

All critical thinking courses have state-mandated requirements. These will not be recounted here as the intention is not to assess critical thinking per se, but rather to look at ways these student learning outcomes can be framed for arriving freshmen. The basic intention of INTL 100 was to present critical thinking as a practical activity that affects every aspect of daily life. The course therefore set up critical thinking not as a separate topic, but as the holistic outcome or natural result when critical reading, writing, listening and speaking are applied. Critical reading is needed to understand a contract for a job, rental agreement or health insurance. Critical listening is needed to follow the instructions of a boss, the day's news, or one's family. Critical speaking and writing are crucial to conveying our thoughts and ideas to others so we can make ourselves understood. Critical thinking is therefore not a single activity, but a range of skills that we can identify and improve upon throughout our lives.

However, as I point out in my syllabus, no one ever truly masters critical thinking because it is fundamentally about asking questions of ourselves as much, if not more, than of others, in a constantly changing world. Like sports, music or art, if we don't practice our skills they will deteriorate. To that end, a significant component of the course was a series of exercises that students usually did in their groups (more below). The goal was to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses while practicing each of these skills and reinforcing their daily application in and outside class.

Two other deliberate choices shaped the basic frame for the content of the course. The first was to offer this class in the Fall semester to reach students as they arrive on campus because, as Briggs, Clark and Hall point out, this is the "transition bridge" when students must make connections between their pre-university lives and their new experiences in college. If successfully crossed, they will be able to create their own "identity" as students, including not only their ideas of themselves as learners, but also as social beings. Whereas, failure to cross that bridge will result in disorientation and disaffection.⁸ At HSU, this is borne out by the fact that, according to the HSU Office of Institutional Effectiveness, approximately 23% of first time undergraduates are regularly on academic probation at the end of their first semester. This transition, identified by many scholars, is often seen as the task of orientation staff, student affairs, or perhaps departmental faculty, but as Vincent Tinto, among others, makes clear, this process must be coordinated and should not be limited to the first few days, but include at least the first six weeks, if not the entire first semester. As he argues, the reasons for departure at this point in a student's college career are substantively different than their reasons at a later point, but that significant institutional "front-loading" of support can help students make that transition and successfully manage later challenges.⁹

The second choice, based on my own experience teaching a 7-week first year seminar as part of a previous campus experiment, was to add a significant college preparation/ resilience

⁸ Briggs et al, "Building bridges", 6.

⁹ Vincent Tinto, "Stages of Student Departure: Reflections on the Longitudinal Character of student leaving," *The Journal of Higher Education* (1988): 451.

component to the requirements of critical thinking. The challenge was to not “dumb down” critical thinking outcomes (which some faculty doubted was possible) or, to my mind, the equally dangerous pitfall, create patronizing or condescending material for college preparation. The balance was struck by presenting the college preparation work as practical exercises in critical thinking. These exercises were not designed to replace readings on fallacies, syllogisms etc., but were built in to their group work. This way, students could work through the concepts for themselves and apply them in their own lives while at the same time making stronger connections with their peers.

These exercises will be discussed below, but they were presented as a higher level of critical thinking and offered to students as an opportunity to question not only the course material and how it was conveyed, but as a way to evaluate themselves, assess their own skills and needs, and make plans as to how they would acquire and master both the general skills and the specific course content. The goal was to engage students with their own learning process and help them become active learners in every setting. Overall, and in line with scholars such as Swanson, Vaughan and Wilkinson, the course sought to ensure that this somewhat unorthodox combination of content was “rigorous” while remaining able to “provide the appropriate levels of challenges and support” especially as their research suggests this type of approach “will potentially lead to higher first-term GPAs as well as higher rates of short and long term persistence.”¹⁰

The final content area of community or service learning evolved significantly over the first two years of the course. Originally, and given the percentage of HSU students from distant cities and regions of the state, an underlying aim was not only to teach critical thinking skills, but apply them to the broad phenomenon of globalization and its specific consequences in the local, rural, and generally economically deprived, community of Humboldt.¹¹

Yet, since the course was first offered in Fall 2015, events on and off campus, prompted further reflection on ways in which a freshmen course could help students acclimatize and connect to Humboldt County. The practicalities will be discussed further under structure, but in terms of content, this pedagogy seemed the best way for students to gain some understanding of the complex local/global issues shaping the forces at work in their new community. Thus, as of Fall 2017, INTL 100 has an (optional) service learning component and, relatively unusually on campus, added this widely recognized high impact practice to a freshmen course.

This did require some shifting of the course outline and material not so much to add more readings about Humboldt County (already present) but to add material about the definition and role of service learning so they could reflect and connect their work in the community to the concepts about globalization (and critically speak/write/think etc.) about those experiences. Also conscious that the literature suggests “social justice” is not a concept well understood by

¹⁰ Nicole M. Swanson, Angela L. Vaughan and Brett D. Wilkinson, “First Year Seminars: Supporting Male College Students’ Long-Term Academic Success,” *Journal of College Student Retention* Vol 18 (4) (2017): 397.

¹¹ INTL 100 readings on Humboldt/global California/local issues are listed as a specific section of the Bibliography.

freshmen, the goal was simply to help them become more aware of perspectives different from their own and lay the foundation of a deeper understanding of their surroundings as well as the mission of the university.¹²

Student thoughts on content areas

As indicated, student comments will be included throughout this paper as a way to gauge their engagement with each element. In terms of the specific topic or content areas of the course, feedback began in the first week through two early/short writing assignments. The first exercise (for points) was assigned and explained during the second class meeting and was essentially an email to the instructor. The due date was set as the first Sunday evening and meant they had the benefit of the first assigned reading and two class discussions while also giving the instructor time to send each student a personalized reply before class on Monday morning.

This assignment has been used in all three iterations of the course and asked students for their initial thoughts/definitions of the terms critical thinking and globalization. Given the addition of service learning in Fall 2017, the term community was added. This created a baseline of their understanding of key terms for the course while opening a channel of communication with the instructor. I responded to each student with a comment on some aspect of their email and it was interesting to note how many upper classmen were surprised at getting an individual response to this kind of assignment. One particular email from a freshman in 2016 suggests the benefits of opening a personal connection from the outset far outweighed the time required.

Dear Dr. Alison Holmes, I wanted to start off by expressing my building excitement for this course. Everything you have talked about thus far is very intriguing and I get knowledge butterflies when I step into your classroom. When I pondered the term critical thinking, the definition I came up with was "using all the knowledge you've gathered to analyze information or experiences and make decisions based off those as a collective". When I think about globalization I think about people from all over the world coming together to critically think about important decisions.

The samples below are drawn from 2016 and 2017 to demonstrate that the students' replies were not substantively different across years (despite many factors on and off campus). They also seem to suggest students saw two basic approaches to the task. The first was to offer some kind of formal definition while others gave a more impressionistic response. Interestingly, one student was already making connections to another course so clearly other instructors were talking about similar issues (arguably a crucial argument in favor of more coordination of freshmen faculty teaching/training – a recommendation beyond the scope of this paper).

Critical Thinking - email exercise replies	
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking is the process of analyzing arguments and forming conclusions based on these claims. What I think makes this such a difficult process is that it's often very easy to become so entrenched in a specific belief that one is unable to consider conflicting points of view.

¹² Matthew Mayhew and Mark Engberg, "Promoting the Development of Civic Responsibility: Infusing Service-Learning Practices in First-Year 'Success' Courses," *Journal of Student Development* 52:1 (2011).

Therefore, I see critical thinking as a very conscious act that requires the utmost focus and separation from emotion.

- The term 'critical thinking' to me means to look at something from another point of view, to dive into the construct of something. It also involves looking for proof, facts and logic to back up an inference about something.

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- In one of my later classes, my professor called critical thinking information literacy. I think this is a great term to supplement critical thinking as it means competency or knowledge is required to fully understand the issue at hand.
- Critical thinking is used to understand the motives of others and then use that knowledge to challenge your own perspective.
- To me critical thinking is considering alternative perspectives analyzing and considering why you believe what you believe and being humble enough to understand that everyone including yourself is wrong sometimes.
- Thinking outside the box to understand what's inside the box.

The content area of globalization was perhaps more complicated for some students. Many had little or no exposure to the term and there had not yet been any assigned reading on the subject and little time for class discussion. Students were still willing to grapple with the idea and came up with some interesting and thought-provoking observations that we picked up in our class discussion after this assignment.

Globalization - email exercise replies

2016

- The term 'globalization' to me means the movement of people and things around the world, driven by government, need, convenience, and connections between economies of the world.
- The term globalization means to me that cultures are expanding and intertwining. The term globalization brings up both positive and negative images; such as progress in political and economic relations, however encroachment on the environment via industry and technological advancements and overpopulation as well.

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- I define globalization as a period in time that the world is going through right now. It means the world is connecting with everyone. People from one side of the world can now easily form connections with people far away from them. Globalization is creating a more unified world where people can make financial ties with people they couldn't before.
- I feel that globalization can be a good thing for the world – a way to connect one country to another using various forms of technology. It's something that has been around for a very long time and a way to gain knowledge about different cultures; however if there are positive effects, there are negative ones as well. Globalization may be able to bring new and different cultures to various parts of the world, but wars have been fought because of differences in culture. I believe that the good weights out *[sic]* the bad though and that globalization just needs to be a team effort between the countries of the world.

During and between the second and third iterations of the class, events in the country – particularly the election of President Trump and, in our own community, the murder of an

African-American student at an off-campus party, made the idea of ‘community’ especially salient. These events also made the goal of connecting the classroom to the community through the means of service learning perhaps a more challenging, but worthwhile experiment. Their initial thoughts and comments suggest that their understanding of community at the outset was relatively fluid, but I was particularly struck by the similarity of the themes. More examples have been included in this section to illustrate the breadth of commonality and the ideas and aspirations revealed in their comments.

Community - email exercise replies (added in 2017)

- Community to me means a sense of belonging. To feel welcomed and included with neighbors, friends, family and strangers. To have a community is to have strength and connections between a melting pot of people, ethnicities, religions, political views and personal ideologies about themselves and the world, yet still feel a part of something bigger...A home.
- Community is a group of people you can connect with. A group of people who support care and connect with you and your everyday struggle. Your community can be anyone you associate yourself with, like family, friends, neighborhood, sexuality, etc..
- Community means coming together as one group or entity and supporting one another. It can be roommates living together in a small apartment, a campus, a town, or even something much larger. The underlying essential for surviving is still the same – communication, understanding and trust. Without these things, a community will crash and burn.
- Community is the coalition of peoples with similar interests or ideal whether it be preference of location or the opportunity to be with people that share the same beliefs. Community can be created between a few people or with the entirety of humankind.
- Community to me represents a group of like-minded genuine individuals who encourage me, who remind me of my strengths and weaknesses, potential to improve and who hold me accountable...on a personal level. Community has always been integral in confronting my own fears of...not reaching my fullest potential of doing the wrong thing etc. but in a positive and meaningful way. Community has brought so much light into my life.

These definitions and impressions are interesting, but only go so far. Thus, it seems important to add some end-of-semester feedback to glean any changes in their views. In Fall 2016, the idea of this type of assessment was not yet fully formed and therefore the feedback was done via a quick index card exercise. Whereas, in Fall 2017 the Center for Community Based Learning supported this project by conducting focus groups. In some ways, there is not a huge difference between the initial comments and the final feedback, but almost regardless of the year or method, students seemed to find at least two “take aways” from the course. The first was that they “found themselves” applying critical thinking to other classes and their everyday lives. Second, they seemed to feel more confident about making connections between the local and the global as well as making new (and more) connections between their campus environment and the community/world outside. A final encouraging note is the fact that during these focus groups done entirely outside class and without prompting, students regularly referenced readings from the course (indicated in the text). Also, as statements become longer, further examples have been put moved to an Appendix, also indicated.

End of semester index feedback Cards - 2016

- This semester I have learned about all of the specific and necessary parts that must up the art of critical thinking. Pertaining to Globalization I have learned/realized how interconnected the world really is, especially through the use of technology.
- As far as critical thinking is concerned, I'm almost constantly made aware how many people do not use it. I can see this through people I talk to or in the media etc..
- Critical thinking how to read and comprehend an argument I have always been terrible about understanding material but I have greatly improved. Globalization I have learned there is now a specific term outlining the advances and growth of global relationships.
- One thing I learned about critical thinking is that it is an actual subject with many important applications that can actually be applied in everyday life.
- I have learned what the aspects of globalization are and how they can led to both positive and negative changes in the environment. The aspect of critical thinking I have learned is how important it is in everyday life as well as using it in other classes.

Focus group Feedback on content topics (they were specifically asked if they could see the connections between the different content areas – more in Appendix 2)

- I also thought she did a really good job of connecting it into why we need to learn it. The first portion of the class, in my opinion, was very oriented around the importance of critical thinking and the way that globalization works. So before we were even introduced to things like transformationalism (note: course reading in a globalizing world? culture, economics and politics David Held (ed) London: Routledge, 2000) and all of these global concepts, we were introduced to the fact that critical thinking is a key component for our adult lives, and so by opening with that, I think it was a really good starter...she did a really good job of embedding critical thinking into globalization...
- I guess you could kind of feel the way the format of the class was, it kind of felt like you were learning it separately, but you definitely weren't...you could definitely take what you were learning separately and apply it to the other one. I definitely see how they connect, I feel like what she was trying to get at is saying that globalization isn't good or bad there is no such thing as good or bad, no binaries...which is why we need our critical thinking which is what she was teaching us to like...assess globalization more realistically rather than seeing things in black and white and more in like shades of gray (note: first reading of the course: "The Importance of Critical Thinking", Lane Wallace, *The Atlantic Magazine*, 2009)

Predictably, the fundamental content of the course was the basic requirements for any critical thinking course. However, this paper argues that, despite what could be seen as additional work, there are strong reasons to combine critical thinking concepts with "outside" content as it helps them apply the approach of critical thinking to something concrete. Arguably, it also helps them see why these tools are useful not only in the college context, but also in their lives off campus and beyond college. Thus, globalization theories and service/community learning concepts effectively became sites of application for their developing critical thinking skills making them both more tangible and relevant. Their ideas and suggestions for the future of the class (discussed later) may suggest that these applications were perhaps not as fully expressed as some students would have liked, but they saw the objective of combining these three areas and not only appreciated the connections that were being made, but began making

connections of their own. That said, content never stands entirely on its own, but delivered to students as part of an overarching structure, discussed below.

IV. Course Structure: Groups, Writing intensive and Service learning

If there was some concern about the addition of globalization and service learning content to a basic critical thinking course, the three structural elements of this course are perhaps more experimental or even controversial. These included the use of a rotating group structure; the determination this would be a “writing intensive” course (despite being a first semester freshmen class of 45 students); then, in 2017, the addition of service learning.

In-class Groups

As indicated above, much of the initial planning for the course took place in a campus course design workshop offered to faculty via application by instructional designers in HSU’s College of Extended Education. The primary text for this workshop was Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An integrated Approach to Designing College Course by L. Dee Fink (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013). In this text, Fink makes almost the same point as Smith (and Herbart) but identifies it as a paradigm shift from being “content centered” to “learning centered”. Further, that this learning centered teaching includes the awareness of a taxonomy of different kinds of learning: foundational knowledge, application, integration, a human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn.¹³ Key to Fink’s approach is the idea that these elements are not hierarchical, but relational and interactive which is to say that the different types of learning (including content) is enhanced by the connections made by students between the types. Essentially, Fink suggests, when students apply their knowledge of foundational concepts, they care more about the topic at hand and ultimately engage in their own learning process. This multi-level learning and process of engagement is entirely borne out in the case of INTL 100.

During the third class session (Friday of the first week) students were broken up into groups (8 groups in total - approximately 5-6 students per group) based on that day’s seat choice and an instruction of: “look to your left and right, as well as behind and in front of you, and form a working group. You need to be able to talk to each other and close enough to pass things back and forth”. As they are sitting at tables, this also encourages them to actually look around and see everyone on all sides – perhaps for the first time.

Because part of the ultimate goal is to get students to meet as many people as possible over the course of the class, later groups are arranged by the draw of a card (and slightly manipulated by the instructor). Manipulated because I am also anxious to ensure a spread of upper and lower classmen, the inclusion of a ‘spy’ (more about this later) and gender and color balance in each group where possible. Conscious that I didn’t want my role to be too blatant, I usually thought about the make-up of new groups as well as the position I wanted those students to have in the classroom prior to the rotation session. Each group number had a constant position in the room throughout the semester so it was possible to hand out numbers

¹³ Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: As Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013), 61.

in such a way that I could ensure groups fell broadly in line with these parameters. This initially caused some angst from both the students who want to always be up close and those who always wanted to stay out of the eye line of the instructor. However, this was less of an issue after it was made clear that this movement was so the instructor could actually see and hear everyone. The perceived “fairness” of that goal seemed to be agreeable to the majority and particularly welcomed by quiet students who, in a class of 45, acknowledged that they often felt passed over in their other large classes (of which they had a number in their first semester). There was always some last minute shifting, but the underlying idea that students should eventually meet and work with (almost) everyone was generally successful - a point they later commented on.

Once in groups, students were encouraged to think of these students as their home team and to sit with them each class session not least as in-class exercises, writing reviews and regular quizzes. They were encouraged to exchange contact details and form study groups particularly for the quiz at the end of each section of the course (for a group grade). For the class as a whole, I ensured that each time the groups were re-arranged, there was an exercise that included some form of ice-breaker so they could get to know their new group. In practical terms, some groups began to save seats for each other, text each other if they were late or missed class, or hand in assignments for each other. While this seemed to help the transition and some groups clearly became close outside class, there is risk as there is no guarantee all groups would gel in a meaningful or even productive way.

Arguably, the value to the students was demonstrated by the startled reaction of the students every year, at the five week mark when, having become friendly with their initial group, they experienced the first shift. Thus bearing out Fink’s point that groups can help with the problems (and dangers) of anonymity and passivity in the classroom because the group dynamic means everyone knows them, creating an expectation of engagement.¹⁴ Vincent Tinto similarly points out that “...for most students, the classroom is the one, perhaps the only place, where they [students] meet with academic staff and other students and engage in learning activities” which is why such courses require “clear expectations, timely support, feedback on assessment, engaging pedagogies.”¹⁵ For Tinto, groups are an important structural component of a pedagogy that supports his goal of creating a “classroom of community” mainly because, in his view, “participation in a collaborative or shared learning group enables students to develop a network of support – a small supportive community of peers – that helps bond students to the broader communities of the college while also engaging them more fully in the academic life of the institution...”. He concludes that, in his research he has found that a “community of classroom-based peers...served to support students and encourage their continued attendance

¹⁴ Dee Fink, “Beyond Small Groups: Harnessing the Extraordinary Power of Learning Teams” in *Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups*, Larry Michaelsen, Arletta Knight, and Dee Fink (eds) (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2004).

¹⁵ Vincent Tinto, “Enhancing Student success: taking the classroom success seriously,” *The International Journal of the First year in Higher Education* Vol 3 no 1 (2012): 4.

and class participation...They were able to meet two needs, social and academic, without having to sacrifice one in order to meet the other.”¹⁶

Student focus group comments on Groups

- So one thing that Holmes talked about a lot that the reason that she put us in groups because we're all doing different service learning and some...aren't. She really wanted us to be exposed to service learning if we weren't doing it, and if we were doing it, to be exposed to other ones. That really came out in the final presentations and I think that was a really good idea.
- I liked the different group changings we did for the essay portions - it was really nice to get feedback from pretty much everyone in the whole class because a lot of classrooms you sit in this one particular spot and you are just kind of friends with the people around you but this kind of forced you to go outside of your comfort zone and kind of connect with pretty much everyone in your class...I really liked the readings on how they connected what she was talking about in class...it was nice...how she connected everything.

Writing Intensive

For some time, HSU has been discussing the idea of creating courses that would be designated as writing intensive. This designation would be used to ensure that both class size and the basic structure of the course would enable faculty to spend more time commenting on written work and with students individually. This attribution is not yet established, but the main features of this concept were incorporated into INTL 100. The idea was to bring a number of active learning techniques to the writing assignments in a way Tinto portrays as a way for students to gain “a voice in the construction of knowledge”. The goal is that this kind of active engagement in the creation of the standards and rules of the course would give them a perspective on their work in line with what Tinto suggests would be “an experience that required students to rethink what they knew and become personally involved in deciding what they knew and how they knew it. In that way, they sought to have students take ownership over the learning process. The result was not only a sense of personal involvement in learning that students as very different from past educational experience, but also a type of learning that students saw as richer and, for some empowering.”¹⁷

Following that idea over the semester, students were required to write three summary papers (based on the readings on globalization or service learning) and four essays or reflection papers (essays were required from those who opted out of the service learning while reflection papers were done by those who had a placement). All students were required to read some common material so that class discussions were not harmed. Crucially, these different forms of writing necessitated an important discussion on writing voice and genre while maintaining a consistent assignment for all students in the form of the summaries for the main content material. The premise of this idea was that summaries are a basic building block for any type of research or

¹⁶ Vincent Tinto, “Classrooms as Community: Exploring the Educational Character of Student Persistence,” *The Journal of Higher Education* Vol 68 No 6 (1997): 613.

¹⁷ Tinto, “Classrooms as Community”, 611.

field of study. The core skills of being able to read an argument then, clearly, accurately and fairly convey the core elements of that argument in writing (or in a presentation) were offered as the foundation of their scholarly identity. The essays and reflection papers were then set out as forms of writing that build on that first level by asking students to undertake a more in-depth analysis of the argument or use a second reading and compare and contrast elements between the two (for essays) or compare their reading with their community experience (in the case of reflections). The final was also focused on their writing and took the form of a take home essay exam including three short papers either essays on the readings done over the semester or reflections on their service learning. All papers (apart from the final) were peer reviewed in class – although they were allowed and even encouraged to ask their peers or group to read and review their finals as well. Thus, while quizzes and to a certain extent, exercises, ensured they had mastered the critical thinking content, the writing assignments sought to help them practice a skill and the final became a way for them to see how far their writing had developed over the semester.

This approach to the writing element effectively supports the shared construction of knowledge in two key regards. The first was the way in which their writing assignments (particularly those based on the service learning option) brought information back to their group and the class. The second was the development of the grading rubric we used throughout the semester, which was created by the class in six distinct steps as follows.

First, we discussed rubrics generally, various definitions, and why and when they are used etc.. Then, in their groups, they did an exercise using a rubric to assess some pieces of poetry (this work was also trying to reinforce the idea of critical reading and the importance of word choice and the meanings they convey). Third, we discussed the rubric used by the university to grade the graduate writing proficiency exam or GWPE (a secondary goal at this point was to introduce them to the idea of the GWPE - and the standards they would encounter in many other courses as well as in their senior year). Fourth, they discussed (and I acted as their scribe on the board) the concepts they felt were important for a critical thinking rubric e.g. how important is grammar or spelling in this context, what about the use of quotes or evidence, how many points would each area be worth and how/whether areas would be weighted etc.. Based on these discussions, I laid out the resulting rubric and handed it out at the next class session so students could review it and make further comments. The sixth and final step was the class vote (including any final amendments) to the rubric.

Some might suggest this required a lot of time, but the resulting rubric was the cornerstone of the writing element of the course in that it was the foundation of the student peer reviews making it important to note the review process as it was integral to the group process. Each student brought a hard copy of their paper and I handed out copies of the rubric as a grid sheet for multiple readers. Students would then read their colleagues' papers and make (and sign) their comments on the paper as well as fill in and sign a rubric grid. At the end of class, each student would be given time to look over the comments and the grid and add any question or concern they wanted to bring to my attention. I would then fill in another rubric grid and make my own comments with a final grade for the assignment. As a methodological side note, I never

looked at the student rubrics until I had done my own grading so while I could not prevent myself from seeing comments on a student's paper, I wanted to try and prevent my scores from being swayed by seeing the group's conclusion. This makes it particularly interesting that I was generally within two or three points of the student-produced scores and while I was often the 'toughest' grader, this was not a forgone conclusion as some groups were very thorough.

The rubrics were also useful given that, in keeping with the writing intensive practice, students always had the option to revise and resubmit their written assignments with a standard deadline of 3-4 days after they had been returned. If they chose this option, they were required to hand in their previous paper and the rubric with their revised version. This had a twofold benefit in that students could see the specific areas where their grade changed - but I could also ensure they have done substantive work.

Comments from students reveal that while they appreciated the idea of the shared process of creating the rubric, some felt it was ultimately not particularly helpful. However, and almost regardless of the value of the rubric per se, a significant point seems to be that the sharing of their writing and the process of writing and re-writing gave them new insights into the content of the course and the ideas of their peers.

Focus Group comments on writing – more in Appendix 3

- One of the biggest parts of this class is the writing and I think by the end of the semester I improved a lot...the peer review too, I really appreciated that because I feel like all my other classmates, they have different experiences with their writing so they wrote their opinion on what I wrote and it helped me improve...specifically when we wrote about the summaries and reflections for service learning for those who did it, it was actually kind of nice seeing what they actually did and experienced...
- The entire process of reading everyone else's essays and the class really helped because it just was, it was really fun...I liked reading other people's perspectives on the articles and like mine would be like completely different. So like that also made my writing better because you'd read something you'd be like, this is interesting how they did that.
- ...in reality...I didn't really use it [the rubric]. I didn't scan their essays to see if it was structured right...I was just interested in the content and that's really what I think made me a better writer and not a rubric. I think I would have preferred just a peer review by the students and then a grade by her.

Focus Group Comments on rubrics – more in Appendix 4

- I thought the rubric was interesting to see how everyone, I guess a grading pattern people have or like people like even the vocab of it. I know we argued for a minute, like using the terms like "effective" and "strong" and what was another one arguing all about just using words and like the different meanings of those words and how a strong essay could completely be strong in a different way than like something effective being towards what you're saying. Like providing that evidence.
- I didn't completely agree with the...rubric, but I did think it was a great way for people to like connect with what they're writing. Like if we had we had a pre-made rubric and we had no say in it, a lot of us would probably be like, it was unfair and not be as enthusiastic about writing...

- I think definitely realistically, if you were going to think about it, if Dr Holmes was going to make this rubric completely on her own rather than the class making it, we would have been graded completely the same, but I feel like it goes back to us understanding why...why we need to summarize, why we need to cite things, it's just like understanding why we are being graded for these things. It just makes the learning process a lot more thoughtful and easier to understand.

Community/Service Learning

If critical thinking was the frame and writing was the foundational skill of the course, giving them something to write about and reflect upon was the contribution of the service learning placements. Tinto speaks of classrooms as “smaller communities of learning...at the very heart of the broader academic community...meetings places or crossroads that intersect...college can be seen as consisting not merely of multiple communities, but of overlapping and sometimes nested academic and social communities, each influencing the other in important ways.”¹⁸

However, what he does not discuss is the fact that uncertainty and negative events in those larger communities in which the university is “nested” are also present in the classroom and affect the learning environment. Events off and on campus over these three years led to a tense and wary atmosphere, but also reinforced and reanimated the campus discussion on a host of issues in terms of how the campus relates to the community (or not) and the expectations students bring to Arcata and their experiences once here.

One of the original aspirations for the course was to help students connect the local to the global, but in light of what appeared to be a growing breach between “town and gown”, more was needed to help students and the community to understand each other. Service learning, long recognized as a “high impact practice”, seemed to offer that possibility as it would help students and the community to connect. However, that idea required some significant structural change to the course and the consideration of some issues not regularly discussed in the service learning literature.

The first challenge was the creation of opportunities for the students, but interestingly, much of the service learning literature does not delineate between service learning courses for upper classmen vs those specifically designed for freshmen – despite the fact I would argue there are both pedagogical and practical concerns.

Bradley Smith et al are an exception to that trend, in that they directly address the issues of first year service opportunities and argue there are four “hallmarks” of “high quality service learning”. They suggest such opportunities should be: integrated, robust, collaborative and promote civic engagement. Integrated in that the service learning placement is explicitly linked to the academic or learning outcomes of the course. Robust because the opportunities actually respond to needs identified by the community while remaining clearly linked to the objectives of the course which leads directly to the goal of achieving a collaborative process for both the

¹⁸ Tinto, “Classrooms as Community”, 616-617.

development and planning of the opportunities as well as their management and evaluation. Finally, and particularly pertinent to this course, they argue that any service learning should promote ideas of civic engagement and community responsibility – by which they mean students should be asked to consider their own role in the social and political systems at every level: local, regional and international.¹⁹

These hallmarks, particularly the importance of reflection by the students on their experience, are echoed by scholars such as Chupp and Getting who argue that reflection is key to the students' improved performance in "critical thinking and reflective judgement"²⁰ while Iris Yob explicitly links service learning and the connection of students to the "real needs of the community" to the students' ability to apply their learning in the classroom to their lived experience which, in turn "enriches their knowledge and skills."²¹

In the specific case of HSU, and in the face of what could be seen as a discouraging or even depressing local and national context, there are two important factors to consider. The first is the assertion by Yob that the pedagogy of service learning for first year students leads to "greater understanding of issues and problems in the community, a greater appreciation of and ability to relate to cultural and racial difference, an enhanced belief in their ability to make a difference".²² She goes on to state that while this is not an argument for service learning to be mandatory, but it does seem clear that reflective service learning not only helps many students connect to the community – and is therefore linked to an increased desire to persist - but that the evidence suggests service learning may have "particular relevance to meeting the needs for first year and first generation students, women students, and possibly other groups of students as well."²³

However, and potentially even more important for those hoping to support a climate of equity or social justice is the caution from Mayhew and Engberg that, while service learning can help students develop a sense of civic responsibility or what they term "charity", this should not be confused with teaching freshmen about "social justice" per se. As they put it, first year courses are "an ideal space for students to make meaning of themselves in light of what they can do for others"²⁴, but "may not be suited for introducing first-years to advanced theoretical precepts involving the robust examination of the sociohistorical roots of oppression"²⁵. I would suggest

¹⁹ Bradley Smith, James Gahagan, Samuel McQuillin, Benjamin Haywood, Caroline Pender, Clay Bolton, Mary Katherine Wampler, "The Development of a Service-Learning Program for First-year Students Based on the Hallmarks of High Quality Service-Learning and rigorous program evaluation," *Innovative Higher Education* (2011): 319.

²⁰ Mark G. Chupp and Mark L. Joseph, "Getting the most out of service learning: Maximizing student, university and community impact," *Journal of Community Practice* 18 (2019): 195.

²¹ Iris M. Yob, "Keeping Students in by Sending them out: retention and service learning," *Higher Learning Research Communications* 4(2) (2014): 39.

²² Yob, "Keeping Students," 45.

²³ Yob, "Keeping Students," 51.

²⁴ Matthew Mayhew and Mark Engberg, "Promoting the Development of Civic Responsibility: Infusing Service-Learning Practices in First-Year 'Success' Courses," *Journal of Student Development* 52:1 (2011):32.

²⁵ Mayhew and Engberg, "Promoting the Development," 34.

that the experience of INTL 100 bears this out and further argue that, while service learning can help inform and engage students, there is also a real need to respect and be patient with the student' transition process. This is a real moment of "walking with" a student by opening as many doors as possible and helping them interrogate their own ideas and values, but ultimately allowing them to choose their own direction and identity.

In light of the fundamental shift towards service learning in 2017, and what I deemed to be the importance of helping students begin to see the community in a new way, I added a second short in-class writing assignment at the end of the first week. First, we went through a website with government and community data (<https://datausa.io/about/>) looking at students' home towns/counties. As we did so, we used this as a way to introduce concepts of information literacy and the importance of questioning sources of information, asking about the methodology used to gather data, and different ways one can assess the credibility of sources found on the web. After a number of students volunteered places to consider as a class – often their home town or county – we turned to the data for Humboldt County for comparison. As this was the first exercise in groups, they were asked to discuss their impressions together (while introducing themselves to each other) and then write a quick paragraph to "compare home to Humboldt" (or talk about new/different impression of the campus if they were local). Given the fact that the ideas of community/community service/service learning is a key theme of this paper, more excerpts are included here than perhaps necessary, but illustrate a sense that students express a positive view of the "smallness" of Arcata and commonly suggest that it is more friendly than their home. As this was an in-class written assignment, their comments were not anonymous. Of the ten comments here, the first five are students of color and five are freshmen. Each group is listed in class order (abbreviated as Sr, Jr, S, F).

My community: in-class writing assignment

- To me home is where my family is...my community is very small because I tend to keep to myself and don't go out much. So I'd say my community is small and quiet. I'd say home is very different than Humboldt because it's not a big city. As to community here in Humboldt I say it's pretty much the same. It is small and tends to be quiet every day. I decided to come out here because it was away from home but also it was a place I haven't seen (nature and tight communities) the change was big. I don't think I experienced culture shock because I came with an open mind but I guess you could say I notice the lack of Hispanics on campus. (Sr)
- My community is my family and friends. They help support me and offer some emotional support. I also have a community here in Humboldt since it's my final year here. My community here really offers emotional support and since we are similar in age and experience we connect a lot more. I think I experience a little bit of culture shock since Arcata is so small compared to back home. There is more white people here in Arcata compared to back home where there's a lot more diversity. Classes also gave me culture shock because some professors treated you like equals compared to high school teachers. (Sr)
- I have two homes. Both are very close to me but share the same qualities of togetherness, security, support and encouragement. One of them I grew up in for 18 years and consists of my mom, dad and brother. This is the ultimate home or homes b/c it is where I know I'll be accepted back unconditionally. My second home is here in Arcata. I live with 3 other girls that I've known for about two years. They are my family up here. I come home to them every night

and we've all been there for each other since day 1. The difference between home 1 and home 2 is...home 1 was designed by my parents who set strict rules and expectations. Home 2 was created by 3 young adults who are learning as they go. Home 2 I feel a great sense of freedom and a lot more responsibility. (Jr)

- Humboldt is different from my hometown in the way that it's much smaller and more isolated. The surroundings here are beautiful in a different way, more natural than urban. I came here mainly because of the environment and the smaller community (S).
- Humboldt residents tend to be more welcoming and friendly than the locals of San Diego. Residents in San Diego tend to be more cautious with who they trust. (F)

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- In Fresno there are farmers markets. Everyone is pretty much outside since it is always warm. My community is very friendly and diverse. In Fresno it is like Humboldt in that way that there is always agriculture but...different...landscape. Also since Humboldt is a small county everyone is very friendly and always say hi where as in Fresno people will say hi but won't have a continuous conversation. By all the friendliness in this community up here it was definitely a culture shock but in a good way. (Jr)
- I call home Oceanside...My community is very beach kind of community. Everyone is very into surfing and going to the beach in their spare time. It is pretty different from Humboldt, people don't tend to be as kind. The difference is why I came here because I did want to experience a different environment and new people. (F)
- My hometown has a population of just under a thousand and that makes it's really easy to streamline goals and projects. It can also be slightly suffocating and that's part of why I'm here. Arcata is kinda the perfect city and location for the next phase of my life. The people are similar to back home but they have more variety. I'm definitely experiencing culture shock, but not as bad as it could be. Things are different here but enough is similar that I think I can learn to thrive while still challenging myself. I'm excited to become an active member of the Humboldt County community. (F)
- Coming to HSU I'm constantly meeting new people to the area. They all come from Southern California and are completely blown away by not only the nature but the people here. One thing that has stuck with me is the new students say that it's so friendly here when you pass on the street...you make eye contact and smile say hello a quick conversation that wouldn't happen somewhere like LA...the longer you live somewhere and invest your time in it you begin to understand all its inter-workings *[sic]* and moving parts positive and negative ones. I think that's how it goes with every community, you can learn from it or be ignorant of it but it will always be there and as long as you live in it you will be part of it no matter if you choose to or not. (F)
- I call my home LA the melting pot of people or people and cultures...Overall the community...felt very fast paced...as though they made fake connections. Humboldt feels very different, where people seem to be more happy *[sic]* and actually wave to each other and make an effort, this place definitely feels like a small town. The difference is definitely why I chose this place, I love the mysterious trees and the feeling of a close knit community. In LA everyone is trying to be a big fish in a little pond but here it feels as though everyone's just swimming along happy. (F)

True to the promise of "confessions" from the classroom, the service learning opportunities for INTL 100 were not developed with much of this research in mind, but based on the comments from students and the goal of connecting freshmen to their new surroundings in a real and relevant way. My approach was based 20+ years working with the non-profit sector and volunteer organizations including the running of a university student volunteer bureau in Hyde

Park on the south side of Chicago. Thus the opportunities sought for this course were not developed on the basis of service learning literature, but my own five criteria based on practice.

- 1) The campus Center for Community Based Learning had to be involved and approve any placements or agreements with all partners. They are the ongoing connection between the campus and the community and, as such, they are vitally important - from first contact, through the ongoing maintenance of community partnerships, to the necessary follow up and assessment;
- 2) The Center's list of potential placement opportunities were narrowed based on the very broad notion that the local and the global could be connected through the placement and/or that represented areas or jobs of interest to students across the 3 HSU colleges;
- 3) Particularly important given most would be freshmen, placements had to be within a reasonable distance from campus/accessible by public transportation so as not to disadvantage students without cars. They also had to be in areas that were public and generally deemed safe (and with hours that would not require students to be on public transport late at night);
- 4) Partners had to be willing to meet with me so that, together, we could develop specific job descriptions for each placement (this was important to me given my work on career curriculum on campus as well as trying to impress on the students the fact I expected them to bring the same commitment to this volunteer work that they would bring to a paid job and view it as a "contract");
- 5) Partners needed to understand that these were largely freshmen, new to the area, and be willing to adjust their expectations in terms of the level of work or expertise these students could bring as well as be willing to offer support and supervision.

The final list of partners (note: names of the schools have been anonymized) included:

- Elementary School #1- a 1-1 or small group friendship club for students deemed 'at risk' due to economic or social issues, sometimes connected to language issues;
- Elementary School #2 - similar to above but more in a group setting;
- Middle School - an after school program where students supported staff and supervised students in a variety of activities;
- SERVAS - primarily office work for a peace organization that vets and connects hosts around the world with travelers- "peace one conversation at a time";
- Eureka North Coast Veterans Resource Center - primarily office work but often interacting with veterans coming in for advice and support;
- SCRAP Humboldt - a repurpose/recycling center that runs a small store and workshops as well as providing some programming for teachers and schools - students helped run the store and offered/organized/supported at least one community workshop;

- Redwood Discovery Museum - a small, hands-on, experiential museum serving the community but particularly low income families, often single mothers – students helped with the weekend programming generally and created international storytelling time which involved choosing a story from another part of the world and then talking about that place with the children i.e. its geographic location in relation to Humboldt, its language, currency etc.;
- Arcata Economic Development Corporation - students were taken on tours of local/global businesses and tasked with writing brief marketing/summaries of the companies;
- Rotary International - two students did some career exercises (a resume [two drafts], locate job descriptions of interest for 8 jobs and write and cover letter for one of those jobs [two drafts]). The final assignment was to give a five minute talk to a Rotary lunch based on research of Rotary's international work and compare it their work in Humboldt and/or their own home town. At the lunch they also had to network and demonstrate this by getting basic information from five people including their first and last name, their job and something about them – this placement was reserved for upper classmen and supervised primarily by the instructor.

As it was a pilot, the official catalog course description did not include the service learning element which effectively meant students were not aware of element until they walked into the class. This led me to believe not many students would be interested or able to take part (due to class or work time constraints). However, it was quickly clear that this was an incorrect assumption as 36 students initially expressed interest. This led to some scrambling, but happily, the organizations were able to accommodate the 33 students who ultimately pursued a placement. For the future, there are two important lessons. The first was the basic need for an instructor to over-provide options (with the caveat that this must be made clear to community partners who may be disappointed if they put in work and receive no students). The second was the importance of coordinating the instructors seeking placements in the community. This looms as a potentially serious problem as community partners do not have time to coordinate campus people clamoring for their attention and so it will fall largely to the campus Center for Community Learning to coordinate and even direct this process. However, it also suggests that all instructors undertaking service learning – particularly with freshmen – need to agree a code of conduct and to be completely transparent with the CCL and with the community organizations so as not to confuse students or jeopardize those partnerships.

Focus Group comments on Service Learning

- Yeah, it was cool learning other aspects of the community outside of the college itself, and hearing kids point of view especially for us student who are never around kids, so it was weird at first, I had to remember how to be a kid again but it was a cool learning experience, yes.
- Definitely building the relationships like not just with the kids but with the staff members. But yes, basically what you said with how people react towards it because when people hear that you volunteer...it's like yeah it does feel good....
- For me, if I wasn't at [Elementary #2]...nothing would change if I wasn't there besides having more people to talk to the kids, but I think I made an impact on some kids lives since I was there and they definitely made an impact on me and gave me a new perspective and new understanding...

The most in-depth and specific comments on the work students were doing in the community is found in their reflection papers. With 45 students in the class and 33 taking part in service learning, this is a considerable resource that cannot be shared in its entirety, but some salient points will be offered as their thinking reveals a great deal about their process as well as the benefits and issues. It is also interesting to note that even students not taking part in service learning still commented on this aspect of the course based on what they had heard in their small groups or from final group presentations.

The first reflection paper was due early October and connected to the reading of a Commencement Speech by David Foster Wallace (in They Say, I Say: the moves that matter in academic writing 2ed Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, Russell Durst (eds) New York: W.W. Norton, 2012). Many students had only recently been able to begin their placement (particularly those requiring a LiveScan the cost of which was kindly covered by the College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences so it would not prevent students from participating) but these initial reports offer their first impressions of being in the community. The speech is essentially an exhortation to a graduating audience to step out of their own world and try to see the world through the eyes of others. This becomes clear from the statements and connections made by the students.

Reflection Prompt October 5 – more in Appendix 5

- Wallace writes, “To have just a little more critical awareness of myself and my certainties because a huge percent of the stuff that I tend to be automatically certain of, as it turns out, is totally wrong and deluded” (Wallace, 2005)...highlights the idea to instead question the possibilities. To actually pay attention to one’s surroundings and not jump to conclusions...By training our minds away from the automatic ways of thought that makes us assume and be uncaring of others and our environment as we close off all possibilities that could in fact free us in our day to day lives by keeping an open mind. By working at the Discovery Museum, I plan to adopt the principles of Wallace... The objective of the museum is to create a hands-on learning

experience for children in an intriguing way, which will encourage them to want to continue to explore and keep learning. As I can tell so far, the museum has created a positive and safe environment to accomplish their goal and the people there do seem to be open minded to where the kids are coming from and want to make the best experience they can for them. I know that by working with the youth of the community will definitely lead me to perspectives I would of never been able to inspect before. Just being able to understand at a child's level will unlock many possibilities to community in which we live.

- Currently I am practicing on seeing the world how others see it. Being raised by two Arab immigrants who fled their homeland to escape the grips of war, I have been taught to see the world only how they see it. If I were to possess this single perspective, I would most certainly hold a narrow and unrealistic reality on the matter. For instance, I was told that veterans and murderers were the same thing while growing up. Due to this, I hope to broaden my view when volunteering at the North Coast Veterans Resources Center...By opening myself to new perspectives I have been able to critically challenge and disassociate myself from the views of my parents, allowing myself to find my own. In a world surrounded by biased pressures, we must sift through them using critical thinking to guarantee we stay true to our own morals... Critical thinking is relevant and the practice will enable us to overcome the future issues...I do believe volunteering at the Veterans resource Center will give me different perspectives so I can see the world how others see it. I can assume veteran are the ones to blame for the high rates of poverty and drug abuse associated with their demographic. However, I could choose to consider the fact that current systems and politics [cause] veterans to fall down...an unsuccessful path. Overall, exposing myself to different worldviews will broaden my awareness of other possibilities.
- The work I am doing for my service learning has helped me with my critical awareness since I get to meet and work with so many different people. I am volunteering at [Elementary #2] School and I have met over 50 kids in the past week. Meeting and talking to all these kids and hearing some of their stories of their daily lives helped me realize that my long and hard days weren't so bad. One day a girl had lost her jacket on the playground and she came to me hysterically crying, I told her "it's OK it's just a jacket don't cry you can always get another one" after this she only began to cry even more. She then told me that her parents don't have enough money to buy her another jacket so she was going to have to wait a whole month till she was able to get one...I only saw her suffering and put my own solution to it without realizing she might not have the same luxuries as I do. That helped me open my eyes and be more critically aware of the way I think and the things I say.
- I think that working in the community will give me that different perspective. After reading the article about Humboldt County's poverty and seeing the data maps it made me want to become aware. I'm here in Humboldt at the university where I am separate from the community that actually lives here. I too live here, in a sense, but I don't focus about the local community as I am consumed by the university community. Now that I've had a chance to see some of the kids that attend the local school in Arcata, I can see now the way they hold themselves up, speak, and act to truly reflect the environment they grew up in. This is also why I think working closely with

these kids in a 'friendship club' will not only give me insight but also given them a mentor from the outside of the community they know. Wallace is an advocate for not falling into a routine and taking the time to critically think about the world outside of your own. I agree with Wallace as I have become a victim of being involved in just my own world. I am also a part of the greater community and should take my place.

The second reflection prompt was due after the Autumn break and was connected to the reading of a speech by former President Obama entitled 'A More Perfect Union' (in They Say, I Say: the moves that matter in academic writing – 2nd ed - Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, Russell Durst (eds) New York: W.W. Norton, 2012) and asked student to consider what their colleagues at their service learning placement would say if they read the speech.

Reflection Prompt November 29 – more in Appendix 6

- I fulfilled my service learning requirement with the Arcata Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) meaning that I was able to tour local businesses and speak with the owners about the effects of globalization on their business and the struggles of succeeding in Humboldt County. If this speech was read to the AEDC and the various local businesses that I toured I believe they would respond solemnly. What Obama addresses in his speech is a shameful and shadowed part of American history, one that many people do not enjoy discussing or admitting, but the AEDC would agree with the former president's sentiments on the importance of unity, mutual understanding and support in the United States. I believe they also would resonate with his statement on racial inequality and the struggle that many Americans face, African American or not, succeeding in today's broken system. Globalization, I have learned, is apparent in...everyday life from the clothes I wear...the food I eat and the jobs that will be available to me in my future.
- I believe that Obama's speech is impactful and it speaks to the capacity of humanity to unite to achieve what is good for all of us. I see this in the organization I have been volunteering at. At the creative reuse center SCRAP people of all walks of life donate creating materials, office supplies, hardware and more to sell for little money back to the community. This joint effort ensures that thousands of tons of waste are recycled and repurposed and that anyone, regardless of their race, class, gender, profession, or privilege, has the chance to develop their creativity and create real change for our world.
- The topic of diversity and equal opportunity is very important for schools and educators to think about. It is critically important that all students feel safe in order for them to learn. The staff at [Elementary #1] School would surely agree with this speech by Obama. I think this also ties into globalization as discussions about cooperation and resolving political difference is relevant everywhere and key to beginning to resolve conflicts. Globalization has definitely shaped the world around us, however not as a new phenomenon. Historically, the effects of globalization have not been the same for different groups and it continues to affect different regions and peoples in a wide range of positive and negative ways. I think globalization could be affecting the children I worked with by the jobs their parents have...and economic stability...
- As we come to the end of the semester and the end of my time volunteering for this organization, I have come to realize how much globalization actually partakes in Servas's mission. As we have learned in this class, globalization wouldn't exist without the advances that technology has made...technology facilitates Servas's member-outreach process because people

can become members with just a click. ...Living in Arcata has also helped me realize how globalization can negatively impact us locally.

These reflections were encouraging and echoed clearly at the end of the semester when, in the focus groups, they were asked about the benefits of service learning both to the community and to them personally – even if, for some students, the shorter final was part of the attraction.

Focus Group comments on Service Learning – More in Appendix 7

- Definitely it was the best way to learn about globalization. Applicable to this course specifically, but I think the idea that freshmen should partake in service learning is really great...to go genuinely out of the classroom. That's a nice thing, just to give you a break and something different, I guess a different way to think about those ideas made you think for sure.
- I kind of felt connected to HSU [before] but that connection to the community was really new for me because I wouldn't really go off campus because I didn't really know where to go or where to start and sometimes I don't feel safe off campus so that's another thing. But yeah, finding those spaces where I feel comfortable and where this like other community members there too. I valued that.
- I think any time you get to spend time outside of class with your peers strengthens the bond between you...I saw other students at SCRAP I volunteered with them and had workshops with them too so definitely I know them better...I liked having the experience at a place that's in town because I like taking my friends there now and I'm taking my family there when they come so it definitely let me get into that part of Humboldt that I didn't know about before.
- Personally, living here and growing up here I already feel a part of the community but going to US Servas I had never heard about them before so I think that service learning allows you to connect to different organization that you might not be aware of especially freshman coming here, I think that instead of making you feel left out, service learning kind of bridges that gap between the community and HSU. Because like I said, growing up here, HSU seemed like this big school on the hill that I was never apart of and I'd always want to be here, and when I finally came here I was like "okay I have all these resources that I didn't know HSU had".
- I think it would be super beneficial to have freshmen working in the community, especially because in the beginning of the year we were learning about how we perceive the community and how they perceive us, how we're only here nine months out of the year, there's going to be differences in our views and I think by addressing that [and] teaching freshmen that Humboldt County is very, and Arcata, is very community-oriented and getting your foot in the door and teaching you that volunteering is very easy here...that's a really nice concept as a freshmen ... and it was nice that we had a shorter final.

While the focus groups offer many perspectives, arguably the most useful comments in terms of the service learning are those found in the final essays where students read “Looking back, Looking Forward: Where do you go From Here?” by Peter J. Collier and Vicki Reitenauer (from *Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service- Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities*, Christine Cress, Peter J. Collier and Vicki Reitenauer et al Sterling VA, 2013)

- 1) As you reflect on your service learning experience, what did you learn about yourself, your community (home), and Humboldt County in this process? (be sure to briefly

introduce the group or organization you worked for and your own community before you answer each of the three parts of this question and use course readings - including citations! - where useful/relevant).

- 2) What processes of globalization can you identify in the issues you saw in your service learning experience (be sure to talk about how the local affects the global as well as how the global affects the local and use course readings - with citations! - where useful/relevant).
- 3) Find a news article that relates to the issues raised in your service learning experience (e.g. education, K-12 schools, child welfare, peace and conflict, recycling, environmental issues etc.) and write a short summary paper on that article. Be sure to connect your service learning experience to the topic of the article and explain why you think they are linked in some way. ATTACH THE ARTICLE and a description of your search process e.g. keywords, search engines, library resources etc. (5 points will be automatically deducted if you do not do this last step).

In terms of timing, it is important to recognize that the focus groups took place at approximately the same time as they were working on their final papers (they were given the prompts two weeks in advance of their due date) and perhaps explains why some of the answers in their papers echo those from the groups.

FINAL – DEC 8 more in Appendix 8

- Personally I was surprised to learn that the majority of small business in Humboldt County are actually widely impacted by globalization even those that do not export or import goods or labor. The simple existence of technology and trade agreements such as the TPP and NAFTA greatly influence the scope of the global economy and local business, and even rural Humboldt County must adjust accordingly.
- Not only did I have the opportunity to learn about my community here in Humboldt through my work with service learning, but I had the realization within myself that I truly feel that Humboldt is my home. I learned that a community built on trust is stronger than one built on success, and that no matter how deep the struggles of Humboldt are, you can always bet that you'll have the locals to have your back. I've learned that I love this area so deeply that I emanate this feeling of community in everything I do. A part of me knew that by working hand in hand with the community, I would come to this realization and I am undyingly grateful for the lessons service learning has taught me.
- Working at SCRAP made me realize how valuable this experience is to everyone involved. For me, it made me feel like I am a part of Humboldt's community rather than just a region I go to every ten months of the year to learn. It made me realize that there is more to Humboldt County than just HSU and that I have been limiting myself to my own boundaries rather than opening myself up to the community.
- In conclusion, the Redwood Discovery Museum, although it plays a small part in Humboldt County, has shown me how to potentially run my own nonprofit makes an effective way to reach out to the children of the community...Through this volunteering experience, I have learned the importance of not just studying a subject, but actually going out and seeing what is happening out in my own community and taking action where I see it is needed.

- Before enrolling in the course...I remember believing that we live in a completely globalized world. Now I know that I didn't even understand what that meant...I can see myself beginning to grasp the concept of globalization and noticing it within my everyday life...I have participated in a handful of community service projects but not one of them has helped me grow so deeply on a personal level. This experience not only helped me grasp a more realistic understanding of how globalization has affected the way our actions interact with the local and global relationship. This opportunity also challenged my personal 'truths'...In other words I am beginning to...think for myself and that's the most meaningful lesson.
- What I learned about my community was that every community, including my own, can use a helping hand. My community is small but still in much need of attention. Resources are often limited so what [Elementary #1] was often tasked with was providing basic needs to struggling families. One of my kids told me that he slept in a chair because his mom is still working on getting him a bed...Humboldt County as a whole is a struggling county... Through my service learning I think I learned more about the Arcata community...I agree that service learning is very valuable when it comes to using your academic knowledge to better the country and nation. Each change that is made to a community has the ability to have a ripple effect. And all change starts with one person.
- Prior to my volunteer time and this globalization class I didn't really think much about the effect my community had on me growing up, but now looking back I can really see how your community shapes what type of person you are...moving up to Arcata and participating in this service learning activity gave me a broader look on how other communities in California work...there are many things I learned about Humboldt county through my service learning but I think the thing that stood out to me most is how unified this community feels compared to back home...The second issue I discovered while volunteering at the middle school was the poverty in the community...when I first moved up to Arcata I saw there was a lot of homelessness in town but I always just assumed it was the people who migrate to Humboldt County to find work in the marijuana industry, it shocked me when I realized...homelessness...also occurred with families.
- In conclusion I have learned that community based service learning increase one's capacity to apply knowledge and skills to civic issues through a collective effort with the mutual goal of social justice and the improvement of communities. The city of Oakland and Humboldt County although at first appear different, both share similar issues that 'at risk' populations are confronted with. I believe the problems these places face can be solved with more efficient collaboration and navigation of difference. I am now confident with my future capabilities civically engaged citizen, and look forward to partaking in more service learning opportunities in my community to find more sustainable solutions for long terms improvement of the society in.
- Awareness and education are key in order to invoke action. I think that by teaching the local population, young and old, of the issues we face with poverty and unemployment we can begin to help initiate change in our community. Knowing there are homeless children attending [the middle school] ... is something that makes you think. If everyone had a chance to walk in those kids' shoes I believe there would be a lot more motivation for change in the community.

While anonymity is crucial to ensure students feel free to speak their mind and express their views honestly, the disadvantage is that the single student's story is potentially lost. It is (appropriately) impossible to connect the various assignments and the focus group comments of students but, in the interests of assessment and observing progress, it did seem valuable to try and follow the trajectory of at least one student through their responses from the beginning

to the end of the semester. The comments of a sophomore in the College of Natural Resources and Sciences who worked with Rotary can be found in Appendix 9.

V. Tools & Resources: the practice and application of content and structure

The final area to be addressed is related to both content and structure, but is separated from those more traditional frames to convey the fact I consider these to be the means by which we extend the content to students and put tools in their own hands so they can be more resilient when dealing with the flow of the semester, particularly their first year. These resources and tools also relate directly to the process of feedback and assessment of the course as many of these tools and resources opened new channels of communication to the student. The tools consist of the ten exercises worth 5 points each for a total of 50 points (Note: the class was not done on percentages or weights but each assignment was given a point value and students were informed of the point scale and what was needed to achieve each grade. This grading style was used because it was clear that many students do not understand percentages, find the idea of weighting stressful, and have difficulty working out their grade when some assignments are still to be completed. In contrast, in this system students can simply keep counting their points). The resources included a student classroom assistant along with other networks and connections that will be discussed below.

The class exercises were not difficult and often done in class with their group. Rather, they were intended primarily to help them learn something about their own strengths and weaknesses, practice a specific critical thinking skillset often related to “college preparedness”, and hopefully bond with their group. The combination was designed to help them feel more prepared and thus more resilient in both the academic and social spheres. That said, students with an unexcused absence for the day could not make up an exercise, but those who sought an excuse were able to do the work on their own (and if this was not possible, they were excused). For this discussion, it is useful to have a brief overview of the exercises and the overall purpose of each one.

Exercise 1: Email the Prof

The three questions included in the first exercise have already been discussed as the email to the professor (including the WikiHow with tips on the etiquette for emailing a professor).

Exercise 2: VARK (Visual, auditory, read/write, kinesthetic learning inventory questionnaire)

This requires some explanation as there is debate and even controversy on the validity of this approach. Students answer questions about their learning styles and preferences and then they are ‘assessed’ on what kind of learning style they prefer or if they are multi-modal. The key to this exercise for this class (and why it is done so early in the semester) is that it is about challenging students to think about the process of learning and also to step back and assess the types of content they are being asked to learn across all their classes e.g. art will be more visual and music will be more auditory, history is likely to be heavily read/write while chemistry lab will be kinesthetic etc.). Once they have determined their strongest ‘mode’ (or whether they are multi-modal) we brainstorm in groups and as a class about their other courses and devise strategies they can use to adapt their own strengths to any type of content delivery they may

encounter. We talk specifically about different note taking styles or study techniques they might create for the classes that fall 'outside' their preferred learning style. This is presented as a critical or meta thinking exercise as they step back and consider the ways in which their instructors deliver content as well as their own responsibility to engage with the material - or talk to their professors about issues they might experience in those classes.

Exercise 3: How to read a scholarly article.

This is a short video with a quiz so it's about critical listening and reading. The video breaks down the anatomy of an academic article and offers tips on how to interpret or understand a scholarly piece. Responding to a student's request of "can you show me how *you* do that" we now go through the first reading they will be required to write a summary for as a class exercise. I put my personal copy of the article on the projector so they can see my system of taking notes and, using the language of the video, we talk about what I have marked/underlined and why, and compare that to their own copies]

Exercise 4: Assessment using a 'rubric'

This exercise has been mentioned as part of the writing element of the course and this is the poetry exercise where they are asked to examine the words and tone as well as apply a rubric to one of three poems we have read to each other out loud in class. We also discuss the importance of looking up words or ideas that are unknown or unclear (including practical instructions on how to do that). Note: the poems are the *Caged Bird* by Maya Angelou, *Love Sonnet XVII* by Pablo Neruda and *Thinking* by Walter Wintle. We read the Wintle poem and *Humpty Dumpty* by Lewis Carroll aloud in class.

Exercise 5: Six Hats

This exercise is based on the Edward De Bono approach to the different roles people have in group settings and represented by hats of different colors. The goal is to ensure that different voices are all heard thus making a group not only more diverse, but more effective. In class, they are given cards with colored hats they are to play in a discussion of a short newspaper article about Humboldt County. They are asked to swap hats at regular intervals while someone takes notes. At the end of class, note-takers report as to how the group fared and any conclusions they came to about the process or the issue they were discussing.

Exercise 6: Citations - purpose and practice.

This is essentially an exercise in information literacy, finding and assessing good sources as we go over various HSU online library resources and particularly the International Studies Library Research Guide that I built and maintain (<http://libguides.humboldt.edu/intl>).

Exercise 7: Deductive and inductive reasoning

A classic critical thinking exercise this involves mapping syllogisms etc..

Exercise 8: College Wandering Map

This is an introductory career exercise that explicitly helps them connect their high school lives to the new college activities. This was timed just prior to Autumn break (for many, a time of

intense homesickness and exhaustion) and combined with information about campus clubs/activities/and counseling services in an effort to help them with their transition issues by reminding them why they are here as well as help get them involved - or get support.

Exercise 9: Evidence and Citations

This takes the form of a citation 'treasure hunt' in which they are given an assertion and they have to look for the evidence (in one of the articles they have read for class) for a quote that supports the argument posed.

Exercise 10: Scientific Method

This is a brief in class exercise in the form of a true/false questionnaire about what constitutes a 'good' question and how (or whether) it can be 'proved'.

The intention for all the exercises is to try to time the topics and skillsets at moments through the semester of maximum impact (and usefulness). Bearing this in mind, and in consultation with campus RAMP staff, the exercises tried to follow the flow of the "Student Stress Schedule" as adapted from the Illinois State University Office of Residential Life - RA Handbook and Resident Advisor Training for the Department of Residential Life at Lewis & Clark College ([Student Stress Calendar](#)). This approach explains, for example, the timing and pattern and why the early exercises are about self-exploration and learning basic reading and research skills. Or why, just after they do their first group shift and as roommate issues often become a problem, they learn to appreciate the value of other voices in a group. The second half of the course is dominated by exercises that become more specialized or academic as final papers and assignments become the focus of their attention. The one exception is during the "longest week", just prior to autumn break, we do an exercise that gives them the opportunity to think about the connections between their high school and college experience and consider how that relates to their choice of major and/or career. This also has the benefit of reminding them, just when they are feeling low, why they came to college in the first place and offering them information about campus resources and groups in their areas of interest.

Interestingly, though at a very different level, the identification of the flow of student concerns from the pragmatic perspective of a stress calendar is reflected in the academic literature on student transition. Tinto, in particular, identifies the "stages of student departure" and the "distinct stages through which new students must typically pass".²⁶ Referencing the work of Arnold Van Gennep, Tinto discusses the relationships between succeeding groups in a social setting as a progression through three distinct phases: separation, transition and incorporation and each with its own rite of passage.²⁷ Each of these stages is relatively self-explanatory in that separation involves the decline of interaction with a previous group while, in terms of the college experience, the key stages are transition in which the individual learns the knowledge and skills required to be a member of the new group while incorporation involves the

²⁶ Vincent Tinto, "Stages of Student Departure: Reflections on the Longitudinal Character of student leaving," *The Journal of Higher Education*. 59:4 Jul-Aug (1988): 439.

²⁷ Tinto, "Stages of Student Departure," 440.

demonstration of competency in the new skills.²⁸ Tinto's main point in applying concepts associated with the study of traditional societies is that, while these different stages are inevitably stressful, they need not lead to a student's departure. "It is the individual's response to those conditions that finally determines leaving or staying..."²⁹ and, I would add, the level of support a student receives, informed and guided by an understanding of these stages.

In the context of INTL 100, the intention was, rather than overload students at the outset with information they did not need immediately, the exercises could be a practical way for the course to anticipate and provide support for various skills at the most relevant moment in the semester. The hope was that, while remaining rigorous and insisting on a high standard of work, the group exercises would, at the same time, encourage students to have confidence in their own ability to achieve the tasks being asked of them. I have argued that critical thinking can, and should be used as a frame for college readiness and that it can and should be offered in conjunction with other content - in this case globalization as applied and lived in the community. Before this course, I would have thought that students are not especially aware of the idea of college 'readiness' or 'preparedness' but it would seem from the focus groups that even if students don't necessarily recognize this terminology as used by administrators and faculty (and why should they), they do appreciate the skills they gained if primarily after the fact. In a way, this could be related to the observation upper classmen are more grateful for resources being offered to freshmen. It therefore falls to faculty to make these connections overt (and ideally coordinated between similar types of courses) so these messages are reinforced across the student's academic and social experience. The focus group comments here are listed by the three structural elements of the course: critical thinking, the group structure, and writing (subdivided by summary writing, need for evidence, and citations).

Focus Groups: practicality of critical thinking and college readiness

- ...I didn't notice anything specific like being as college-ready skills, but a lot of the stuff I learned, critical thinking was did actually like help in other classes this semester and hopefully in the future...the critical thinking parts were pretty good and especially when we were going over argument structure and stuff like that. So in other classes I use those arguments and my papers had a little more flow to them and...they weren't so jumbled up and it felt like they actually made a good argument...it was also a good way to see, like when I was reading other classes, to see whether or not when I was researching was valid material to put into papers and stuff.
- I think [critical thinking] is just a skill useful for any college student really or anyone in, in society. I think that she did a good job at explaining why knowing these critical thinking skills is going to be beneficial in our future. And how it makes an argument stronger. I think that's the whole point of 30 people thinking your essays have more like integrity...or it just sounds better, tighter and like, you know what you're talking about.
- ...she definitely helped me grow on these skills that are definitely going to be used all throughout college and when I get out of college but just the thing that I really admire and value is her basically telling us the reason why - because you know, I think that's why high schoolers

²⁸ Tinto, "Stages of Student Departure," 441.

²⁹ Tinto, "Stages of Student Departure," 445.

tend to not understand because when you don't know why you are summarizing or what's the importance of citing someone or whatever, you are just like "I don't want to do it!"...

Focus Groups: practicality of groups

- She definitely taught us that it's crucial to be able to work with others, all of our quizzes or group quizzes and for many people that's frustrating, but you have to and you have to learn how to work with others. And I'm, that's definitely a huge thing that needs to be worked on and she's done a very good job at teaching us that it's important.
- ...I also liked how even aside from like the, the course itself, a she would bring up events that were happening on campus and, and also um, placed the emphasis on how our peers is our community - the people in her class. So it's important to get to know them.

Focus Groups: practicality of summary writing

- I really liked that we just learned how to write a summary, first I was like "are you serious what do you mean learn to write summaries" but really, I didn't know how to write a summary right. I was always super biased, you know not thinking about my direction, about what I'm truly saying, about how I'm representing this other author. So it's really, it was a lot of fun because now I can see myself really taking the time to understand what they really were saying so I can really represent them thoughtfully and instead of...because you know I wouldn't want someone to do that to me and it just made a lot of sense including this learning how to summarize and all these things. She was just kind of also helping us understand academia, how it works, kind of like why you have to be respectful to others and kind of join into the conversation and like it's a discussion and things like that (based on readings from *They Say, I Say: the moves that matter in academic writing* – 2nd ed - Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, Russell Durst (eds) New York: W.W. Norton, 2012). So, on top of giving us these readiness skills on like in college of summarizing, citing, she gave you the reasons behind it, of why you need to, so it was a lot more thoughtful understanding why we do these things.
- I think that specifically with the summaries focusing on those, you don't really know how important they are until you are forced...because when you're in high school and they are like "write a quick summary about this" and you don't really second guess it, you just say "Oh this person said this" but...you kind of having to think outside of the box and be like "okay I'm joining this conversation, this isn't my view, this is someone else's view that I'm representing" so I have to be true to the other, provide citation, making sure that everything you're saying is cited and that other stuff as well (this references the same chapter from *They Say, I Say* as above).
- I think...with the summaries it wasn't like we had anything to go off of with our knowledge it was just evaluating the paper and his opinion on globalization or critical thinking and the reflection was more, with our service learning, how we related that to what we learned about globalization and critical thinking. So it just kind of helped going back and forth between learning new stuff and reflecting.
- I think being able to summarize a paper is a really valuable skill especially in college because a lot of what we do is just gathering research and putting it into another essay, so being able to evaluate an essay's main points and then laying them out and getting critiqued on it by your peers and by the teacher I think it was really helpful.

Focus Groups: practicality of other academic skills e.g. evidence and citations

- I could see that college readiness or college preparedness, as in like when we did...structures for evidence and learning about arguments and what is a valid argument, what is valid evidence, different types of evidence...also peer reviews. They began to become more brutal, you know, I started with getting a 14, 15 from my peers and then going down to like 12, 10...I was getting more honest reviews on my whole entire essay structure. And it was actually pretty cool because we designed that essay structure. So it was like, all right, well I can see what people consider qualifiable [*sic*]. It was quite interesting to see the college readiness there.
- I saw [college readiness] when we were preparing or when we were learning about citations. I'm like, I know a lot of us were doing citations differently and then she took the time to explain what she was looking for and explain how to do your own citation...and what is a reliable source to use...instead of just going online to look it up. So I thought that was really helpful and helped me with other classes...

Student Classroom Assistant (SCA)

Apart from the inclusion of a service learning component for freshmen, perhaps the most innovative aspect of INTL 100 in Fall 2017 was the use of a student classroom assistant. In this case, it is relevant to know that the International Studies major has a capstone course that is offered only in the Spring. A student from the local area, Spencer Greay, had just come back from a year in Spain (study abroad is required in the major) and had only the capstone to complete. Rather than hold Spencer back from graduation, and bearing in mind my intention to include a service learning component to the class which I feared may involve extra work, I agreed that Spencer could take his capstone as an independent study. We agreed that he would complete the other requirements of the capstone (a career and an academic portfolio and a series of assigned readings about pairs of 'change' leaders) but his final project – worth 50% of his grade – would be acting as a classroom assistant for INTL 100 and a final paper on first year/critical thinking issues and his role in this experiment.

The idea of a classroom assistant was essentially based on my own experience of this class and discussions with other faculty about the challenges of a large class – particularly of freshmen. High D/F rates and obviously high W rates were not, we felt, simply the result of students failing to understand the content or instructor, but often the result of class absences and/or lack of social connection. Anecdotally at least, it seemed that students were simply ignoring (or not seeing??) emails while large classes and classrooms, made it difficult to catch students for that key conversation. This prompted the idea of a classroom assistant akin to a K-12 teacher's aide than college teaching assistant and more the result of practical support than deep research.

From the outset, it was explicitly understood that Spencer would not assess, grade or offer students feedback on their work. His role was simply to attend most lectures, get to know the students, support in-class group activities by handing out or taking up papers, and walk the room answering questions (mirroring what I was doing). From the perspective of student support and persistence, he was there, not only to offer a "fellow student view" to the students I felt might be in trouble and directed him to, but also to observe the group for himself and quietly approach those he felt could use some encouragement or perhaps information on

campus support services and resources. Again, this plan was not based really on the common sense idea that having someone whose job is watch the class as I taught it would be well placed to spot behaviors or hear comments (often intentionally kept away from the instructor) that signaled a student was in need of support.

Given Spencer's role as additional follow up to my own outreach, it is important to provide some context here about the attendance policy of the course. INTL 100 has both EXcused and UNexcused absences and students were tracked via a sign-in sheet for each class session. To get an absence EXcused all a student has to do is make contact (preferably by email) in advance or up until 5:00 pm the day they missed class. There was no requirement for an 'excuse' or an 'explanation' – only notification. The sign-in sheet asks students to print and sign their name and it is explained that, as it's a signature, to sign in for someone else is effectively identity theft and will earn an F for themselves and the person they signed in for. A student's UNexcused absences are then listed on the next sign-in sheet (excused absences are not) so that, when they sign in the next time, they are confirming they are aware of their absences. If they feel a mistake has been made, they can come to me to correct the count, but appeals must be done at the time of the next class or it stands. In class, I do explain the high correlation between attendance in class and good grades. However, my main goal is to be totally transparent and so I explain to them that the attendance policy and sign-in sheet are my early alert system. I repeatedly remind them that "I can't help if I don't know" and this system helps me know as soon as possible if a student is having issues.

Each UNexcused absence is followed up with an individual email from me simply asking if they are all right and remind them of whatever assignment is coming up etc.. However, with the addition of the SCA, I sometimes asked him to do a second follow up if I got no reply and in the hope a student-to-student contact might have more success. Beyond that, we would both watch for that student's next appearance in class and he would help me catch them for a conversation before they managed to duck out the back door.

Finally, and to support Spencer in this role, he was also part of a training program for major-based peer mentors run from the RAMP office. As well as giving him some background, information and confidence in the role, this training also meant he could be given access to a student's personal data e.g. GPA, probation status, and whether a student was deemed to be "at risk" via the MAPWORKS retention and tracking software system. MAPWORKS has primarily been used by RAMP mentors, but has not yet been rolled out across campus. In this case, it was helpful as it gave us an initial sense of who may need attention and while it is a rough system, it did give us two data points – their entry and their mid-semester "rating". This meant we were able to use it as a starting point to share our impressions not only on how all the students were doing, but specific people Spencer could keep a special eye on for any signs of difficulty.

This approach is entirely in keeping with Tinto's assertion that classroom community is as much (or more) about a "supportive atmosphere" than about student or faculty traits³⁰ or Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld who argue that "the presence or lack of social support networks and supportive interactions is a major factor for students in deciding whether to stay or leave"³¹ - while lamenting that much of the literature has been overly diverted from social integration to conversations about interactive or collaborative techniques in the classroom.

As indicated at the outset, these findings are not startling, but the implications are both broad and deep. As Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld conclude, "Levels of fear about the social side of university life predominate in the accounts of students' early weeks at university. Students made clear their urgent need for both physical and social opportunities, and space for making contact with others (social interaction). We have argued that integrating into the university is a complex process, and finding a place between old and new social contexts creates tensions for students which are often difficult to resolve; for some students 'over-attachment' to social contacts at home can lead to withdrawal from university. We have also documented students' views on perceived or actual support received; especially important was emotional support for feelings of self-confidence and easy in the self, but instrumental, informational and appraisive support give students confidence in terms of their academic work. It is clearly the case that, as academic staff, we need to ensure that students have a wide range of opportunities to form alliances with other students and with tutors, but our findings suggest that university estates departments and accommodation services also have a crucial role to play in this respect."³²

The addition of a student in the classroom as an intermediate level of authority was a new way to offer students another layer of social interaction and support as well as a bridge to the instructor. The role also provided a way for the instructor to follow up with students using a 'voice' that was perhaps less intimidating. Upon reflection, the fact that this opened what was effectively a private channel of communication between the SCA and the students probably should have been considered in more depth, but in this case, the question did not arise given the long-standing relationship between the SCA and the instructor. I always had complete faith that he would be sensitive to moments in which he felt he could help and those where he should refer a student to other sources of support on campus - me or some other network. For the future, this level of trust may not always be achievable, but the use of a senior in the major and the extra support of peer mentor/RAMP training provides some assurance that this role could be repeated with confidence.

The "Spy" Network

The idea of the SCA might have been enough of an experiment for one semester, but when I saw the roster for the class I noted there were four International Studies upper classmen in the

³⁰ Vincent Tinto, "Classrooms as Community: Exploring the Educational Character of Student Persistence," *The Journal of Higher Education* Vol 68 No 6 (1997): 601.

³¹ Paula Wilcox, Sandra Winn and Marylynn Fyvie-Gauld, "It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people: the role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education," *Studies in Higher Education*, 30:6 (2005): 720.

³² Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, "It was nothing to do with the university," 720.

course I had previously taught in other courses. Spencer and I therefore opted to create a third tier of support in a network of “spies”. The spies were invited by me, via email, to an initial conversation about the class. At that meeting, I introduced Spencer and explained his role as an extra layer of support to students, particularly those who might be struggling. I then invited them to step up as leaders in their respective groups and help students with questions about how to interpret the course/my instructions etc.. I asked them for permission to ensure they were not ever together in a group so that they could continue to have that role and finally I asked them if Spencer could, from time to time, ask how their groups were going. The title of spy is obviously overblown for effect (which they enjoyed), but I did give them permission to talk freely to Spencer about any concerns they had for themselves, the class, or students in their groups, thus opening an even deeper layer of social interaction and feedback. Throughout the semester, I periodically asked Spencer how the spies were doing and he indicated that he appreciated having them spread between groups because it gave him a more natural connection to walk up to different groups in the classroom. He did convene them from time to time and/or asked them questions about the class atmosphere via email, but he never disclosed the contents of those conversations so any follow up that he did as a result of that channel remains unknown to me. I suggest that his value as an addition to the class, as conveyed in both the mid-semester index card feedback (“awesome”, “he’s da homie”, “he’s bomb”) and in the focus groups (below) reflect the fact that students appreciated this relatively unusual connection to an older student. Further, that he was both conscientious and sensitive in his dealings with the students and the spies who came to him for support, as reflected in his capstone paper.

This situation occurred on multiple occasions, often just after the class had ended. A student asked a question directly of the SCA, but not knowing the best or “right” answer, the SCA directed the student to the professor...You could see the student ease their way up to the professor, unsure in their approach. On some occasions the SCA accompanied the student to the professor, but always following the student/professor interaction, the SCA would follow-up with the student to ask, “how did it go?” and the overwhelming majority would respond in a very positive manner. We can see that the SCA was instrumental in initiating contact between the student and the professor, which may have never happened if there had not been a prior student/SCA interaction. By helping to create this student/professor contact the student is benefited because it shows them that the professors are there to help and assist them in their journey, with this in mind, the hope is that the student would now have more confidence in approaching other professors or others on campus for assistance, be it inside or outside the classroom.³³

Thus, while their observations strongly support Wilcox et al’s assertions about the importance of social integration – it is also clear from the focus groups that they didn’t need Spencer for academic help as much as they valued his presence as a helpful senior who has made it

³³ Spencer Greay, “Innovations in first year courses: student classroom assistants and student persistence”, International Studies Senior Capstone paper (unpublished) 2017.

through. It was not specific academic help or a broad idea of social connection they appreciated, but somehow the combination of the social within the context of the actual classroom made a difference. His presence seems to have helped create a sense of community in the class as well as a stronger connection to the campus and their hope of creating a 'scholarly' identity.

Focus Group: SPENCER – even if you didn't use him, were you glad to have this resource? More in Appendix 10

- We were introduced to a senior...and I found it helpful for planning out my future not in this class...I don't think I ever asked him questions about this course, but I did ask him questions about planning for the future, just...being introduced to...a senior who had, has to go through this stuff was helpful. That would be helpful if there was like one student assistant that was the major of that course in every freshman course I would definitely feel super.
- I think that up to the student, individually, like if some kids feel more comfortable going to him then they will go to him or if some feel comfortable going to Holmes they will be go to her he's just kind of like a safety net...kind of like a peer without being a peer.
- To be really honest...I didn't actually use Spencer for what he was required to do, like I would just talk to Spencer and it was nice being able to kind of have him there...I think that if I was an older student and I was having a fellow student in that class who knew the ins and outs of Holmes and was able to help me kind of navigate her, because honestly when you first meet Dr. Holmes she is kind of intimidating, you're like "wow she's kind of scary" but I don't know. I became more comfortable with her and I wasn't afraid to approach her but...having a Spencer there as a resource I think would be very valuable for future classes.
- I did not use him in like an academic way whatsoever but the thing is I don't want you guys to think that he was not useful at all because he made it like such a fun environment which may seem very like "oh not that important" but I feel like at really is because it's a great learning environment we honestly did joke a lot in that class, she is so funny, he's funny, they would joke around, make games...
- Because he is an older student, so being able to kind of socialize with that student kind of bridges that gap between freshman and older students because, it's the same thing when you are in high school. You don't really want to go approach the seniors and just start up the conversation with them but when you have someone like Spencer there who is kind of like "Hey, I'm here to talk, what's up, how are you doing?"

VI. Feedback, Assessment and Next Steps

Given that, as of Fall 2017, INTL 100 was going to incorporate a number of significant changes based on the first two iterations of the course - including the use of service learning for first semester freshmen and a student assistant - it was important to be intentional in terms of the number of type of opportunities for feedback and assessment. This was particularly true given that the standard anonymous course evaluation process at HSU relatively recently moved online and has suffered the predictable decrease in participation (less than half of the students responded to the online evaluation for this class in 2016 and 2017). Other mechanisms were therefore created and deployed throughout the semester to ensure students had the opportunity to engage with the design of the course. Most of the six opportunities listed have

already been discussed, but moving towards a discussion on 'next steps' it is perhaps useful to see the full list as well as recap the overarching lessons.

- 1) HSU's end of semester anonymous online faculty evaluations (responses: 20 in 2017 and 16 students in 2016);
- 2) Two rounds of anonymous index cards in both 2016 and 2017;
- 3) Student classroom assistant;
- 4) The Spy network;
- 5) Structured, face to face, feedback groups (5 groups, 20 participants);
- 6) Anonymous online survey of the community partners.

In terms of the online evaluations, it is probably not surprising that the comments found there sound very much like those from the focus groups as it is probably safe to assume that those who took the time to attend a focus group session were also likely to fill in the online evaluation. What is perhaps more interesting from an assessment perspective is that the comments in 2017 are longer and draw out larger themes or impressions of the course while those from 2016 are very specific and classroom oriented. One could suggest that the addition of the service learning/ reflection element shifted the attention of the students towards the 'bigger picture', but that may be stretching the data.

Online Evaluation 2017 - complete the sentence "Overall the moments in this course when I was the most engaged, excited, and involved as a learner were when...." students offered comments about both the topic and the structure of the class, but all reveal that the practicality of the course was the most "engaging"

- I am very appreciative that I had the opportunity to take this course as it has helped me improve the way that I think critically and how I absorb my surroundings. I believe that Prof Holmes has truly given me perspective and made me question my beliefs in a healthy manner such as one that broadens my understanding of the world around me. I am fascinated with the concept of globalization and I believe she did an outstanding job presenting relevant information that makes the class content easy to understand. I was unsure of my major when I came to this university and I strongly believe that this course contributed to my decision.
- We discussed theories of globalization (even the notion that the world might not be as global as we are led to believe) and applied critical thinking skills to carefully question and analyze arguments that are presented to us, which was really fun and interesting in class discussions. There were a lot of time, especially near the middle of the semester onward, when multiple students started to analyze and engage more critically with the content, even theorizing certain factors that potentially played into various examples of globalization, policy, etc. that the instructor presented to us. I could that that throughout the semester, a few students in particular improved upon their ability to discern and break down problems, which was enjoyable to see. I enjoying learning how to 'unpack' my thoughts more thoroughly and it challenged me to apply this skill set to every facet of my life –not just academics.
- Spencer. As an upperclassmen, I think having a student who isn't in the class but understands the material be present is a great resource. They are less scarier [sic] than a professor at times (not to say that this professor was scary/ intimidating) but I think ways to help bridge the usefulness of a "spencer" to the needs of freshmen would be to have them send emails to check

up on students, even if it is a general hey how you doing, a check in. Could be a quick (optional) 1 point per week to respond and also to help Spencer understand the needs of the classroom.

- When Dr Holmes goes off on her tangents about the world.
- The professor would connect the topics we were learning about to real life scenarios. The more a teacher does this it makes the coursework seem more relevant and applicable to real life.

Interestingly, answers to the same question from the online survey in 2016 focused more on the in-class activities and particularly groups and writing.

Online Evaluation 2016 - complete the sentence "Overall the moments in this course when I was the most engaged, excited, and involved as a learner were when...." students offered comments about both the topic and the structure of the class, but all reveal that the practicality of the course was the most "engaging"

- Group quizzes. I felt as if I really had to challenge myself to prove myself useful to my group.
- I enjoyed the readings and papers.
- I fully understood the material and when we engaged in feedback when turning in our essays.
- I loved the in-class activities in our groups, including our group quizzes.
- I reading the assigned articles for summary papers
- When I was most engaged was when we would review each others papers and also when we would discuss the articles and what we liked best about them, what we took away from it.
- The group quizzes was smart because we learned to work with people we didn't really want to at first.
- lectures were when I felt the most engaged.

Outside the classroom, the views of the community partners are also important although there were not many responses. A short survey was sent on the 2 February (i.e. 6-8 weeks after their involvement with the course was over) and all the partners who responded indicated that their experience was positive. There was a suggestion was that perhaps we should consider some way to put an element of evaluation from the placement into the student's class grade which will be investigated during the next round of discussions with the community partners.

The focus groups also produced a range of suggestions from the very practical suggestion of having the class meet twice a week for an hour and twenty minutes "so there's more time" to the idea that the class should be more like other golden four classes and have only ~25 students "so you could become more connected to the students. Because I have some friends...that now I'm friends with and hang out with outside of class and I think that's another level...making connections with fellow freshman...so two classes of 25. I know some professors don't like teaching the same classes, but I think it would be beneficial, because then you're not lost. And I know that Holmes knows your names, she learns everyone's names but I think that having that kind of one on one is really important and that something really special about HSU, they are able to have these small classes and offer it one on one with the professor".

One relatively small, but interesting suggestion specifically on the presentation of the content was the idea of "a web map that explains the main aspects and like how it connects other

places and giving us a visualization of what we are going to be learning and not just slides and statements...so instead of just an outline text format more of a like a visual creative..."

In terms of assignments, one student made the request that current events be used more often and explained that this idea was based on the existing assignment that asked them (using the information literacy/library search exercise) to find their own article illustrating one of the features of globalization. The student had found this "super cool and it just bridged a lot of the connections of the things that I wasn't understanding how globalization affects us on the globe or, you know, what I wasn't getting, it just made a bunch of the connections, that's why I feel like current events would really help people grasp it".

Another student recalled the in-class exercise in which we went through my own notes of a reading as a class and broke down the argument together. The student indicated that "I would have liked to the critical thinking part like go through during the class and like break down...what the different things are. Like in the beginning of the semester we had an article and she went down and talked about like the evidence and like how does highlight the evidence and like the main idea and like talk about that. So if we did that more, I feel like it would be easier to understand some of the structures of essays and how, one essay could be different from another but have like the same structure and stuff like that."

Next Steps - not a 'Conclusion'

Many of the suggestions offered have merit and the fact that students came up with some very practical as well as creative suggestions indicates that they were actively practicing their critical thinking skills, which is encouraging in its own right. However, there are two points to make in terms of this course and changes to both its specific form and the implications of this reflection on the broader area of first year courses. As promised, these conclusions are not new or startling, but could require change that is both wide and deep.

Tinto convincingly argues that "At no time is support, in particular academic support, more important than during the critical first year of college or university when student success is still so much in question and still malleable to institutional intervention...a key feature of such support is its being aligned or contextualized to the demands of the classroom and thereby enables students to more easily translate the support they receive into success in the classroom."³⁴ It would easy to think that the key phrase here is "institutional intervention", but this case study leads me to conclude that Tinto's real insight is the call for the *alignment* of "academic and social support for basic skills students in ways that allows them to obtain needed support, acquire basic skills and learning content *at the same time*"³⁵ (emphasis mine). For most universities, that requires a huge amount of coordination not only between faculty, but also between academic and staff units in ways that are not necessarily clear or easy. HSU

³⁴ Tinto, "Enhancing Student success," 5.

³⁵ Tinto, "Enhancing Student success," 6.

has created a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. The document has been years in the making and currently includes many elements touched on here, but it remains to be seen if the coordination and collaboration necessary for the alignment that Tinto recommends, and as supported by the experience of this class, will be the result.

Looking at the current shape of INTL 100, I would say that, on the basic content and the framing of critical thinking as a holistic exercise, the course has worked. Further, that the combination of critical thinking with globalization has achieved the intention of bringing international content to a freshmen GE class. The group rotation and writing intensive approach seems to help them engage with their own learning and with each other, thus building community in the classroom. Meanwhile, the addition of service has made a profound difference to their connection to the world around them and to their sense of a shared community and personal identity(ies).

In keeping with 'confessions from the classroom' mode, it is my intention to continue to steer this course by the map provided by my students through their writing and feedback. So, to the student who would like to reduce the class size to 25, I wholeheartedly agree that it would make community easier to create, but that suggestion may be beyond my ability to change - though there are a number of options I will investigate. The idea of a creative visual seems very helpful and I will seek to include more current events (and allow students to search for more of those on their own) while also providing them more modeling of my own 'scholarly' habits. I will also try to locate or create more basic research tools and guides that students can use to master the strange language of higher education. These would include things like a 'getting started guide' and a higher education vocabulary list which I can incorporate into the International Studies Library Research Guide. Not mentioned by students, but a gap that stands out both in terms of first year experience and the content of globalization is financial literacy. To address that issue in the course and on campus more broadly, I have commissioned a student to create three financial literacy modules that I will add to the next iteration of this course along with a second major/career choice exercise.

To the student who would like more time in each class, I would say two things. The first is that while I share that desire, the importance of seeing freshmen three times a week cannot be underestimated as a way to create a sense of habit and connection and so I think I should continue that pattern, at least for the time being. However, I understand the problem and I hope the other significant changes to the course will address that sense of being rushed.

Originally, I effectively used critical thinking learning outcomes to frame globalization and connect them via first year/college readiness skills. I then added service learning as a way to link the community of the classroom to the community at large. In large measure, and based on the various assessment tools created for the class and initial student success rates indicated in their comments and the lack of a DFW or achievement gap, I would submit that this approach has worked - up to a point. However, the current shift in Area E does, as argued throughout this paper, presents an opportunity to do more. Critical thinking is an ideal frame not only to address the issues identified by the students and to implement some of their suggestions, but

to create community and cohort across an entire year. A longer timeline would help students connect to the local and to the global by using the content of globalization as well as the content and structure of service learning.

To that end, paperwork has been submitted and approved for an Area E, College listed (AHSS) course, 104S 'The Global Meets Local in Humboldt' which will continue to use the frame of Humboldt in a global context while wrapping in basic critical thinking concepts. This also offers the possibility of expanding work on college readiness and practical skills. The second semester critical thinking course is also in the process of being approved as an official service learning course while retaining the 'INTL 100 Thinking Critically about Globalization' title. This new frame would create more time to focus not only on the traditional critical thinking outcomes, but also to apply those skills and implement some of the requests from students e.g. more current affairs, more searching on their own and more breaking down the arguments together as a class. Both courses will still focus on creating community inside and outside the classroom via the group format, writing intensive work, student classroom assistants and crucially, a service learning component that could now extend across two semesters.

While each course would remain free-standing and students would not be required to enroll in both parts, the hope is that students deemed to be "at-risk" could be encouraged to take this as a themed two-semester, cohort building course. This would support a sense of group identity across an entire year while encouraging students to volunteer one or perhaps even two semesters gaining invaluable experience and connection to their new community while building their resilience and college skill base. However, and most importantly, this would provide the space to "walk with" students and offer them a bridge to their education and life beyond college rather than simply more instruction.

Appendix 1: Area E

CSU GE-Breadth Area E
Lifelong Understanding and Self-Development

Courses that meet the learning objectives of Area E draw on findings from the biological, behavioral, and social sciences to study humans from psychological and physiological perspectives.

From Executive Order 595

This area requires a minimum of 3 semester units or 4 quarter units in study designed to equip human beings for lifelong understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities.

Instruction approved for fulfillment of this requirement should facilitate understanding of the human being as an integrated physiological, social, and psychological organism. Courses developed to meet this requirement are intended to include selective consideration of such matters as human behavior, sexuality, nutrition, health, stress, key relationships of humankind to the social and physical environment, and implications of death and dying. Physical activity could be included, provided that it is an integral part of the study described herein.

Suitable Content

With the exception of courses in physical activity (detailed below), reviewers expect courses in Area E to include three kinds of inquiry:

- Sociological:** in this context, the relationships between an individual and broader society.
- Physiological:** the human body as an integrated organism with systemic functions such as movement, nutrition, growth, reproduction, and aging.
- Psychological:** the study of the mental processes that create consciousness, behavior, emotions, and intelligence.

Any single course should address all three – though not necessarily with equal emphasis. Submissions in this area fail when they focus on a single learning skill (e.g. library use, computer literacy, or study skills for college success).

Appendix 2 - Focus group Feedback on content topics additional comments

- I think the course is structured very well. Again, going back to the mixing between critical thinking and globalization and originally starting with the critical thinking. She did a good job lecturing and making sure that we knew - if I had a dime for every time she goes, “does this make sense?” I'd be rich because she truly, truly, cares. Yeah. So she's a great professor.
- I believe like starting with critical thinking was a great way to make everybody begin thinking outside the box and then introducing globalization, like expanding your mind outside of your own world, your own nation for that matter. Thinking internationally, thinking how to communicate with one another.
- I liked the way it made us think and I like the way it's interconnected...I just liked how it made me think a little harder and like, even though...it would make me frustrated, it made me want to do better, but I think that's just Holmes...but I think...it should be required as a lower division... like your first two years because as freshmen going into college, the things being taught critical

thinking wise and globalization...people need to be more aware of what's going on and it should be taught to you as young as possible.

Appendix 3 - Focus Group comments on writing

- I really liked [the writing]...it really helped me like...get my critical thinking...But in general...I do...agree...that...it should be like something that...everyone...should take. I feel like all my classes it definitely was one of the classes that I got the most out of it, but for me only really writing wise in a way because you couldn't walk in there and they're like wow, you could write it 20 minutes before class. Like if it was shit she was going to tell you. Yeah. Which is cool. And like she really, she cares and she will sit down and take the time and so I think Holmes is the perfect person to be teaching this course.
- On her prompts and I feel like in a way she was kind of trying to fish out, not fish out, but like see who could take on this complicated prompt and who was kind of like I don't get it. So, but then like those that didn't get it, I feel like she also did a good job in communicating with them. So I feel like she wants us to recognize...what we need to work on.

Appendix 4 - Focus Group Comments on rubrics

- It was definitely a new experience. I had never created my own rubric before and it was interesting to see how people value different things...but yeah, I got a lot of good feedback.
- I think you definitely get to get that perspective of how exactly am I going to grade someone else's paper, like what are the standards that I am going to hold it to because you also have to realize as a student coming up with a rubric, you're going to be graded on this as well, so you can't be that person that is like, "Well I'm going to hold them to the highest standard" because then you have to realize, I am going to be held to the highest standard as well. In the beginning I thought making the rubric was a little bit pointless and I didn't really give much effort into it because I felt I didn't really need to do this but going on and realizing further down the line, having this rubric I kind of knew the ins and outs of it and what to expect so I knew that when I was writing my paper and it was 11 o'clock at night I was like "okay I just have to meet these standards". But I think overall it definitely did show me that you have to be aware of what your teachers are grading you on because it's important and they are going to look at these things when reading it.
- I think that the rubric gave me a standard to meet when I was writing my summary papers, I was like "okay, I have to do this and I always had my rubric next to me to make sure that I met that. Towards the end I got rid of the rubric when I was writing it because I wasn't really paying attention to it and I knew what my group members were looking for and that kind of thing. You kind of got to realize that everyone in the class was becoming more and more aware of what everyone else was looking for so you kind of got to kind of not be so dependent on the rubric...

Appendix 5 - Reflection Prompt October 5

- Wallace's speech ties in well with the service learning project I am doing at [Elementary #1] School and with everyday life. The project we are working on is a lunchtime club with several 5th grade students that are struggling with belonging and getting along. The goal is to foster community among the students and help them learn how to be friends and express themselves in a constructive way...At first glance the school seemed very hectic and chaotic but later I realized it is actually very structured while letting the students have some freedom to be kids. I

am reminded how much energy younger kids have and how every interaction can be fun. The idea that Wallace brings up, of understanding how other people see the world, is essential working with children and adults. Kids see the world in very different way and what may seem like not a big deal to us can be huge and life changing for a child. Everyone has had a different upbringing and so what may seem shocking to one person could be normal to another. It is important to suspend judgement and realize these differences in order to understand where people are coming from. I fully agree with Wallace that choosing to see the world through someone else's eyes is vitally important to being able to function in society. Our own attitudes is everything and can dictate the types of experiences we have.

- My first day as a volunteer at the program approached quickly after the orientation. I was both nervous and excited... I didn't know what to expect, it had been so long since I have been around this age group. And the last time I was around this age group I was one of the little guys myself. ...It was very difficult at first to get some of the children to want to even listen to you when you would just ask them their name and how they are, some were very shy and it was just difficult to communicate with them. This made me think of Wallace as well and that I just needed to take a step back and look at the situation from these kids' view. I am this random college student that they have never seen before and all of a sudden they have to listen to what I tell them or ask them to do. Now that I looked at the situation from the children's view I can see how it wouldn't be easy befriending one of these new faces on your campus and that you wouldn't want to be the only one talking and making friends with these new people. All in all I feel like the first day went well and I am excited to continue.
- When getting in contact with [Elementary #2] School for my service learning assignment I remember doubting myself whether I had picked the right setting...I was pretty pessimistic thinking that spending time with lots of children wouldn't benefit me in some way. From reading Wallace's plea I concluded that my education opportunities were not always all about me and what I think is good for me but how I choose to think about them and what I learn from them. Not only did the children offer me quite the communication experience but other volunteers did also. Children with all types of backgrounds and ethnicities talked with me for hours and told me their stories...having the chance to partake in service learning at...School so far has uplifted me to be observant of the bigger picture. Seeing the true benefits that I am getting from this learning experience and trying to connect them to my life in a way that will educate me. I am not only engaging into the community but I am learning from the people I am engaging with.

Appendix 6 - Reflection Prompt November 29

- From what I have observed during my time volunteering, workers at SCRAP Humboldt have the empathy and capacity to acknowledge that everyone regardless of race, gender, sexuality, and or class should have the right to nurture themselves, the earth, and their own creativity. Obama makes an extremely moving and relevant point within his speech that also mirrors the values and goals of SCRAP Humboldt strives to achieve through their organization.
- If President Obama's speech were read to the people I work with at [Elementary #2], I believe they would agree with most of his comments...[Elementary #2] is a very multicultural and integrated school with very supportive and sincere staff. From the time I've spent there and the

experiences I've had I can say that I've never seen or experienced any racial prejudice activity or comments. I even witnessed conversations between children explaining their racial backgrounds to each other and 'oohing' and 'aahing' at each other's differences...From what I've seen and experience in Arcata, the community here is very multicultural and integrated as well, so it only made sense that the primary schools are just as integrated with different racial groups and express respect and genuine care towards one another. From my experience with service learning, I have learned that uniting together and connecting with one another and opposing racial bias and discrimination can start from a very young age.

- As we come to the end of the semester and the end of my time volunteering for this organization, I have come to realize how much globalization actually partakes in Servas's mission. As we have learned in this class, globalization wouldn't exist without the advances that technology has made or the course of the last couple decades. Technology facilitates Servas's member-outreach process because people can become members with just a click. ...Living in Arcata has also helped me realize how globalization can negatively impact us locally.

These reflections were encouraging and echoed clearly at the end of the semester when, in the focus groups, they were asked about the benefits of service learning both to the community and to them personally – even if, for some students, a shorter final was part of the attraction.

Appendix 7 - Focus Group comments on Service Learning

- I think maybe it could've been more work for some of them... because maybe at the, at the schools they were having to take care of these kids and then also keep a track of our hours...maybe it wasn't... I wasn't taking the kids off of their hands. I was just in the classroom with them.
- I would say I think its valuable for freshman to be able to do service learning because if you are moving on to most things in life, grad school, other jobs, internships, they want to see volunteer experience...so I know personally I'm going to keep volunteering with my service learning site after the semester ends. I really like the organization and I know they will have me come back...I've been here 2 years now and I know if I'm going to go and do other things like possibly Peace Corps...it would be good to have volunteer experience and I just didn't reach out...as a freshman and I know if I had that option and it was already organized for me in a class then that would really help I think.
- Yeah, I would add that since I felt like it's so very hard to me, like I said in the beginning to grasp globalization, the service learning definitely helped give me some real life examples where you can see it happen, you're like "Okay."

Appendix 8 - FINAL – DEC 8

- The organization I did my service learning was Rotary International and wow I got to see a glimpse into Humboldt County that I never thought was here. Considering Arcata is very remote, is known nationally for about three things, I didn't expect to find an organization that is involved with humanitarian needs and seeks to help the world through a massive array of projects...Upon learning and researching this as well as the luncheon, I learned how this club sticks together and raises money and projects that do good in the world...when they don't have to.
- The economy of my hometown in small town rural Colorado thrives on the local businesses in the area. Growing up there, I was aware of their significance, but I didn't understand until I left, the degree to which my hometown depends on them to survive. Working with the AEDC gave me a much better understating of the struggles that those businesses are facing from

competition from larger companies to the even changing flow of business as, specifically in the case of my hometown, ski seasons come and go...During my service learning, I definitely learned the most about Humboldt County. Hands on exploration of the local economy gave me the opportunity to observe the ins and outs of the area and the things that influence commerce. I learned about the historical Humboldt Bay oyster industry and the local Sun Valley Floral Farm's position as one of the top suppliers of tulips and lilies in the country, and the seasonal ebb and flow of Humboldt County's economy due to the university population and the seasonal nature of much employment in the area. Being able to explore the county in such a personal way really helped me adjust to the area as my new home.

- Concluding my service learning at [Elementary #2] I can say that it has taught me about myself and my capability to do good as well as to apply my skills to civic issues within a community similar to Humboldt country or even nationwide. Considering that I have always been interested in the contribution and effort for positive change in the world, it has been incredibly helpful to gain an understanding of how these small acts of improvement within smaller communities ultimately lead to the greater good for the overall nation and world.
- One issue that stood out to me was the poverty level in Humboldt County, it is a major issue and affects a number of people living here, including the children. Many children at [the middle school] receive meals for a low price based on their families income, and some even struggle finding a place to stay....Entering Humboldt as a student I knew very little about the atmosphere...When reading the job description from [the middle school] I learned that 50% of their students receive reduced lunches and in the very beginning of this class the fact that Humboldt has a high suicide rate was higher than other areas...I had no clue when considering Humboldt the problems it faces as a community. Now that I am more aware I am curious as to see what has gotten worse or better...
- Throughout the semester, feel I have greatly broadened my curiosity. Becoming more educated on globalization, what it even is and how it has grown and affected California I now see more of the cause and effects of events. From the beginning of the semester I've been asked how the change has been moving to school and I've always said...mostly the same. Now I know that although they may seem the same, if you keep updated on what's going on, the comparisons are huge. I intend on staying updated and further looking into how the state has changed, and wouldn't have felt the need to do that without this class.
- My service learning has shown me if I want to see change I have to be that change. The change also has to start with the community members who are young so as to shape the future that they and I will live in.

Appendix 9 - Views of community and service learning from a single sophomore across the semester

Community - Definition email: Community to me is simply a group who share the same or similar location or values. While it is easy for me to understand how a place like Arcata can be considered a community it took my years to understand while people such as boy scouts attendees of music festivals and African American have all mentioned their members as belonging to a community. It took time for me to understand that community not only refers to a location (even though people often share here similar values) but also group who share common views or goals in life.

Community – short in-class paper: I love Humboldt because it's so different than where I came from. I haven't experienced a lot of culture shock while I've been up here but have been surprised on how many people are involved in healthy, agriculture and natural living. I'm beginning to think of Humboldt

as home because of how much I love it here. The university itself may be my favorite part about living up here because I live working to further my education and become a better person.

Essay Prompt #1 Oct 5 2017 - The Rotary Foundation's mission is to improve people's lives, both locally and abroad by promoting peace while strengthening the economy, fighting disease, and providing clean water and other natural resources. I love Rotary's vision and believe working with the organization will offer a completely new perspective on different and diverse cultures where projects are being executed. Although I will not be visiting the other countries in which Rotary leads humanitarian projects I believe it is still important to try to understand other people's stories and struggle through critical thought.

Essay Prompt #2 Nov 29 2017: Discovering the connections between Rotary and people from all over the world has made me aware of the connections between myself and others. I discovered how the orange orchards where I grew up provided fruit to people across the Pacific and how technology had already begun to bring my life closer with the other billions of people living on this planet. Globalization has influenced my career aspiration and goals to develop agricultural practices that would secure wholesome nutrition for everyone. Globalization brings everyone close. What happened in one place influences what happens in another, what happens locally can have global consequences. We share an increasingly similar destiny with everyone else making the ability to work through our differences one of the critical factors in creating a better culture. The world is getting smaller and it is everyone's responsibility to help bridge the local with the global in a positive way.

Final Essay prompt Dec 8 2017: Recognition of the impact of our actions in our community and worldwide is essential if we are to try to understand things holistically. Soon to be created companies in Costa Rica will affect the buyer (often overseas) and the local families. Students at Humboldt State University will influence the communities of northern California now while making change elsewhere with their education in the future. My experience with the Rotary club...has opened my eyes to more connections like these and the responsibility to keep everyone in mind not only when overseeing community service, but everyday life...My service learning assignment also furthered my dreams of being able to help others as a career. "A strong sense of community" is a phrase I've heard for years but am only now being able to fully understand and recognize its importance. Communities are always changing from internal (local) and external (global) pressures so it is the responsibility of people, like the Rotarians I met, to help others within the community if these pressures negatively impact their community's businesses, education, and general well-being.

Appendix 10 - Focus Group: SPENCER comments

- I was glad he was there because sometimes the professor was really busy with other students and I had to go to my next class. So having him there just, it was a way to kind of communicate with her or like if I did, if I had a question he could answer that that was helpful.
- I thought Spencer was pretty helpful. Some days I would walk in in a couple minutes late and Spencer would always prepare me, hand me all the paperwork I needed, kind of let me slide into class, you know, quietly and just adjust and let me know what's going on. And also I could ask

him questions if, yeah, she was busy after a class...there was like a line of students ready to ask questions so Spencer was another person...

- I think that up to the student, individually, like if some kids feel more comfortable going to him then they will go to him or if some feel comfortable going to Holmes they will go to her he's just kind of like a safety net where if they aren't going to her for whatever reason then...kind of like a peer without being a peer.
- It was a huge class though so, having like 2 members of faculty in their was kind of keeping us in control because I could see that that class could get out of hand a little bit if there wasn't that other authoritarian figure in the room.
- I don't know how to really explain it but even though I didn't get much out of him academically I feel like he helped us so much in other ways, I don't really, it's hard to pinpoint how because it's more of social ways but like I just really enjoyed having him there.

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<https://datausa.io/> "Data USA puts public US Government data in your hands. Instead of searching through multiple data sources that are often incomplete and difficult to access, you can simply point to Data USA to answer your questions. Data USA provides an open, easy-to-use platform that turns data into knowledge. It allows millions of people to conduct their own analyses and create their own stories about America – its people, places, industries, skill sets and educational institutions. Ultimately, accelerating society's ability to learn and better understand itself."

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