

## **Texas Tech's Global Studies Program\***

By John Barkdull, Ph.D.

Texas Tech University is, with Texas A&M and the University of Texas, one of the state's three major public systems. Texas Tech enrolls over 38,000 students. In addition to the main campus in Lubbock, Texas Tech is affiliated with Angelo State University and has operations in Abilene, Amarillo, Midland, Odessa, Fredericksburg, El Paso, Dallas, Highland Lakes, Cleburne, Junction and Waco. The university has long had a study abroad facility in Seville, Spain and recently opened a campus in Costa Rica.

The new campus in Costa Rica highlights the emphasis Texas Tech has placed on international education. This includes attracting foreign students, sponsoring study abroad in dozens of countries, internationalizing the curriculum, and holding numerous academic and cultural events. The university's Quality Enhancement Plan featured the theme of global communications. Texas Tech's administration includes an Office of International Affairs, led by a Vice Provost and housed in the International Cultural Center. The ICC provides meeting space, a passport office, and support for international education from kindergarten through graduate study. TTU also offers degrees in international business and international economics. Nearly every program incorporates a focus on world affairs, and some require an international experience to earn the degree. In short, TTU has committed to a global orientation and put that commitment into practice.

The Global Studies major is an important element of the university's international curriculum. Texas Tech's undergraduate major in Global Studies is an interdisciplinary degree, emphasizing social, political, historical and cultural aspects of world affairs. Students must take a set of core classes including classes in political science, history, communications, geography, and culture. Students select another set of elective classes from a list developed by the Director of Global Studies and the academic advisor for the Department of Political Science. In addition, they are required to achieve competence in a foreign language. The university requires the

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degree plan to encompass instruction in written, spoken, graphic, and numeric communications literacy.

The Global Studies program at Texas Tech was established in 2013. In its first year, one student declared the major and graduated in Spring 2014. Today, Global Studies majors number about 90, in some semesters exceeding 100 students. The enrollment expectations specified in the plan to create the degree have been met. Thus, Global Studies has grown to account for about one-fifth of undergraduate students counted as part of the Political Science department.

The Global Studies program has addressed two important challenges. First, the question arises whether the program should stipulate an international experience to earn the degree. An international experience could include study abroad, scholarships that involve foreign study and research, internships, work experience, and the like. The premise of an international experience requirement is that a student ought not to earn a degree in Global Studies without ever having crossed a U.S. border – or even leaving West Texas. Consequently, an international experience requirement would seem mandatory.

This raises the question of how to meet the needs of students who already have had significant international experience. Some students have military experience or grew up in families that traveled and lived abroad (children of diplomats, for instance), or have worked abroad. Does it make sense to require such a student to undertake an international experience, at added cost in time and money, when it is not likely to add much to their appreciation for living abroad? Because Texas Tech mandates that any degree requirement apply to all students, it is not possible to treat students with international experience differently from those who have not gone abroad. Consequently, Global Studies does not encompass an international experience requirement. Instead, the emphasis is to be on positive incentives, rather than a requirement. This includes encouraging students to take Study Abroad, raising awareness of internship opportunities, and providing scholarships.

Global Studies has established a scholarship fund, with the goal of making it an endowed fund to provide a permanent source of scholarship funding for students engaging international experiences. Currently, the fund offers a prize in an annual essay competition. The Steering Committee proposes topics for the essay competition and selects winners, who are awarded \$750.

Second, an interdisciplinary program faces the challenge of finding a focus. The director consulted with faculty, advisors and administrators about the broad purpose of the Global Studies

undergraduate degree. A consensus emerged that the program must answer the question, "What can I do with a Global Studies degree?" Consequently, beyond providing advice on career options, Global Studies at TTU has adopted a career development focus. When fully implemented, this focus will entail forming a network of potential employers, providing regular career counseling, and raising student awareness regarding the wide variety of career paths available to the Global Studies major. Students can design their degree plan to prepare for potential career paths.

The Global Studies program is the home to the Peace Corps Certificate at Texas Tech. The PCP allows students to combine course work with volunteer experience to earn the certificate, which offers favorable consideration in Peace Corps applications. The PCP encompasses six tracks, including education, health, environment, youth in development, agriculture, and community economic development.

## Course Assessment

Advanced undergraduates must take a capstone course; only Global Studies majors are allowed into the course. The capstone serves several purposes. It calls on students to synthesize their interdisciplinary course of studies, reflecting on how various disciplinary approaches, regions of the world, and issue areas relate to one another. The capstone also emphasizes communications literacy, with assignments and exercises aimed at developing written, oral, graphic, and numerical communication skills. The class provides the best opportunity to engage in program evaluation. The Global Studies program has established several goals for the curriculum but gathering data to assess these goals is difficult when students are taking a wide variety of courses across the university. The data on such questions as whether students feel the program has met their expectations is most readily collected in a course for advanced Global Studies students. Moreover, the capstone facilitates assessing whether communications literacy goals have been met.

### **POLS 3368 Transnational Issues**

In addition, Global Studies majors are required to take Political Science 3368 Transnational Issues. Because this is a course the Director of Global Studies teaches, it is possible to gather data pertinent to the degree in this course as well as the capstone. The class is open to all Texas Tech students. Typically, about half the students are Global Studies majors, and most of the rest are Political Science majors, although the class does draw students from across the university. As part of

program assessment, the Director administers a survey asking students about broad program objectives.

In Fall 2018, students responded to a survey on their experiences with POLS 3368 (Table 1). Twenty-nine students identified themselves as Global Studies majors (including double majors). Students were asked about critical thinking, ethical reasoning, class content, and class format. Twenty-six of the Global Studies majors felt that the class had helped develop their capacity for critical thinking. Broadly, they believed that presenting a variety of perspectives on important issues pushed them to think critically about different points of view. Several noted that class discussions and short papers did the most for critical thinking skills, and one student observed that too much lecture hindered development of critical thinking. Self-reporting does not require students to demonstrate improved skills, but the near-unanimous agreement among Global Studies majors that POLS 3368 contributes to that end suggests that the class has significant effects.

Regarding ethical reasoning, all but two students believed that their understanding of ethical issues had increased. Of the two students answering no, one reported having had a similar class before, and the other student felt the course asked questions about ethics but did not agree that the course advanced the student's understanding. The other 27 Global Studies majors agreed that the course helped them understand ethical issues in world affairs. Typical responses referred to the variety of perspectives presented. It was also stated that interactions in class helped deepen student thought and comprehension of ethical questions.

The Director notes that students did not place emphasis on the explicitly normative orientation of the class, which was to evaluate globalization and global issues in terms of human rights. The course included a unit on human rights and an effort was made to draw attention to the human rights aspects of every issue. A final exam question called on students to assess whether the world was making progress, suggesting human rights as the appropriate set of criteria for making that judgment. Yet, no student mentioned human rights in the evaluation of the course.

The survey queried students on whether they wanted other topics included, the course had improved their understanding of globalization, and introduced the concepts and information required to understand the major subjects. Students were also asked what to include more of, and what less. Results are summarized in Table 1.

## **GLST 4300 Global Studies Capstone**

In the Capstone class, GLST 4300, 19 students were asked about their experience with the global studies curriculum (Table 2). Asked about whether the entire course of studies had increased their capacity for critical thinking, all students surveyed in the Spring 2019 class agreed, although a few responded about the class instead of the curriculum. Asked whether they thought Global Studies had improved their communications skills, 15 agreed, and four had reservations. One saw improvement, but not as much as in other areas. One student thought the entire college experience was responsible for improved communication skills, not the major alone. Two felt that they had experienced little improvement in an important communication skill. The survey asked students in what areas the program might improve development of communication skills. Students mentioned more in-class discussions, a full class on professional communications, more emphasis on graphic and visual representation of ideas, expanding the opportunities for formal speaking, exercises to improve vocabulary, and organized speaking events outside the classroom.

Students were surveyed as to whether the Global Studies curriculum had fostered their understanding of ethical issues. Sixteen of the nineteen students responded with clear affirmative answers. One suggested more attention to the historic roots of social norms, one called for a full course on global ethics, and one student thought more discussion of the practical effects of ethical principles would be useful.

In general, student self-reporting indicates that major cognitive goals of the Global Studies program have been met. Students say their capacity for critical thinking has improved, their communication skills are stronger, and they have gained understanding of ethical issues in global affairs. At the same time, this does not tell us precisely how these gains were achieved. Global Studies encompasses six required classes, an elective communications literacy class, and a wide selection of prescribed electives from across the undergraduate curriculum. Discerning which classes or combination of classes result in the greatest gains is not known and likely unknowable. The one common thread in student responses is that they learn best by doing, which means more assignments and exercises that call on them to think critically, communicate, and engage in ethical reasoning.

## **The Career Orientation**

In Fall 2018 Global Studies initiated a course to further this focus, Professional Career Paths in Global Studies. The

class is numbered as lower division, because the idea is to provide guidance and outline options for freshmen and sophomores so they can have the knowledge to design appropriate degree plans. However, upper division students are welcome and indeed the class is open to all majors, not only Global Studies. The career paths addressed in the class include diplomacy, law enforcement, the military, global health, development, international organizations, and humanitarian organizations.

Professionals holding positions in these fields visited the first and second offerings of the class, both in person and via Skype. The units provided background information about each area and advice on how to get started in a given field. Background information included the organization of the profession, the legal framework governing the field, ethical issues, and day to day life as a professional in a given occupation. Visitors were especially valuable for enlightening students about the rewards and frustrations of their professional lives. Guest lecturers gladly shared contact information with students, which has been posted to the course Blackboard site. Thus, a network of professionals in international careers is being established that students can access.

Positions in international settings are likely to call on a range of cognitive and communication skills. Course materials and student evaluations are designed to foster and test student abilities in critical thinking, ethical judgment, synthesis, writing, speaking, and interpreting graphical and numerical information. Students were asked whether they believed their skills had advanced in the course.

Texas Tech course evaluations ask only three questions, on whether the course followed the learning objectives, the instructor was effective, and the course was valuable. Student evaluations for the first iteration in Fall 2018 showed 83 percent of responding students believing that the class was a valuable learning experience. That figure dropped to 50 percent in Fall 2019, but only four students responded to the online course evaluation.

In 2018, the Director surveyed students on ten questions, including their class year (Table 3). Although the class is lower division, aimed at helping early-career students design their course plans, five out of ten students in the class were juniors or seniors. Asked if they would have preferred to take the class earlier, all five upper classmen said yes. All students agreed that the course had provided them useful career information. Eight agreed that the course made them aware of career options they did not know before, while two said they had

learned of the career paths elsewhere. All agreed that they learned of opportunities at Texas Tech to enhance their career prospects.

Asked which parts of the course they found most useful, students responded by noting invited speakers, simulations and discussions, scholarship and study abroad information. Guest speakers was the most frequently cited as the most useful class resource. About half the students said they thought all parts of the class were useful. Of those who cited a "least useful" element, order of presentation, writing papers, and repeated information were noted.

When asked what topics they would like to see added to the course, a plurality suggested giving more time to simulations. The class included a simulation based on Model United Nations. Several students wanted more such exercises, or more time devoted to the one conducted. Other students thought more attention to resume writing, interview skills and the like would be helpful. Several suggested other careers or more information about one or more covered in class. For instance, a guest speaker informed the students about global health careers, which students thought could be given more attention.

Regarding what to drop, nearly all students said "nothing" or did not respond to the question. One suggested making papers more related to what was being discussed in class. The instructor had sought to make the papers akin to what a person in a professional position might write, not about course materials per se. For example, the first assignment was to write a briefing for the president, modeled on a declassified Presidential Daily Brief available from the State Department. One student cited that as the "least useful" part of the course. The instructor will continue to make this assignment but with more explanation to students of its utility. In additional comments, one student asked that the course be made more "freshman friendly."

In all, comments on the first iteration of the professional development class were very positive. In open-ended additional comments, students volunteered such observations as "This class was great!" and the like.

## Conclusion

Global Studies at Texas Tech has enjoyed some significant successes. Of course, room for improvement and for further development remains. In particular, the career orientation needs more than just a single class. Materials for career counseling will be compiled and made available to counselors and students.

The network of international professionals demands cultivation. Further outreach to those with global careers will provide opportunities for recent graduates.

In sum, Texas Tech University has adopted an institutional orientation toward international affairs. The Global Studies program is an important component of the university's broader efforts. The growth of the Global Studies major and the range of associated activities indicate that a healthy, successful program will continue to make an important contribution to Texas Tech's academic mission.

**Table 1: Student evaluations of POLS 3368, Fall 2018**

Question	Sample Responses
<b>Critical thinking:</b> "Do you believe this class helped develop your critical thinking skills? Why or why not?"	<p>"Broad questions to think about," "had to think deeply about solving problems," "developed new opinions," "short papers allowed in depth thought," "brought up challenges my generation will face," "yes, but I am still afraid to get involved in discussions," "variety of perspectives," "readings were in-depth"</p> <p>"Not really, very heavy on lecture, need more assignments," "very straightforward, no reason to ask why,"</p>
<b>Ethical reasoning:</b> "Do you believe this class helped develop your understanding of the ethical dimension of global issues? Why or why not?"	<p>"Yes, I had to think about what would be adequate strategies to solve problems," "The topics for the essays made writing enjoyable," "Gave me a new perspective on different effects of globalization," "Yes, we explored the many sides of different cultures."</p> <p>"No, I think this class asked a lot of ethical questions, but the essays I would say is where I learned the most," "No, I had a class last semester that did similar."</p>
<b>Most interesting topic</b>	<p>Transnational crime/ Human trafficking 5  Universal rights/ethics 3  Climate change/environment 7  Clash of civilizations/culture 1  Population/migration 1  Economics 1  Security 1  Element of class 9</p>
<b>Least interesting topic</b>	Readings



<b>Class coverage (add or increase content)</b>	Should include: Security, current events, workable solutions, immigration
<b>Improved understanding</b>	All responding students said “yes”
<b>Concepts and information needed to evaluate globalization</b>	Nearly all yes. No: Globalization is too broad to talk about; not enough to evaluate
<b>Include more</b>	Discussions, guest speakers, graded events, current events
<b>Include less</b>	Powerpoint, theory, long readings, specific topics

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 TABLE 2: STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF GLST PROGRAM (GLST 4300 STUDENTS)

QUESTION	RESPONSES
Take class earlier	5/5 yes
Useful career information	10/10 yes
Made aware of options	8/10 yes
TTU opportunities	10/10 yes
Most useful	Invited speakers, simulations and discussions, scholarship and study abroad information
Least useful	Order of presentation, writing papers, and repeated information were noted
Add to course	Job-hunting skills, more time for in-class activities (especially simulations), guest speakers for all career paths covered
Delete from course	Paper assignments not directly based on course materials

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Table 3: Student evaluations of GLST 2300, Fall 2018

Question	Responses
2. Take class earlier	5/5 yes
3. Useful career info	10/10 yes
4. Awareness of	8/10 yes
5. TTU opportunities	10/10 yes
6. Most useful	Guest speakers, in-class activities
7. Least useful	Lectures, readings, redundancy
8. Add topics	More time on simulations, other careers
9. Drop topics	A few students recommended changes to handling of existing topics.

FULL QUESTIONS ON SURVEY OF GLST 2300

1. Are you a freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior?
2. If you are a junior or senior, would you have liked to take this course earlier in your college career? Why?
3. Did this course provide useful information regarding your intended career path as a Global Studies major?
4. Did the course make you aware of career options that you did not know about before? Which ones?
5. Did the course inform you of opportunities at Texas Tech to enhance your career prospects? What did you find most helpful?
6. What part of the class did you find most useful? Explain.
7. What part of the class did you find least useful? Explain.
8. What topics, if any, would you like to see added to the course?
9. What topics, if any, would you like to see dropped from the class?
10. Please add any other comments you wish to offer on any aspect of the class.