

Amideast Education Abroad Programs

MENA 390: Community-Based Learning in the MENA Region Syllabus

Credit Hours: 5 credit hours

Contact Hours: 45 course contact hours and 150 worksite placement hours

Program Location: Tunis, Tunisia

Term and Year:

Course Description:

This course is designed to enhance students' professional, analytical, and communication skills within the context of a placement experience by providing a concurrent academic and experiential seminar group experience. Through required assignments and seminar discussions, students will actively engage in the development of intercultural professional competence and work toward effective and sensitive global citizenship and leadership skills.

Student volunteer placements will be coordinated by the instructor and will focus on practical engagement and interaction with the host country society, and may occur in private, public, and semi-public spaces. Students are expected to spend approximately five hours at their community placement worksite each week.

This seminar will require students to demonstrate upper university-level writing and oral skills and to actively engage in group seminar activities. Assignments and graded components include reflection essays, constructive peer feedback, and organizational analysis of the placement site, all designed to build knowledge and professional development. At the end of the semester, students will additionally design and share a final service-learning project.

Learning outcomes for the course:

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe key strengths and challenges within their service-learning sector of Tunisian civil or non-governmental associations.
- Engage with culture-related theories to observe and analyze their community learning experiences
- Demonstrate improved intercultural competence through successful interactions in Tunisian professional settings.
- Elaborate on future plans for cultural collaboration that demonstrate awareness of convergences and divergences between their own culture and the culture(s) they are introduced to during the course.

Knowledge:

This course is designed to assist students to acquire and demonstrate knowledge about:

- Interpersonal and professional development within the community placement experience throughout the key stages of initial matching and selection, establishing the relationship, goal setting, gaining independence, and termination.
- Intercultural competence and cultural understanding and their application to the community placement experience through the study of various theoretical models.
- The key issues in Tunisia relevant to the sector and mission of their specific community placement; for example, employability, youth issues, media, or human rights.

- The explicit and implicit organizational structure, community context, rules, and norms of the Tunisian organization at which they are placed.

Skills:

This course is designed to assist students in acquiring or enhancing the following skills:

- Self-awareness of how cultural differences may impact personal communication styles, work objectives, interpersonal relationship, and professional expectations in a professional setting.
- The ability to navigate the challenges inherent successfully and professionally in the community placement in a productive manner.
- Leadership practice through opportunities for providing engaged and constructive peer feedback related to cultural understanding and professional development.
- The ability to effectively synthesize and communicate, in writing and orally, key information gained from the community-based learning experience to a wider audience.

Attitudes:

This course is designed to encourage development of the following attitudes:

- Confidence in the ability to contribute professionally as responsible global citizens.
- Reflective sensitivity to stereotyping, differences and human diversity.
- Life-long curiosity about culturally diverse and community-based experiences.
- Flexibility and resilience in new or diverse circumstances and in problem solving.

Reading Sources:

1. Deane, Shelley. Transforming Tunisia: The Role of Civil Society in Tunisia's Transition. International Alert, Feb. 2013, www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/Tunisia2013EN.pdf
2. Sweitzer, H. F. & King, M. A. (2013). *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional, and Civic Development in Experiential Learning*. Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning. (Selected chapters)
3. Bennett, Milton, J., Becoming Interculturally Competent (2004). In J.S. Wurzel (Ed.) *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education*. Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation. http://www.idrinstitute.org/allegati/IDRI_t_Pubblicazioni/1/FILE_Documento.pdf
4. "Western do-gooders need to resist the allure of 'exotic problems,'" The Guardian, April 23, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/apr/23/western-do-gooders-need-to-resist-the-allure-of-exotic-problems>
5. Hooker, John. Cultural Differences in Business Communication (2008). In C.B. Paulson, S. F. Kiesling, and E.S. Rangle, eds, *Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication*. <http://web.tepper.cmu.edu/jnh/businessCommunication.pdf>
6. Rundstrum Williams, Tracy. Examine Your Lens: A Tool for Interpreting Cultural Differences <http://frontiersjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/RUNDSTROMWILLIAMS-FrontiersXXII-ExamineYourLENS.pdf>

- **Locating the Readings:** Citations for readings above include weblinks, when available. Some readings can additionally be found on the Amideast Education Abroad syllabus page. Additional readings may be uploaded during the semester and assigned based on each student's specific field of interest and community-based work placement.
- **Pacing the Readings:** Unless otherwise noted or communicated by the instructor, the readings are to be done for homework in the week before class and are intended to reinforce the material presented in class.

Attendance and Engagement:

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and come prepared to participate fully in class activities. Students are further expected to be on time for all classes. Arriving late for class is disrespectful of both the instructor and fellow students.

Beyond being in class on time, expectations of student engagement that are accounted for in this portion of the grade include both quality and quantity: full involvement in in-class exercises, class discussions, active listening and asking questions, and proactively seeking additional help during office hours if needed. Throughout the semester, there are a number and variety of program activities that are mandatory for all students. They are announced in advance and reminders are sent. They have an Arabic language component and are tied to activities in Arabic classes. Failure to attend mandatory program activities therefore reflects negatively on students' attendance and engagement grade.

For more on the attendance policy, please see the policy posted in the online course and on the Absence request site on the Student Portal.

Engagement at Community Placement:

Regular placement attendance is essential to the students' applied learning in this course and impacts the ability to participate in discussions and complete the required assignments for this course. Each week students are expected to spend five hours per week in their volunteer placements, in a schedule to be mutually determined between the student and the organization. A minimum number of 15 placement hours are required to be completed before the midway mark of the program. This is the equivalent of 4 weeks of service across approximately 6 weeks of the session. This 'gap' is designed to account for time to establish the contract, AMIDEAST scheduled travel, and breaks. Students may find it benefits them or better meets their professional goals to offer additional hours, and this may be discussed with the placement supervisor and course instructor.

For MENA 390 students, the course instructor will be the students' point of contact for all administrative placement questions including establishing the initial placement, scheduling, and submission of weekly signed placement attendance forms. Students should refer to the Memorandum of Affiliation (MOA), which can be found as Appendix A of this syllabus for further Amideast placement information and guidelines the professor will remain in contact throughout the semester and if it is agreed that students are in good standing with the placement including timely submission of all paperwork, thoughtful completion of the MOA and the attendance requirements, students will be awarded the full 30 percent credit.

Engagement in Seminar:

The engagement grade will depend on both the quality and the quantity of student's professional comportment, comments and questions during seminar time, online class discussion or electronic communications. Engagement will account for an additional 20% towards the total course grade. Examples of positive engagement include providing supportive feedback to peers; offering constructive suggestions to a dilemma presented in class; challenging in a professional and open-minded way a reading, perspective or idea presented; agreeing to take into consideration feedback received from peers, supervisors, or faculty; implementing suggestions received from peers or faculty; arriving on time, leaving at the end of time, and focusing on the tasks at hand.

Poor engagement may be evidenced as: texting or taking calls during class time; providing generic comments without showing real reflection, originality or growth - "My placement was challenging but worth it because I feel that I learned a lot this semester," offering feedback that does not contain sufficient details to be useful, "You are doing great, keep at it!"; presenting a reoccurring difficulty in a placement and not attempting any proposed solutions (e.g., feeling the placement is not meeting expectations yet not speaking with supervisor, adjusting goals and expectations, etc.).

Organization Paper:

Students will submit a paper of approximately 1,000 words on the organization in which they are placed which demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the mission of the organization, the social, financial, and political context in which the organization is operating as well as describe the actual experience of working onsite. The organization paper should be experientially descriptive (based on firsthand interviews and conversations with organization members/staff, personal experience) as well professional in tone, citing literature gathered from the organization, and include references from external sources (e.g., newspaper articles, primary studies).

Please be transparent and open with your placement organization about the paper's content, methodology and purpose, emphasizing that it is an internal paper for a class not for external publication or public sharing. When beginning the project, you might consider asking your placement organization if any of the topics in the paper might be particularly useful for you to focus on for them, for example if they need an updated organizational description for project proposals, organizational brochures, website text, etc. Offer to provide the placement organization with a copy of the paper once completed. Further details regarding required content and evaluation criteria for the papers will be distributed during the course. Peers will review and prepare feedback and questions on the content elements of these papers.

Final Project Proposal:

Students will submit a 250–500-word proposal outlining their final project. Students will indicate which form the final project will take, provide any details related to how they will use that relevant format, summarize the main theme or argument, and explain why they chose that format. Students will briefly define their methods and proposed timeline. Peers and the professor will review and prepare suggestions and questions on submitted project proposals.

Final Project:

The final project is an opportunity for students to share what they have learned through this course with a wider audience. All projects are expected to be submitted for publication or posted online (as in the case of blogs, photo journals, op-ed articles, or video documentaries). Even though these are creative assignments, students are still expected to have a meaningful accompanying or underlying message. Written pieces, photos or film should explore a larger question pertaining to students' community-based learning experience, develop a theme that relates to the organization, or present the most important facts for other Americans or another defined target audience to know. The project submission will be worth 15 percent of the final grade and facilitating a "Question and Answer" period regarding the project during the final class will be worth an additional 5 percent. Further discussion and provision of the required elements of both components will occur during the course.

Reflection Essay:

The purpose of the reflection essay is for students to select an experience(s) from their placement, reflect on and think about it, and identify new or alternative ways to act or understand that experience in the future. Specific detail about the subject matter to be covered in each essay will be determined by the professor during the course of the seminar and based on individual learning needs, placement profile and professional development level. In general, essays should be 500-750 words and are not meant to be literature reviews (e.g., will not require citations or references from non-assigned readings). However, students are expected to make critical thinking links to 1 or more of the assigned readings for this class and demonstrate application of concepts to their own unique experiences. Further details regarding prompts and evaluation criteria for the essays will be outlined during the course. Reflections essays are submitted directly to the professor and not reviewed or critiqued within the peer group setting.

Course Schedule:

Session	Classwork	Readings/Assignments	Exams, Trips, and Holidays
Session 1	Introductions Review of Syllabus: Expectations, Assignments Personal Goals		
Session 2	Introduction to the World of Civil Society in Tunisia: History, Statistics, Typology of NGOs	- Reading: Source #1, "Transforming Tunisia: The Role of Civil Society in Tunisia's Transition"	
Session 3	Planning for a Successful Internship, Part 1	- Reading: Source #2, Chapter 2 "The Developmental Stages of an Internship" & Chapter 3 "Tools for Engagement"	
Session 4	Cultural Learning, Intercultural Styles and Differences, Part 1	- Reading: Source #3, "Becoming Interculturally Competent"	
Session 5	"Reductive Seduction" and Social Change in the Global South	- Reading: Source #4, "Western do-gooders need to resist the allure of 'exotic problems'"	
Session 6	Planning for a Successful Internship, Part 2	- Reading: Source #2, Chapter 5 "Anticipation"	
Session 7	Planning for a Successful Internship, Part 3	- Reading: Source #2, Chapter 6 "The Learning Contract & Supervision"	
Session 8	Cultural Learning, Intercultural Styles and Differences, Part 2	- Reading: Source #5, "Cultural Differences in Business Communication"	
Session 9	Engaged Application: Organization Presentations & Discussion, Part 1	Organization paper due	
Session 10	Engaged Application: Organization Presentations & Discussion, Part 2	- Reading: Read Peer Papers and prepare feedback for discussion	
Session 11	Planning for a Successful Internship, Part 4	- Reading: Source #2, Chapter 11, "The Community"	

Session 12	Cultural Learning, Intercultural Styles and Differences, Part 3	- Reading: Source #6, "Examine your Lens: A Tool for Interpreting Intercultural Differences"	
Session 13	Reaching Conclusions	- Reading: Source #2, Chapter 14, "The Culmination Stage"	
Session 14	Final Project Presentations	Final projects due	
Session 15	Reflection Session	Reflection paper due	

Appendix A: Community Based Learning Memorandum of Agreement:

Community Based Learning is a credit bearing course (MENA Studies 390) in the Amideast Education Abroad Programs in the MENA.

Community Based Learning (CBL) combines community service with academic learning objectives. In this course, students will:

- Engage in community service
- Enhance learning by joining theory with experience and thought with action
- Reflect critically on their experiences of joining academic learning to the real world

These learning experiences are designed with community institutions, relying on partnerships that are intended to be beneficial to the community and to the students.

Placement Confirmation:

Student Name:

Name of organization:

CBL Assignment and Student Responsibilities (attach additional sheets, as necessary):

Weekly Work Schedule:

Day	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
WORK HOURS							

Start Date (Month, Year):

End Date (Month, Year):

Planned Absences (e.g., field trips, breaks):

Roles:

Amideast Education Abroad

- Provides students with structure and guidance to process and reflect on their CBL experiences
- Assists students in connecting their CBL experiences with course learning objectives
- Responds promptly to resolve any organization or student concerns

Collaborating Organization

- Provide CBL opportunities that are significant and/or challenging to the students, are relevant to course learning objectives, and address community agency goals
- Provide training, supervision, feedback, resources, and sufficient information about the organization to aid in the success of students' CBL projects

Student Expectations:

Students who elect to take part in this course are expected to adhere to the following guidelines as a condition of their participation and to earn a passing grade at the end of the semester:

- Complete all assigned work for the course
- Report incidents or concerns to the CBL instructor promptly
- Always comport themselves professionally while engaged in their community-based learning assignment, including, but not limited to
 1. Reporting for work at or before the agreed upon reporting time and remaining in the workplace until the agreed upon end of the work period (students are expected to be engaged in the work assignment approximately five hours per week)
 2. Dressing professionally (as appropriate for the workplace and the local business culture)
 3. Expressing themselves in a professional manner at all times while in the workplace
 4. Behaving in a culturally appropriate manner at all times while interacting with others of all nationalities in the workplace
 5. Maintaining the confidentiality of the organization where they are working and the confidentiality of the staff members of the organization

Participation in Community Based Learning through Amideast is a privilege, not a right. Students who do not adhere to these guidelines will be removed from the Community Based Learning program and receive an F in the course.

Type Names:

Student

Organization Representative

Amideast Country Director

Print Document, Sign and Date:

Signature

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Date