

Engaging Students with The international travel fair

Intercultural Communication aims to prepare students to be global citizens who communicate competently with individuals from unfamiliar cultures. I was inspired by conference poster sessions to create a Travel Fair to help students practice this skill.

First, students self-report their cultural identity and I create culturally diverse semester-long teams. Next, teams submit an international destination and corresponding culture. The project is scaffolded; as we cover course concepts, students apply their new knowledge to research their destination.

- After studying **listening**, students find and interview a cultural insider. They submit a summary of the more relevant information they learned.
- After studying **globalization**, teams find and read a recent news article about a current event at their destination. They submit an explanation for how the event may affect tourists.
- After studying **biases**, teams choose a stereotype or prejudice about their destination and provide evidence discrediting or problematizing it.
- After studying **verbal and nonverbal communication**, teams create a list of verbal and nonverbal expressions that differ from the local culture to prevent faux pas.
- After studying **intercultural theories** (e.g. postcolonialism), teams submit a theoretical analysis of their destination's culture.

Finally, teams compile their research into a poster presentation. We host the Travel Fair which is open to anyone. Team members alternate between presenting and visiting other teams' posters.

The practical and applied nature of the project make it feel relevant and engaging. Instead of only learning about concepts in the abstract, students use them to create an end product that they can be proud of. They choose the topic they want, use their creativity, and start dreaming of travel. They also enjoy viewing one another's presentations and learning in a more casual, conversational environment. The poster session format encourages discussion and engagement; students learn from one another.