



Bridging the Gap Between Professional Development and Global Citizenship Through International Internships

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Abstract

Internships in Dublin: Critical Inquiry and Professional Success is a transformative course, integrating critical inquiry, professional development, and cultural competence. Taught remotely and designed to accompany student internships in Dublin, the course challenges students to reflect critically on their identities and experiences, set goals, and align their career aspirations with global citizenship values. Weekly assignments, such as analyzing workplace dynamics and engaging with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, provide structured opportunities for reflection and skill-building. The course fosters an inclusive learning environment, attracting students from all majors, including those often underrepresented in study abroad programs. By dividing the class into small groups, it promotes deep engagement and peer learning. Ultimately, this course prepares students not just for their future careers, but also to become thoughtful, informed global citizens and innovative leaders.

Keywords

Critical thinking, cultural competence, global citizenship, international internships, professional development

Course Overview

Internships in Dublin: Critical Inquiry and Professional Success (CAT 124RS) is a transformative course that blends academic inquiry, professional development, and cultural engagement. Taught remotely and designed to accompany students' internships in Dublin, Ireland, the course integrates real-world experience with a reflective, critical approach. With an emphasis on developing students' critical thinking and inquiry capacities in the context of globalization and professional development, the course aims not only to prepare them for the global workforce but to provide them with the necessary skills and

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perspectives to be innovative and thoughtful leaders in their respective fields. A summary of the course profile is presented in the table below.

TABLE (1)

COURSE PROFILE

Course or Program Title and Numbers	Summer 2024: CAT 124RS Sixth College Practicum Online Global Seminar
Course or Program Title	Internships in Dublin: Critical Inquiry and Professional Success
Target Student Population(s)	All undergraduate students
Content Focus, Field, or Discipline	General Education, Experiential Learning
Credit-Bearing	Yes
Program Level	Undergraduate
Program Duration	Short-term (eight weeks)
Onsite Locations	Dublin, Ireland

Course Structure and Learning Objectives

Designing an international academic internship course comes with the very real danger of overwhelming students with too many responsibilities while they acclimate to a new environment. To overcome this challenge while still maintaining high standards, CAT 124RS incorporates two unique design elements. The first is that the internship experience is incorporated as an integral part of the course, both an artifact of study and a source of knowledge. In practice, this means that students spend less time “in class” than they traditionally would, allocating a portion of the required course time to the internship experience. It also means that all assignments are directly tied to the internship in a manner intended to both help students succeed in their roles and better appreciate the implications of their work. The second element is that, rather than the entire class meeting together each week, students are broken up into small groups to meet with the professor every other week.

This structure provides a more intimate setting for the instructor to individually mentor students while facilitating deeper dialogue, connection, and sharing. The rationale for this arrangement is to meet the learning objectives of the course, which include the ability to:

- Reflect critically on their own professional experiences, assumptions, and responsibilities,
- Communicate effectively with diverse and multicultural professional audience,
- Identify and develop actionable strategies to align their professional goals with their personal values and responsibilities as global citizens; and
- Appreciate the influence of globalization on their career field and develop the skills to navigate intercultural work environments.

Assessment

Through weekly assignments, biweekly group discussions, and a final portfolio, students are given structured opportunities to engage deeply with the course while making connections to their internship experiences. These course artifacts are shared in the [List of Supplemental Materials](#).

Weekly assignments (formative assessment) are designed to foster critical thinking about students' internships and professional identities while also providing frequent and constructive feedback. These are graded complete/incomplete to ensure students are engaging critically with the material without being over-stressed by the possibility of a poor grade. If students do not adequately complete an assignment, they are welcome to resubmit.

Biweekly discussion sessions (formative assessment) are graded on a 1-10 scale based on the amount of demonstrated engagement and thoughtfulness. To increase engagement, each discussion session follows the same format, with varying prompts and topics, to offer students the stability and confidence that come from knowing what to expect. These discussion sessions also allow the instructor to assess the students' levels of engagement in and critical analysis of the internship experience through their internship updates and their ability to articulate the connection between each week's topic and their own experience.

Finally, as a summative assessment, students submit a professional portfolio and reflection, where they articulate their professional identity and values while also enjoying space to reflect on their goals and growth over the duration of the course. By integrating students' academic and professional experiences, these assessments are meant to be both practical and sensitive to student workload and time limitations.

Unique Course Elements

Interdisciplinary Focus

One of the most innovative aspects of this course is its interdisciplinary design, which appeals to students from all majors, including those typically underrepresented in study abroad programs, such as male and STEM students. Because the course is open to students in all fields (and internships), each week is focused on (i) developing transferable skills, such as critical thinking, cultural intelligence, professionalism, and communication; and (ii) investigating topics of universal importance such as globalization and career exploration.

For example, the Week 1 assignment uses the SMART framework to help students set specific, measurable goals for their internships and time in Ireland. This process helps students make the most of their time abroad by setting intentional goals while providing them with a valuable professional skill. The Week 2 assignment tasks students with researching their internship organization and its relationship to globalization, prompting them to think deeply about their roles in the organization and to gain clarity on the unique goals and approaches that define it. This activity develops their capacity for critical inquiry and analysis while also honing their research skills.

As a final example, the Week 3 assignment asks students to conduct a detailed workplace observation, analyzing the cultural and professional dynamics of their host organizations. This activity pushes students not only to interact with but to analyze diverse environments and people, challenging them to contend with unfamiliar circumstances and develop the cultural intelligence needed to navigate various professional settings.

Peer Learning and Community Building

Because students intern at different organizations, it is important to create a space for them to engage with and learn from one another's experiences. At the start of the program, the 20-person class is divided into discussion groups of 4–5 students. Each session begins with a check-in, where students update the group on their internship and any challenges or successes they have experienced. When challenges arise, this space is used to help students work through the situation and to explore potential resolutions. After check-ins, the discussion moves to the topic of the week, as students share reflections and connect the material to their own internship experiences. This consistent format promotes the inclusion of quieter voices, fosters community, and encourages students to learn from one another. This aligns with high-impact practices by providing periodic, structured opportunities for reflection

and integration while creating a small cohort experience where students can learn about one another and different career fields.

Location and Context

As an English-speaking, multicultural city, Dublin provides an ideal environment for students to explore the themes of the course, without the barrier of learning a foreign language. Students engage directly with their surroundings by critically reflecting on how their organizations contribute to the goals of Ireland as well as broader societal goals, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Week 5, they assess how their internships promote, or fail to promote, the SDGs, encouraging them to discover the relevance of their work in real-world applications. By navigating Dublin's multicultural work environment, students experience diversity firsthand and are prompted to think critically about their positionality within a global framework.

In the Week 7 assignment, students are asked to take what they have learned about their organization and its impact and write a constructive critique memo to their supervisor (which they do not actually send!). The goal here is to help students practice effective communication in high-stress contexts, taking into account cultural and communication differences that may exist between them and their colleagues. As this assignment suggests, the overarching goal of the course is not to make students experts in Irish culture or to prepare them to work in Ireland specifically, though they certainly learn a lot about Ireland. The goal is to equip them with the skills and perspectives necessary to navigate and thrive in diverse cultural environments.

Inclusive Pedagogy

A central focus of the course is its commitment to inclusion and inclusive pedagogy. The course design reflects a deliberate effort to create an equitable learning environment that welcomes students from all majors, backgrounds, and experiences. By fulfilling a general education requirement and providing an internship opportunity, the course attracts a diverse student body, including male and STEM students who are traditionally underrepresented in study abroad programs. This inclusivity enhances student engagement, as each participant brings a unique perspective to class discussions, creating a richer, more varied learning experience.

In addition to the small discussion groups, the curriculum also reflects an inclusive approach by offering opportunities for students to engage with a variety of lived experiences and viewpoints. For example, in Week 4, students complete a career matrix activity that is purposely designed to uplift and

celebrate the diversity of skills and experiences that students bring into the classroom. During Week 6, students are tasked with writing a professional bio that highlights their unique backgrounds and identities, encouraging self-expression and the recognition of diverse life paths. Moreover, the Week 5 and 7 assignments push students to think critically about how their organizations align with the SDGs, fostering an awareness of global inequities and the role of business in creating a more just and sustainable world.

Summary

Through these elements, *Internships in Dublin: Critical Inquiry and Professional Success* creates a supportive, inclusive environment that not only values diversity but actively leverages it to enhance learning outcomes. By centering inclusive pedagogy, the course helps students build the cultural competency and critical thinking skills necessary for success in an increasingly interconnected and diverse global workforce.

List of Supplemental Materials

Suppl. 1: [Course Syllabus](#)

Suppl. 2: [Final \(Signature\) Assignment](#)

Suppl. 3: [Weekly Assignment Prompts](#)

Suppl. 4: [Career Matrix Assignment Slides](#)

Author Biography

William Robertson Geibel is an Assistant Teaching Professor and the Associate Director of Experiential Learning at UCSD's Sixth College. In this role he oversees and teaches within the college's experiential learning program and works to develop educational programming and partnerships that provide students with real-world learning opportunities including study abroad, internships, and community engagement.