

Case Studies in People, Science and the Environment

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Abstract

Case studies involve the analysis and summary of real-world events. It started at Harvard University for its MBA programs, and thousands MBA programs followed. Why not do this for the undergraduates? At University of Phoenix, the course “People Science and the Environment” was taught twice. At Dominican College, “International Management” and “Global E-Commerce” course was given. The use of the case studies in these undergraduate courses, significantly improve skills for better critical thinking, leadership, public speaking and team building. This paper provides the results.

Keyword: International Management, Global E-Commerce, People Science Environment

Professors at Harvard University, Cranfield University (UK), and Thunderbird University published real-life case studies for 25+ years. Since 1996, internet is the new paradigm for learning. Final projects using real-life case studies via internet search, proved to be very successful for learning.

(A) Dominican College

Dominican College is located 14 miles northwest of New York City. This author joined Dominican College in 1988 as an Associate Professor in the Business Division. In Spring Semester of 2013, the College enrolled 2100+ students. The Business Division offers Bachelor of Science programs in Accounting, Computer Information Systems (CIS), and four concentrations of management: Financial Management, Information Systems Management (MIS), International Management (IM), and Marketing Management. A Master’s Degree in Business Administration (MBA) was approved by the State of New York in 2008. This author served as the Director of Business Administration Division from 1990 to 1996, and taught courses in CIS, MIS and IM curriculum.

1. MG355 International Management

In Spring Semester 2013, 17 students enrolled. This course aims to investigate specific issues in the governance of multinational enterprises. Topics include: foundations for international management, managing across cultures, strategic planning, managing political risks, organizing operations, decision making controlling, personnel selection repatriation, training organization development, labor relations, communications, motivating human resources, ethics and social responsibility.

Luthans and Doh (2012) wrote the textbook. Accounting, finance, ethics, human resource, managing culture, marketing, merger/acquisition, and operations, with an international focus, were covered in details. Students perform in-class team exercises using daily events from Business Week, Economist, Financial Times, Fortune and Forbes magazine. Four homework assignments were graded. One Midterm Exam was given.

For the final projects, 16 students worked in a group of two and one person worked alone. They employed case studies, on global business founders/CEOs in China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Sweden, see Table 1.

2. MG 366 Global E-Commerce course

Fifteen people registered in Spring Semester 2013. This course was modified to add much internet hardware and software content. One CIS major used this course as a computer elective.

Laudon and Traver (2012) wrote the textbook. Ebay and Amazon served as examples of the American success stories for E-commerce. Much discussion focused on the business model of: Facebook, Expedia, Freshdirect, JetBlue, Google, Groupon, Hulu, Indirect, LinkedIn, Netflix, Pandora, Pinterest, Priceline, Tumblr, Twitter, Yahoo, YouTube, and Zynga. Chinese E-commerce firms that traded publicly in USA are: Alibaba, Baidu, Giant Interactive, Netease, Renren, Shanda Games, and Sina. Why are their stock prices going down since the IPO? Is Facebook a good business model? Why is it banned in China? Why is Apple making iPhone, and iPad in China? Why is Samsung Galaxy 4 so cool? Are there successful E-commerce in Brazil, Russia, and Eastern Europe? Can you start a global E-commerce today and make money? What is the reason that people will pay your product/service online? This type of question keeps the lecture alive and students are challenged to find answers.

In addition, this course covered 7 non-US countries, taking E-commerce to the global level. In the continental Europe, 40+ discount airlines are now operating to benefit travelers. There are 27 countries with 500 million people in the European Union. Each discount airline started with just one E-commerce website, and tried to be the next RyanAir or EasyJet. Final projects involved the comparison between a discount airline and a traditional airline, covering Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, and UK, Table 2

(B) University of Phoenix

University of Phoenix (UOP) is a private for-profit institution of higher learning. It has an enrollment close to 400,000 students and is the largest private university in USA. UOP was founded in 1976 and is owned by the Apollo Group Inc. UOP has 200+ campuses offering more than 100 degree programs from associate degrees to PhDs. Its main campus is located in Phoenix, Arizona. The New Jersey campus is located in Jersey City.

In February of 2008, this author went through a rigorous 16-hour training session and was certified to teach UOP courses. From May 2008 to December 2012, this author taught: Critical Thinking, Essentials of Personal Finance, Information System Security, Integrated Business Topics, Management Negotiations, Marketing, Marketing Research, Organization Behavior, People Science Environment, Public Relations, and Quality Management Productivity. Five papers were published: a) Marketing Research, Hsu (2006), b) Organizational Behavior, Hsu (2008), c) Critical Thinking, Public Relations and Integrated Business Topics, Schmidt and Hsu (2009), d) Personal Finance, Levit and Hsu (2011) and e) Research Information Utilization, Gabriel and Hsu (2013).

SCI 256 People, Science and the Environment

This in-depth environmental science course examines how people use science to understand how they relate to the environment. The course explores relationships between people and ecosystems and the science behind how ecosystems work. It reviews the historical development of the environmental movement, interactions between humans and natural ecosystems, and more specifically, the role of a growing population and associated pressures on natural resources. This course further examines how economics, natural systems, and conservation are interrelated. The many forms of pollution as well as types of energy resources are addressed. This course challenges students to consider the impact of lifestyle choices on environmental sustainability. Textbook was written by Botkin and Keller (2011).

The twenty-hour course at UOP consisted of a five-week, four hours per week schedule. In any other university, this course normally ran 45 hours per semester. How could one teach this course in 20 hours? UOP E-Learning website (E-campus) listed the reading assignment for each week. UOP negotiated agreements with book publishers. Students paid a course resource fee and were permitted to download and then printed the pages. This mechanism saved students time and money.

This course was taught twice. The first class enrolled 8 students, started October 25, and ended on November 29, 2012. The second class got 11 students, and ran from November 5 through December 3, 2012. Students formed three or four Learning Teams with three people in one team and four people in another team. An Individual assignment and a Learning Team assignment were required every week. The Learning Team placed students to work in a group, after class. Table 3 provides the point values for weekly assignments.

This shows how much work needed to be done outside of the classroom. Students would spend up to 5 hours each week, after class to do these assignments. Add the 25 hours doing assignment, to the lecture 20 hours, give 45 hours for the total time spent on this course. So the learning requirement is not different from a traditional university.

Team work was not easy either. With full-time work and family obligations, it was difficult for three people to get together to do team assignment. Virtual teams with email correspondences helped, but did not always work.

Lectures on 21 chapters were presented in class, using PowerPoint slides. There are 50 to 120 slides for each chapter. One needs to be selective to choose the slides that best described the content of the chapter. Simply reading the slides bored students. The better teaching method was to read a few lines, and ask questions:

What are the constraints of using the scientific method to analyze environmental issues?
What are the social and ethical issues in environmental controversy?
Can you identify an ecosystem in which you live or one near to where you live?
What are the differences between an ecosystem and an ecological community?
What is one major cause of present-day species extinction?
Is your community people- or car-oriented? Why or why not?
Can you find a good strategy conserve fossil fuels?
Should government encourage the development of alternative energy sources?
How could your community better manage its water resources?
What is one way natural ecosystems can perform wastewater treatment?
Can you identify causes of indoor and outdoor air pollution?
Do you think that a change in the climate patterns will cause the global rise in sea levels?
What has been the media coverage of a local environmental issue?
How did environmental regulations affect your daily life?
Who should manage the natural resources: legislature, public, scientists, or others?

These type of questions got immediate attention. Students voiced their opinions in a lively manner. Four hours were very long in the evening, because all students worked during the day. One 20 minute break was given, at 8:00 pm each class. Much time was spent with weaker students, to make sure they were able to catch up with the rest of the class. This strategy earned student respect.

For the final projects, the first class members did three group projects: a) China Pollution, b) Greenhouse Global Warming, and c) Tsunami. The second class members did four group projects: a) Alternative Energy, b) Coal Energy, c) Oil and Gas Energy, and d) Nuclear Energy. They submitted their final papers and presented them with the PowerPoint slides. The paper grade is the same for the group, but the oral presentation grade is different for each individual. Student evaluations were good to excellent, with average 8 out of 10, Table 4.

Conclusion

The students learn the theory and need to connect it to the real world. International Management, Global E-Commerce and People Science Environment courses were taught at two different institutions of higher learning to 51 people. The E-campus infrastructure at University of Phoenix made the E-Learning a pleasure. It is an excellent platform to train tomorrow's leader.

Teaching and learning strategies included the in-class use of Business Week, Economist, Financial Times, Forbes, Fortune, Harvard Business Review, Homework, and Internet Search. Final projects involved a written paper and the PowerPoint presentation by a team or an individual. All of these tools and reports attributed to the success in an E-Learning environment. It was a very challenging and rewarding experience.

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Table 1	MG 355 International Management		
	Final Group Project chart		
<u>Group A</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group B</u>	<u>Topic</u>
DeLaPena	Carlos Slim Helu	Guinto	Amancio Ortega
Tirone	America Movil, Mexico	Pena	Zara, Spain
<u>Group C</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group D</u>	<u>Topic</u>
McGregor	Li Ka-Shing	Rajan	Bernard Arnault
Dertinger	Hutchison, Hong Kong, China	Renna	LVMH, France
<u>Group E</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group F</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Hallowell	Stefan Persson	Chisholm	Karl Albrecht
Curran	H&M, Sweden		Aldi, Germany
<u>Group G</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Group H</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Martinez	Mukesh Ambani	Duverge	Michele Ferrero
Polanco	Reliance, India	Cioffi	Ferrero, Italy
<u>Group I</u>	<u>Topic</u>		
Festa	Prince Alwaleed		
Sabella	Kingdom, Saudi Arabia		

Table 2	MG 366 Final	European Airlines	
	<u>Names</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Project</u>
1	Bonilla	Germany	Lufthansa
	Hall		Air Berlin
2	Oneil	Ireland	AerLingus
	Straford		Ryanair
3	Kremer	France	Air France
	Smith		KLM
4	Delacruz	Czech Republic	Czech Airline
	Gagliano		Smart Wings
5	Uffer	Finland	FinnAir
	Kcira		Blue 1
	Hajjar		SAS
6	Butler	UK	British Airway
	Marciano		Easy Jet
7	Lalanne	Poland	Bingo Air
	Hines		LOT

Table 3. Individual and Learning Team Assignment for University Phoenix
SCI 256 People, Science and the Environment course

Point Values for Course Assignments

Week One

Individual Assignment: Environmental Science Worksheet	8
Learning Team Assignment: Create charter and objectives	2

Week Two	
Individual Assignment: Ecosystem Components	10
Learning Team Assignment: Natural Resource outline	4
Week Three	
Individual Assignment: Video Summary paper	8
Learning Team Assignment: Final paper outline	3
Learning Team Assignment: Natural Resource paper	11
Week Four	
Individual Assignment: Environment Pollution outline	6
Learning Team Assignment: Global Warming paper	10
Week Five	
Individual Assignment: Economic Analysis presentation	8
Learning Team: Economic Analysis paper	10
All Weeks	
Individual Participation & Discussion	20
Assignment Totals	
Individual	60
Learning Team	40
Point Total	
	100

Table 4. Student evaluations (SEOCs) on SCI/256 People, Science and the Environment, for Faculty Effectiveness:

1. 10/25-11/29/12 class, 7 evaluations
a) How likely are you to recommend this instructor to other students? 5 10 10 9 6 7 9, or average 8/10.
b) How helpful was the feedback this instructor provided on assignments you turned in during this course? 7 10 8 9 8 5 9, or average 8/10.
2. 11/5-12/03/12 class, 9 evaluations
a) How likely are you to recommend this instructor to other students? 8 8 10 8 10 4 5 10 9, or average 8/10.
b) How helpful was the feedback this instructor provided on assignments you turned in during this course? 8 7 10 8 10 4 5 10 7, or average 8/10.