Opportunities to Increase Cross-Cultural Instruction

Impacts of a Distance Learning Course About
U.S. Philanthropy Taught to Chinese Students

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Abstract

Education focusing on philanthropy and nonprofit management is growing rapidly around the world. Countries such as China present a substantial need to cultivate professionals for the nonprofit sector due to the growth of philanthropic giving and the need for better organizational management. With the majority of academic study and instruction about philanthropy and nonprofit management based in the United States, how can these resources be leveraged to educate students around the world? This case study of a course taught through distance learning by an American located in Indiana to students in Zhuhai, China, presents one method for universities to increase their global reach. The course had explicit goals of measuring student learning, assessing distance learning effectiveness, and understanding the impacts of this cross-cultural learning experience. Despite some disappointment with the distance learning implementation, students learned course material, improved their English, and connected aspects of U.S. philanthropy with the situation in China.

Keywords: *distance learning; cross-cultural reflection; intercultural; philanthropy; nonprofit management education*

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The capacity of the Internet and advancing software capabilities create new educational opportunities through distance learning, some of which may cross international boundaries. Powerful interactive platforms including two-way, synchronous audio and video communication can affordably supplement asynchronous online formats, providing a new framework for instruction and expanding opportunities for international distance learning. This technology offers an opportunity for institutions with plentiful teaching resources to extend their reach to places where these resources are absent but in clear need.

In this case study, we examined a course taught using the Internet from the United States to students in China. The course proved that this approach is feasible, despite difficulties. An American based in the United States taught the course Understanding Philanthropy in the United States from November 2012 to January 2013 to Chinese undergraduates at the Beijing Normal University Zhuhai (BNUZ), a campus neighboring Macau and across the bay from Hong Kong. The instructor, William Cleveland, intended to be in residence in Zhuhai for the 10-week course, but illness required him to return home. This situation necessitated the last-minute modification of the teaching method from in person to distance learning. Lessons and recommendations from this case study can be applied to online courses in general, to the teaching of international students in any setting, and particularly to the leveraging of resources dedicated to teaching philanthropy and nonprofit management at American universities.

The growth and size of the nonprofit sector in China justifies the introduction of concepts from the mature U.S. nonprofit sector. Since the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, Chinese charitable donations and the number of nonprofits have grown significantly. Charitable donations grew 67%, from 60 billion RMB (approximately $10 billion) in 2008 to 100 billion RMB (approximately $16.3 billion) in 2013, representing approximately 0.16% of Chinese GDP. In comparison, total donations over the last decade in the United States have fluctuated between $300 billion and $350 billion and for the last half century have consistently represented approximately 2% of U.S. GDP (McKitrick, 2014). Despite donations in the United States exceeding Chinese donations by a factor of 20, the United States does not have 20 times as many nonprofit organizations as China. Just over 1 million nonprofit organizations in the United States are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service, and far more incorporated nonprofits are not recognized or operate as incorporated organizations (Dale, 1993; Grønbjerg, 1989, 2002; Grønbjerg & Clerkin, 2005; Grønbjerg & Paarlberg, 2002; Pettijohn, 2013; Smith, 1973, 1997a, 1997b). In China, 561,000 social organizations are registered with the national Ministry of Civil Affairs, which similarly represents a fraction of the total number of nonprofits operating in China. The Ministry-registered organizations are broken down into several categories, including 294,000 social groups, 264,000 people-non-enterprise units, and nearly 4,000 foundations (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2014). Privately funded foundations now outnumber public foundations that raise money from the general public.

Three factors account for the growth of individual donations and the number of nonprofit organizations. First, the Chinese economy is, depending on the measure, the world's largest or second largest economy; between 2001 and 2010, Chinese GDP increased annually by 10.4% (Lu & Nan, 2013). The Chinese economic boom created more than 1 million high–net worth individuals, people with more than $1 million in

assets. Second, the Chinese government gradually opened up to nonprofit organizations. In 2010, President Hu Jintao outlined a direction of social reform to improve the system of social services at the local level. This social reform was based on a structure of social management comprising Party leadership, government responsibility, nongovernmental organization support, and public participation. To facilitate reform, in 2013 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China decreed the rapid separation of state and society, a devolution of social welfare service provision from the central government, including the privatization of some government-organized nonprofit organizations. Local governments reinforced this decree by relaxing nonprofit registration policies. Several provinces abolished the dual registration system that requires nonprofits to find a government agency as a sponsor before registering with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Third, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake reinvigorated Chinese citizens' civic awareness, increasing volunteering and donations to unprecedented levels. Public attention to philanthropy grew to include the voluntary initiation of and participation in charitable projects through social media and micro-philanthropy.

The outpouring of giving by the newly wealthy and the general public along with the increasing ease of starting nonprofit organizations highlighted the existence of a human capacity vacuum in China. The NGO Research Center at Tsinghua University (2013) reported that most Chinese foundations could not find qualified professionals in finance, fundraising, and program management. The Center found that 70% of staff had less than 3 years of experience. The Center also found that two thirds of staff received on-the-job training concentrated on program management and that training was lacking in the critical management areas of marketing, fundraising, and human resources. The need for professional management was underlined by the China Red Cross scandal, during which young staff were accused of inappropriately spending donations on luxury cars and other consumer products. The paradigm shift represented by increased institutional giving by private corporations, entrepreneurs, and their foundations demanded increased professionalization in management.

Besides the opportunity created by market demands, professional education to support the nonprofit sector required the active involvement of three institutions. Interviews with the presidents of three organizations, Shanghai Song Chingling Foundation, China Foundation Center, and BNUZ, revealed a similar vision for changing philanthropy and nonprofit management in China through professional education (He, Jin, & Yang, 2013). The combined forces of the three organizations were critical to the May 2012 establishment of the Song Chingling Center for Philanthropic Education at BNUZ. The well-endowed Song Chingling Foundation contributed financial resources, the China Foundation Center provided access to a wide professional network and deep insights into market needs, and BNUZ contributed a spirit of entrepreneurship, experienced administration, and the capacity for new programs at its autonomous campus. The Center emerged as an independent teaching unit and recruited its first cohort from rising college juniors from schools across campus. The newly created philanthropic studies concentration at BNUZ was established to meet the market demand for entry-level professionals in the growing Chinese nonprofit sector.

Quite simply, leaders need to be educated to manage these nonprofit organizations professionally and to build a civil society; students are demanding training to prepare themselves. Several Chinese universities offer courses in philanthropy or nonprofit

management to fill this need. However, research and teaching about philanthropy and nonprofit management are still nascent in China. As a result, few instructors possess qualifications to teach the subject. More important, institutional maturity of the nonprofit sector in the United States provides useful models for the young, rapidly growing Chinese civil society. BNUZ strives to create an innovative model to train philanthropic and nonprofit leaders, so it intentionally introduced an international component to its program. This international component helped differentiate the BNUZ program from programs offered by other Chinese universities.

The present study goes beyond distance learning to better understand the cross-cultural experience. Intercultural exchange creates a deeper appreciation for similarities and differences between nations. Insights gained through international exchange create an opportunity to reflect on the situation in one's home country with the powerful contrasts presented. Students exposed to different teaching and course management styles broaden their experience. If the course is taught in a nonnative language, the students also improve their language skills.

Literature Review

There is a gap in the literature about how the United States can serve as a global hub of education about philanthropy and nonprofit management by actively reaching out to foreign students. University programs in nonprofit management education sprouted in the 1970s and 1980s in many countries (O'Neill, 1998). Programs in the United States proliferated more extensively than the rest of the world combined. The growth of nonprofit management education programs in the United States was remarkable, wherein programs offering graduate degrees increased from 17 in 1990, to 32 in 1992, to 76 in 1995 (Wish & Mirabella, 1998). In 1995, an additional 90 colleges or universities offered courses in nonprofit management, expanding the number of institutions offering nonprofit management education to 166 (Wish & Mirabella, 1998). Educational programs for nonprofit management and philanthropic studies grew in number and complexity in the United States at the undergraduate and graduate level, and by 2006, 240 institutions offered courses in nonprofit management education (Mirabella, 2007). Demonstrating the international interest in the topic, also in 2006, 189 schools outside the United States offered programs in nonprofit management education (Mirabella, Gemelli, Malcolm, & Berger, 2007). However, with more identified programs in philanthropy and nonprofit management education than the rest of the world combined, the United States can serve as a net exporter of education about nonprofit management and philanthropy.

The purpose of nonprofit education is to provide formative influences over these programs. Salamon (1998) asked two questions of nonprofit management education: "What is the central management challenge facing public problem-solving, and what implications does this have for the design of nonprofit management education?" (p. 138). Paton and Mordaunt (2001) expected the growth of international nonprofit management education to be fueled by the increasing sophistication of in-house management programs presented by large national nonprofit organizations along with the increasing globalization of discussion about nonprofit management, although this does not appear to have transpired. In Australia, the focus of education was far more local and the debate about training versus education of managers influenced the lack of spe-

cific nonprofit management education programs in universities (Lyons, 1998). A different situation occurred in Ireland, where national umbrella bodies promoted the idea of educating and training nonprofit professionals along with encouraging the involvement of nonprofit professionals on academic program advisory boards to enhance legitimacy and create a bridge for the practical application of the knowledge gained through educational programs (Donnelly-Cox & MacKechnie, 1998). Adding practical knowledge to the classroom, adjunct faculty represented 10% to 75% of all nonprofit management faculty members, and faculty members came from diverse backgrounds (O'Neill, 1998).

University nonprofit management education programs are typically focused on training local nonprofit professionals and managers (Bright, Bright, & Haley, 2007; O'Neill, 2005; Onyx & Dalton, 2012). In models of structuring these programs within a university, consideration of international components were omitted (Dolch, Ernst, McClusky, Mirabella, & Sadow, 2007; Young, 1999). Similarly, in an assessment of why students pursued nonprofit-related education, a program's geographic location was important, but no mention was made of the nationality of students (Wilson & Larson, 2002). Many of these programs came to offer international courses, but instruction was typically from the U.S. perspective, looking at the nonprofit community in other countries (Mirabella, 2007; VanHorn & Elliott, 2010). This international perspective arose despite the finding that students enrolled in U.S. programs least valued courses about international organizations and issues (Larson, Wilson, & Chung, 2003). Teaching students from outside the United States about the U.S. philanthropic and nonprofit sector remains unstudied.

Our case study adds an intercultural perspective to the methods for conducting nonprofit-related education in different countries. Nonprofit management education is institutionalized differently in various countries for the location of programs within the university and the source of financial support (Donnelly-Cox & McGee, 2007). Therefore, educators must understand the importance of national contexts as each country has its own history influencing the development of a civil society and nonprofit sector and specifics about educating students in this area (Hvenmark & Larsson, 2012a). Of the 76 programs in the United States granting graduate degrees in nonprofit management, 43% are in schools of public administration or political science, only 14% are in business schools, and the remaining 43% are scattered among other disciplines (Wish & Mirabella, 1998). This may represent a bias in providing nonprofit management education because some advocates focus mainly on educating managers for social services and their interaction with government provision of services (Salamon, 1998). Because relatively few business schools offer degree programs in nonprofit management areas, the dependence on a capitalist system is not strictly a prerequisite for understanding nonprofit management (Mottner & Wymer, 2011).

Universities must pursue opportunities in transnational distance learning or be at a competitive disadvantage from the perspective of income, international partnership, and classroom diversity (Hogan, 2012). Exemplifying this in nonprofit management education, Murphy and Meyer (2012) described the international partnerships and other relationships developed at DePaul University's School of Public Services, which increased the popularity of the study abroad program. These courses included students from the United States and a foreign country. Enrollment in study abroad

programs increased from 10 students in 1999 to over 130 in 2010, facilitated by more faculty involvement and relationships in an increasing number of countries. Faculty reported that peer-to-peer learning in intercultural classrooms was very rewarding. Classes were also enriched by having guest speakers from all over the world join via Skype. Underlining the importance of exploring distance learning options is the cost of travel and inability to obtain visas prevented foreign students from visiting DePaul's Chicago campus.

Our study only included students from China, yet the model presented can be applied to intercultural classrooms to enhance peer-to-peer learning. For instance, direct intercultural communication was important for building trust between American and Kyrgyzstani students working on nongovernmental organization projects (Miller-Millesen & Mould, 2004). Students in Taiwan and the United States had favorable attitudes toward the intercultural dimensions of their joint course (Chen, Hsu, & Caropreso, 2005). In a study of U.S. and Chinese students involved in an intercultural classroom, Chen, Caropreso, Hsu, and Yang (2012) found little previous experience in an intercultural learning setting, the overall experience rated positively, and the Chinese students were comfortable using English.

Improvement of English language skills can be an incentive for students to pursue cross-cultural opportunities. English skill improvement measured by student self-assessment has long been known to be feasible (Blanche & Merino, 1989). Perceived language competence and actual competence were correlated, with the additional influence that students anxious about their competency tended to underestimate their competence, whereas less anxious students tended to overestimate their competence (MacIntyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997).

Cultural differences were an important issue with online instruction, although the intercultural exchange was highly beneficial. Stressing differences in cultural approaches to nonprofits resonated more with students, rather than a standard model inferring superiority and different implying inferiority (Hvenmark & Larsson, 2012b). Time management preferences and habits were different across cultures, and instructors needed to be aware of these differences to set up management systems to ensure all students stayed synchronized and on schedule (Richter, 2012). Students made forum posts and collaborated differently online, and instructors needed to be sensitive to these intercultural differences (Chen et al., 2005; Kim & Bonk, 2002).

Method – Course Implementation

Participants in the Course

Forty-six students completed this course of the 50 students originally enrolled. Of the 46 students completing the course, 31 were the first cohort of philanthropic studies concentration from 11 schools and 25 majors at BNUZ. Starting in their junior year, concentrators are required to take 45 credits in philanthropy and nonprofit management in addition to their academic major requirements. The remaining 15 students completing this course were non-concentrators taking the course as an elective. The concentrators previously passed the course Introduction of the Voluntary and Nonprofit Sector; non-concentrators had limited education about nonprofit organizations.

Technology Enabling Distance Learning

Internet connections and communications technologies allowed this course to be taught. Class sessions relied on synchronous communication between the instructor in Indiana and the Zhuhai classroom. Student teaching assistants set up a webcam and microphone in the Zhuhai classroom with the video shown on the classroom screen and audio played over the classroom speakers. Adobe's Connect remote meeting technology allowed transmission of several information streams simultaneously, including audio, video, a screen capture displaying slides or websites, and a chat window transmitting typed messages among participants.

Asynchronous communication was primarily through Course Networking (CN), www.coursenetworking.com. The CN incorporates elements similar to the social networking site Facebook and commercially available learning management systems (LMS), so the CN served as the course website and LMS. The CN allowed the completion of a precourse knowledge assessment, opinion polls, along with posting of readings, PowerPoint slides, and assignments. A key CN feature is the ability to have asynchronous communication that is collected in discrete discussion threads initiated with a post, which can then be liked and receive comments. The CN was supplemented by e-mail to address issues of individual concern for students such as submission of and feedback for assignments.

Course Design, Emphasizing Language, Culture, and Deliverables

This course was taught entirely in English, and strategies were integrated into the course design to overcome language differences. PowerPoint slides with detailed notes accompanied the spoken lectures, and downloadable recordings of each lecture were posted on the course website after class. Readings, all of which were in English, were selected with cognizance of the language challenges and limited to 20 pages for each class session. The final examination was presented in English and Chinese, with multiple-choice questions presented side by side to ensure that difficulty with English did not penalize any of the students.

Similar to challenges with language, recognized cultural differences played a part in the course design; important facets of U.S. philanthropy different from Chinese philanthropy were emphasized in this. These facets included religion, democracy, and institutions organized primarily to raise donations. Religion, a common motivator and beneficiary of philanthropy in the United States, is far less prevalent in China. The different political systems and unique histories of the countries distinctively impact contemporary philanthropy. The Chinese nonprofit sector is growing, whereas the population of American charities has slowed in growth. Fundraising from individuals is different between the countries. In China, no fundraising-focused institutions exist that are equivalent to the United Way or commercially affiliated donor-advised funds, and only a couple of community foundations were recently organized. Given the instructor's expertise about public charities as organizations, the course was specifically focused on organizations as central to philanthropy in the United States. To help maintain continuity and not overwhelm the students, the instructor consistently used several prominent American nonprofits as examples including Habitat for Humanity, the March of Dimes, and the Y (formerly the YMCA). The course project presentations expanded the exposure to other organizations.

Deliverables were designed to engage students throughout the semester and were different from typical courses as shown in Table 1. Each student was required to make a post about a favorite website to familiarize the students with the course's website. Unfortunately, instead of requiring this to be completed during the first week of the semester, the instructor did not assign a specific due date for this assignment, and many students completed it in the last week of the course. Despite this, many students responded favorably to the postings of their classmates with appreciation for learning about a website about which they were previously unaware.

Table 1

Comparing Deliverables for This Course and Typical Lecture Courses

This course	Typical Chinese course	Typical American course
Posting about a favorite website		
Discussion posts on the CN course site	Class attendance	Class participation
Course paper done in teams, including timely submission of interim deliverables	Midterm examination	Midterm examination or course paper
Final examination	Final examination	Final examination

Each class session had a common pattern, including articulating specific learning goals; presenting a relevant website such as Guidestar, Charity Navigator, or a large American charity; and ending the lecture with a summary and discussion questions. These questions extended the class sessions to the course website. The students typically responded to the discussion questions posted and created new discussion threads. Each student was required to make 10 new posts during the semester and comment on five other posts. The postings clearly indicated the students understood the material and critically thought about philanthropy in the United States and its comparison to similar issues in China.

The main course project, completed by teams of two to four students, was a paper with an in-class presentation in English. The project was to compare specific organizations selected from a list of the largest public charities based in the United States. Prescribed questions related to course content guided the analysis. Due to the short duration of the course, interim deliverables kept the students on track. The most important deliverable was a draft paper due 2 weeks before the final due date, which received extensive comments to help students improve their papers. One student from each team made a 5-minute presentation. The presentation slides only in English diminished understanding by some students in the audience.

Results of Teaching and Surveys

The course had several specific goals. The first goal was to teach the students about U.S. philanthropy, including giving to and receiving by charitable organizations. The

second goal was effective use of distance learning technology to teach the course. Part of this goal included assessing the effectiveness of specific course resources. The third goal was to use the intercultural nature of the course to inspire students to reflect on the Chinese situation and how elements of U.S. philanthropy could be applied in China. Part of this goal included assessing the impact of using English as the teaching language and whether this interfered with learning or provided an added benefit of improved skills.

The results measured for the course were based on graded performance of the students and three surveys. Two surveys administered with the course's final examination had excellent response rates of 44 of the 46 students (95.7%). In one survey, students were asked to rate the usefulness of 23 resources provided to the students during the course using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *worse than useless* to *absolutely indispensable*. In a second survey, the course evaluation, students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, technologies used, and perceived skills gained during the course using a 7-point Likert scale and open-ended comments. A third survey, administered 6 months later in June 2013 to 26 of the 31 philanthropic studies concentrators enrolled in the course (83.9% of concentrators, 56.5% of all students), was used to explore reflections on broader learning gained from the course and if students found the intercultural experience sufficiently valuable to offer it for future students. Presentation of these results was focused on the average results for the survey and the percentage of survey respondents responding with a favorable impression rather than a neutral or negative response.

Mastery of Course Material

The first course goal was to teach the students about American philanthropy. Student grades confirmed learning goals were accomplished. Of the 46 students completing the course, only two students failed the course and two received a grade of *D*. The remaining 42 students were equally distributed with grades of *A*, *B*, and *C*.

Exam performance reinforced findings from course grades. Responses to a 20-question precourse knowledge assessment were compared to similar questions on the final examination to measure learning directly. Students who completed the precourse knowledge assessment ($n = 20$) were enrolled in the philanthropic studies concentration. Students who completed the precourse knowledge assessment performed better on the final exam than the other students, many of whom took the course as an elective and had limited previous academic exposure to philanthropy or nonprofit management. The number of correct answers on the final exam was significantly higher for the precourse group ($M = 34.7$, $Mdn = 35$) than for the other students ($M = 30.9$, $Mdn = 30$). Significance was shown by a two-sample t test ($p = .0120$) and a two-sample nonparametric Wilcoxon rank-sum test ($p = .0106$). Questions were matched between the precourse assessment and final examination to test knowledge gains within the precourse group. The precourse group performed better on matched questions on the final exam than on the precourse knowledge assessment. For these 20 questions, the number of correct answers was significantly higher on the final exam ($M = 12.3$, $Mdn = 12.5$) than on the precourse assessment ($M = 7.9$, $Mdn = 7.5$). Significance was shown with a paired t test ($p = .0000$) and Wilcoxon signed-rank test ($p = .0001$). These results show that the students who entered the course with preexisting academic exposure to

philanthropy learned in the course. Presumably, the students with no previous training also learned as nearly all students passed the course.

Beyond the grades, the quality of learning demonstrated in the course project was noteworthy. The specific charities analyzed were previously unknown to the students, and they learned about these organizations using Internet research. Organizations analyzed included arts, commercially related donor-advised funds, community foundations, environment, health advocacy, hospitals, international relief, social services, and universities. Each of the projects indicated the students carefully researched the activities of the organizations, understood the general business model for their success, and made appropriate comparisons among similar organizations. The in-class presentations allowed students to share their learning with one another.

Survey Results About Distance Learning

The second course goal was to use distance learning technology effectively as well as engage students with course resources. Questions about course delivery are summarized in Table 2. Distance learning was a difficult adjustment for the students, especially because they expected in-person instruction. Students rated the live delivery of lectures unfavorably, the least favorable ratings from any of the responses on the surveys. Students rated the delivery of lectures through Adobe Connect at 4.11 ($\sigma = 1.45$) on a 7-point Likert scale. For these ratings, 67% and 58% of students, respectively, rated the use of these technologies neutral or unfavorable, with a score of 4 or lower. Comments indicated that Internet speed negatively affected the quality of the streaming. A small image size of the lecturer on the screen also received several complaints. As well, some students complained that the instructor spoke too quickly for them to understand. Numerous students commented they preferred face-to-face interaction rather than "tele-learning," with a primary deficiency being the reduction in direct interaction. The format was described as distracting, which was compounded by the language difficulties. The distance learning aspect of the course also contributed to a perception of low accessibility of the instructor, with an average rating of 3.96 ($\sigma = 1.59$) with 56% of students rating this 4 or lower.

Table 2

Course Delivery

Survey question 7-point Likert scale 1 = *unfavorable*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *favorable*	Mean response	*SD*	Responses 5 or higher
Delivery of lectures through Skype	3.69	1.47	33%
Delivery of lectures through Adobe Connect	4.11	1.45	42%
Accessibility of instructor	3.96	1.59	44%
Responsiveness of instructor	5.33	1.45	80%

Overall, the instructor's management of the course helped to mitigate some of the drawbacks of distance learning. Students found the instructor responsive, with an average rating of 5.33 ($\sigma = 1.45$) and 80% of students rating this with a 5 or higher. Individ-

uals described the instructor as patient, dedicated, and well prepared. Students noted appreciation for timely response to inquiries, although several students expressed that their deficiencies with English impeded understanding and communication. Several individuals suggested their experience with the instructor could be improved by more timely and thorough comments, especially for posts made on the CN, and a physical presence in China to allow face-to-face communication. Some students suggested scheduling specific times to be available to students along with proactively scheduling time with student groups.

Survey Results About Course Resources

A series of questions addressed the usefulness of course resources, summarized in Table 3. The lecture slides posted including the notes were strongly favored by the students, with an average response of 6.30 (σ = 1.04) and 93% of students rating them with a 5 or higher on a 7-point Likert scale. The readings with highlighting were generally viewed as useful, with an average response of 5.58 (σ = 0.91), again with 93% of students rating usefulness as 5 or higher. This was consistent with a yes–no poll early in the course, through which students were asked, "Did you find the yellow highlighting on the readings helpful?" The students were strongly in favor of the highlighting with 35 yes out of 42 responses (83.3% favorable).

Table 3

Course Resources

Survey question 7-point Likert scale 1 = *unfavorable*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *favorable*	Mean response	SD	Responses 5 or higher
Usefulness of lecture slides including notes	6.30	1.04	93%
Usefulness of readings with critical text highlighted	5.58	0.91	93%
CN adequate for finding course resources	5.11	1.16	78%
CN discussion usefulness	5.07	1.10	78%
Improved ability for finding information on the Internet about U.S. philanthropy	5.56	1.09	91%
Usefulness of knowledge about specific U.S. nonprofits	5.11	1.35	93%
Usefulness of comments on draft research paper	6.32	0.92	95%
Usefulness of course research project	5.80	0.83	96%
Usefulness of project data provided by professor	6.23	0.92	100%

The CN course website was viewed as useful and inspired a diversity of opinions. Students found the CN to be adequate for finding course resources, with an average

rating of 5.11 (σ = 1.16) on a 7-point Likert scale. Students rated the adequacy of the CN discussions similarly, with an average of 5.07 (σ = 1.10). For both of these measures, 78% of students provided a rating of 5 or higher. Slow Internet speeds and the complexity of the CN were viewed as drawbacks. However, students also believed the CN site was a good platform for communicating and learning that improved the connection among the students and between students and the instructor. Contrarily, some students described student posts as boring; students emphasized that some posts appeared to be done only for grades and suffered from numerous meaningless statements. Some students bristled at the requirement of earning points by posting on the CN, which contrasted with other students suggesting the number of required points needed to be raised. Again, language was viewed as an impediment with many students desiring posts in English and Chinese. This is despite a translation function embedded in the CN that facilitated translation between English and Chinese.

Students overwhelmingly expressed great satisfaction with the main course project requiring student teams to describe and compare specific nonprofits in the United States. On a 7-point Likert scale with 1 being *least useful* and 7 being *most useful*, responses to a question regarding the research project about the specific nonprofit averaged 5.80 (σ = 0.83), and the question was rated 5 or higher by 96% of the students. Students rated the project data provided about the nonprofits by the professor an average of 6.23 (σ = 0.83), with all students rating this 5 or higher. The comments on the draft paper provided by the instructor received an average rating of 6.32 (σ = 0.92), with 95% of the students rating this 5 or higher. Similarly, the improvement in knowledge about specific U.S. nonprofits received an average rating of 5.11 (σ = 1.35), with 93% of students rating this 5 or higher. Last, when students were asked to rate the improvement in ability to find information about philanthropy on the Internet, the average response was 5.56 (σ = 1.09), with 91% of students rating this 5 or higher.

Survey Results About the Cross-Cultural Experience of the Course

The third course goal was to inspire students to reflect on the situation in China by teaching them about philanthropy in the United States. To probe the value of the cross-cultural experience, 26 of the 31 philanthropic studies concentrators who took the course completed a survey in June 2013. Students valued the cross-cultural experience at multiple levels. The practical level was important to them for improving skills and broadening their experiences. As noted above, most notable was their improvement in English skills, which is important to the Chinese. For most students, this was their first experience with distance learning. Despite the low ratings given to distance learning, 73% of the respondents would take this course again, even knowing that the course would be taught through distance learning. This was also the first exposure for students to a course taught in an American style, requiring numerous small deliverables rather than only a midterm and final examination. Although these deliverables generated comments such as "too much homework," the majority of the students appreciated the learning gained through regular engagement with the course material.

Students commented extensively about how much they gained by exploring the "English" Internet. The accessibility of websites for American nonprofits was surprisingly high. One student, helping prepare for the course's main project, checked the websites of 900 American nonprofit organizations and was able to access all but 38 of them. The inability to access sites such as Amnesty International and Human Rights

Watch were understandable given the sentiments of the Chinese government. However, the inability to access sites such as the Omaha Community Foundation and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum were attributed to slow spooling speeds limiting access to some sites.

The course helped students to appreciate the differences and similarities between the United States and China, especially when looking to the future. Students were supportive of topics covered in the class based on the June 2013 survey. Of the 16 lecture topics, the average rating on a 5-point Likert scale for each topic, with 1 being *least important* and 5 being *most important*, ranged from 3.38 to 4.48 with social entrepreneurship, funding and assessment of nonprofits, history of philanthropy in the United States, and ethics rating the highest. Personal benefit from the course was specified by 54% of the respondents. Especially important was the insight provided by learning about another country's nonprofit sector that allowed reflection on China's situation. More than 40% of the students provided open-ended comments affirming that this course helped them better understand potential ways to improve the development of the Chinese nonprofit sector. The applicability to the Chinese context was critical to offering this course in the future; 81% of the students recommended future students take this course, and 69% believed it should be required for philanthropic studies concentrators. In addition, a majority of students agreed that this course provided them with theoretical knowledge to help them interact effectively with today's global community in the nonprofit sector. Students repeatedly posted comments on the CN in response to organizations and resources available in the United States such as "we need to develop that in China" or "why doesn't China have an organization like that?"

Survey Results About the Impact of Language

Due to the importance of language in the course, two groups of questions were used to explore its impact in the course evaluation. The results of these questions are summarized in Table 4. Skills in English improved, but students raised concerns that the use of English interfered with learning. Results of the course-end survey indicated that self-assessed English skills trended toward improvement for reading, writing, listening, and speaking. On a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 rating *much worse* and 7 rating *great improvement*, the average response for improvement of English language reading was 5.29 ($\sigma = 0.98$), for writing was 4.84 ($\sigma = 1.15$), for listening was 4.91 ($\sigma = 0.96$), and for speaking was 4.64 ($\sigma = 0.98$). The responses had a majority indicating improvements, with ratings of 5 or higher reported on 89% of responses for reading, 73% for writing, 78% for listening, and 64% for speaking.

Table 4

Impact of Language

Survey question 7-point Likert scale 1 = *unfavorable*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *favorable*	Mean response	SD	Responses 5 or higher
Usefulness of lecture slides including notes	6.30	1.04	93%
Improvement of English reading skill	5.29	0.98	89%

Table 4 (cont.)

Survey question 7-point Likert scale 1 = *unfavorable*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *favorable*	Mean response	*SD*	Responses 5 or higher
Improvement of English writing skill	4.84	1.15	73%
Improvement of English listening skill	4.91	0.96	78%
Improvement of English speaking skill	4.64	0.98	64%
Impact of English use on learning, readings	4.02	1.56	44%
Impact of English use on learning, written assignments	4.56	1.31	58%
Impact of English use on learning, CN postings	5.13	1.11	71%
Impact of English use on learning, lectures	3.76	1.69	38%
Impact of English use on learning, videos	3.98	1.72	42%

In another set of questions about language, students were asked to rate the use of English for the impact on their learning. This was viewed slightly negatively on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 rating *completely prevented learning* and 7 rating *extremely helpful for learning*. Responses about readings in English averaged 4.02 ($\sigma = 1.56$), lectures in English averaged 3.76 ($\sigma = 1.69$), and videos in English averaged 3.98 ($\sigma = 1.72$). These three questions were among only a few in the survey with more negative than positive responses, with the majority rating the questions with scores of 1 to 4: 56% of responses for readings, 62% for lectures, and 58% for videos. Many students requested Chinese subtitles for the English-language videos. Assignments in written English were rated more favorably, with an average rating of 4.56 ($\sigma = 1.31$) and 58% of students scoring this question 5 or higher. Postings to the CN in English were rated highly for helping learning, with an average rating of 5.13 ($\sigma = 1.11$) and 71% of students scoring this question 5 or higher. The mostly neutral responses indicate that the use of English did not impede learning.

Discussion

The cross-cultural gains of presenting a course about American philanthropy to non-American students not only provided substantial insights about the American situation, but also reflected on the Chinese situation. Given the reasonable success of this course, further exploration about cross-cultural distance learning models is encouraged. Leveraging available resources is particularly applicable to topics such as philanthropic studies and nonprofit management, wherein the availability of qualified instructors has a limited and unequal global distribution. American institutions should consider relationships with institutions in other countries to add value to both institutions. More than one model can be used when teaching cross-cultural courses. These efforts must be carefully constructed to ensure that neither technology nor lan-

guage unduly impedes learning and that cross-cultural reflection benefits individuals involved in both institutions.

Rationale for Pursuing Cross-Cultural Academic Instruction

This course shed light on potential future directions for education about philanthropy and nonprofit management in a global context. Some scholars have described how American students learn about nonprofit sector and civil society of developing countries (Mirabella, 2007; VanHorn & Elliott, 2010), but we found equal importance and value for students in a country with an emerging civil society to learn from developed countries. By learning about the American nonprofit sector, especially by learning from a comprehensive perspective which included historical, cultural, and organizational perspectives, Chinese students gained a deeper appreciation of the differences in the nonprofit sectors between the two societies. Ultimately, the course provided skills needed and inspired thinking to improve the capacity of Chinese civil society in the future as well as created a framework for Chinese nonprofit leaders to probe, challenge, and consider opportunities. Having an American professor teach Chinese students about American philanthropy exposed students to thinking from a foreign perspective and provided a basis for these future civic leaders to engage in richer dialogues. We found that students' perceptions of the value of a course were based on the applicability and usefulness of its content to Chinese society.

Cross-cultural education and reflection are critical to the value proposition of cross-border instruction for the students and instructor. Forty percent of the students volunteered comments on the survey that this course helped them better understand potential ways to improve the development of the Chinese nonprofit sector. This applicability to the Chinese situation reinforced the 81% of the students who recommended future students take this course and 69% who believed it should be required for philanthropic studies concentrators at BNUZ. However, the cross-cultural impacts also benefited the instructor. In this case, the opportunity for a PhD student to teach required him to examine his basic assumptions about philanthropy critically and how these assumptions applied cross-culturally. This sort of reflection can be extended for faculty who are confronted with a diverse student body that brings a range of backgrounds and experiences to the classroom. In certain cases, with adequate forethought and preparation, these teaching experiences can become the basis of publications and other tools to share insights to broaden multicultural teaching effectiveness.

Survey results indicated that the students in this course preferred in-person instruction to "tele-learning." However, face-to-face instruction is not always possible depending on the topic and resource availability. Nontrivial obstacles exist across national boundaries for traditional in-person instruction about philanthropy and nonprofit management away from a home institution. Substantial costs in time and money arise when either faculty or students travel between countries. Beyond the cost of getting from one place to another, housing and feeding visitors is costly due to the high price of space and food in some cities. For faculty and students, getting travel documents requires investment of time and money, and sometimes travel documentation cannot be secured.

Other complexities for establishing and maintaining cross-national academic relationships for teaching should be considered when pursuing cross-cultural academic instruction. Both institutions must mutually meet curricular standards. Faculty must

be available to teach courses and staff to provide administrative support such as course registration, posting of grades, and ensuring financial arrangements are properly executed. For course delivery, adequate technological infrastructure for hardware and software must include adequate Internet connections, access to computers, and software for remote meetings and a learning management system.

Potential Course Models for Cross-National Instruction

Many models exist for presenting courses, and distance learning provides its own set of variations. When a single instructor and classroom are involved, instruction can be entirely in person, a mix of in person and distance learning, or all distance learning. In the case of a mix of styles, most of a course could be taught through distance learning with a couple of weeks of in-person instruction. In our course, we used a mostly synchronous model. Some models for distance learning are more asynchronous and may involve recorded lectures, whereas synchronous time involves structured interaction through managed discussions or small group activities. In this case, students situated in a computer lab can work either individually or in small groups as the basis of two-way communication between the instructor and classroom.

Several models exist that involve classrooms and instructors in more than one country. Due to distance learning reducing the interaction between the instructor and students, the same course could be taught contemporaneously for students in the United States and another country. Although there may be difficulties scheduling times when the classes can convene synchronously, asynchronous communications can be joined. A single instructor could lead the course, or instructors on each campus could use a coordinated syllabus. For certain projects, students from different countries could be on the same teams to make the peer-to-peer learning more direct and intimate. These direct interactions would have many benefits including deeper appreciation of intercultural similarities and differences, improvement in language skills, and creation of lasting cross-border relationships. The relationships would be intensified with the possibility of bringing the classes together in the same location for a portion of the course. For instance, a number of service projects could be identified in one of the countries that culminated in a cross-cultural team problem-solving exercise. If these projects aligned with a specific nonprofit organization or the interests of a corporation, funding may be available from an external source. This method could also boost students' learning motivations as they will know they have this extra level of interaction.

Preparing to Teach a Cross-Cultural Course

Regardless of the model used for teaching, the material covered in the course is essential. American exceptionalism encourages viewing the U.S. philanthropic tradition as superior to those existing in other countries. Although there may be legitimate arguments for making claims of superiority, American philanthropic traditions are not necessarily superior nor can they be simplistically transferred between cultures. Sensitivity is essential in selecting subject material, readings, videos, and assignments as they must highlight commonalities and differences between cultures. Areas where obvious differences exist between cultures include the political system, the importance of religion, the maturity of the nonprofit sector, and how nonprofits generate revenue. For instance, rather than positing that American democracy is superior to other government systems, students can explain the roots of American democracy, how it was en-

couraged by voluntary association, and how this tradition of collective action formed the basis of the current nonprofit sector. Although this general sweep of histories is found in other countries in the Americas and South Pacific, this type of immigration-centered and European-dominated historical development contrasts with the history of countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

An overriding concern about teaching cross-culturally is the language difference. The grading and survey results for this course showed that teaching in English did not prevent learning. Few readings exist in Chinese about U.S. philanthropy along with limited availability of Chinese speakers who are qualified to teach such a course. Spoken language for the lectures was also an issue. The instructor attempted to speak slowly to facilitate understanding. The distance learning aspect reduced the ability of the instructor to perceive how well the students followed the lecture and comprehended the material. This is due to the inability to read subtle cues of body language as well as few sidebar conversations between the students and instructor. The instructor noted that students were flipping through printed copies of the lecture notes during the lectures, presumably to help them follow along with the lecture to improve comprehension. Despite these challenges, one of the benefits of this course was the students' improvement in English skills. In more advanced courses where language issues are inevitable, language prerequisites may ensure students have sufficient background to understand the context of the course

When an instructor is planning a cross-cultural course, the preparation of written documents is critical. Key documents should be translated into the students' native language such as syllabus, main project assignments, and examinations. As well, translating readings and lecture notes, as feasible, serves as a helpful aid for students. However, time and translation resources may not always be available. When the instructor selects readings, the readings should not be too long and the language should be fairly elementary. For longer readings, the instructor should highlight sections that are particularly relevant to understanding the critical points, enabling students to focus their efforts on these sections. The school's English instructor may help reinforce language issues related to the course. This provides an additional resource to aid students and allow increased focus on course content.

Issues with spoken language can be addressed in a number of ways. Speaking slowly and using written language reinforces key messages. One way to address the language and connectivity issues is to require students to view prerecorded lectures and have class sessions center around discussions and other interactive instructional methods. This would allow students to stop the lecture recording and rewind it if the language was difficult. Accountability points, such as quiz questions, could be built into the lecture to ensure students viewed them. Students could also be asked to bring specific questions from the lecture to the class meetings as the basis for discussion. When showing commercially recorded videos, subtitles in either English or the students' native language should be turned on to facilitate comprehension. For better direct communication with students, the instructor should have them speak with him or her in pairs so the students can help each other with comprehension and translation. If students make presentations, visuals should have translation in the native language to help students in the audience improve their comprehension.

Execution of a cross-cultural course can be facilitated through consideration of how the students will respond to lectures and assignments. A limited number of examples were used to avoid overwhelming students and to avoid explaining the context of unfamiliar organizations. Many well-known nonprofit organizations in the United States are virtually unknown in China. The CN was a new technology for the students. The intention was to provide a simple assignment to draw them into the technology with the assignment of posting a favorite website. This should have been due during the first week of the semester. This course was taught in only 10 weeks, and interim deliverables helped keep students on track. The draft of the term paper submitted 2 weeks before the final due date allowed comments to guide improvement and ensured students understood the basic assignment requirements. This had the added benefit of reducing the end-of-semester workload for the instructor.

Knowledge of different academic traditions across national borders is helpful in outlining course structure. For instance, in China most courses are assessed only through a midterm and final examination. Specific policies and procedures stood out contrasting the Chinese and American traditions. A strict attendance policy stated that if a student missed more than two classes, they could be ineligible to take the final examination and would fail the course. Required presence in the classroom reduced some of the flexibility inherent with distance learning. A contributing factor to the high percentage of students completing the course was that once the course started, students could not withdraw from it or switch courses without losing whatever they had invested in the course. This course was required for the philanthropic studies concentration, which also contributed to the high completion rate.

One potential limitation that did not cause undue hardship was the 13-hour time difference. Sessions were typically conducted early in the morning in China, which was late in the evening the preceding day in the United States. The time difference proved advantageous for reviewing the draft papers. The instructor received these by 8 a.m. in Indiana, allowing the students to submit them in their evening. This allowed a complete workday to review the papers and return them to students by the time they awoke the next morning. A second way the time difference could be used would be to schedule office hours in the students' evening and morning to provide accessibility in different time periods. Students could be required to schedule at least one synchronous meeting with the instructor to break down barriers. A third way the time difference could be used advantageously would be to schedule any synchronous sessions when the maximum Internet bandwidth is typically available at the site where it is a limiting factor.

Active support of the course at a remote location is essential. The presence of competent and reliable teaching assistants at the host institution greatly facilitated course execution. Two students were officially named by the school and two others assisted on technical issues with the network connection, all of whom were enrolled in the course. These students took attendance, provided reminders to students about scheduling changes, collected and translated information, and managed the network communications for the class sessions. They also interacted with the school administration about scheduling changes, exam specifics, and grading.

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