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Spring 2020

### Global Studies Initiative Faculty Report: Faculty Training on Online Teaching and Learning

Benjamin Jacob Skousen

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**Aims of Global Studies Initiative:** Parkland’s Global Studies Initiative promotes the addition to Parkland’s social science courses of instructional materials on global issues with a focus on the European Union, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia, and East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. Further, it aims to provide social science faculty with instructional design tools and aid them with the implementation of new course materials in the classroom.

### Global Studies Initiative Faculty Report: Best Practices for Online Teaching

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Benjamin Jacob Skousen \_\_\_\_\_

Courses Taught (course name(s), section number): \_\_\_\_\_ ANT 200 \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following questions to complete this report:**

1. Please describe here a couple of the best practices for online teaching and learning that you workshopped in the EDU 914 Parkland Faculty Academy course, and how you plan to implement them in the online component of your classes in the Fall of 2020 and beyond. These can be anything from content management and delivery, to student engagement, student assessment, or anything else you learned in this training course that you will adopt in your teaching.

One is to instigate better student engagement community through media. This fall I will post an informal video about myself at the beginning of class so students can get to know me. I’ll also require students to do the same or at least post some written information about themselves on a discussion board. This, I hope, will break the ice and allow students to get to know me and each other. Ideally, this will serve as a segue into the lab portion of the course, where we will meet in person once a week to wash, sort, and identify artifacts. I hope that being around each other in this kind of hands on activity will be a fun, interesting, and exiting thing for students.

Another is to focus on teaching course objectives. In the past, I’ve created activities and assignments that help students process and engage with the idea that the past and the field of archaeology in general matters (both course objectives). Assignments have included family history projects, “object biographies” of their favorite things (usually phones, jewelry, cars, heirlooms), or writing personal narratives of meaningful places they’ve visited. I think these activities will work just as well, and perhaps better, in an online format. My goal in the fall is to have students post a video or picture of an important thing or place, and explain, either in writing or in video, why the thing or place matters to them and/or to a larger group of people (e.g., family, community, nation). I will also require them to post these videos, pictures, essays, or narratives on a discussion board and have other students respond to them. This format will provide a visual for other students and will hopefully provoke some

interesting dialogue, something that never happened in previous classes (it was simply an assignment that I had them turn in to me). Ideally, it will help students grasp why archaeology matters to them and is far more than just a cool subject.

2. Please reflect on how the new practices you are instituting in your courses will benefit your students in the online environment. Here you might wish to compare your course before and after you implement these practices.

One of the new practices that I will implement this fall is to better focus assignments on general objectives and not format. For example, I changed my “Reading Journal” to “Reading Responses” to give students the option of making videos, audioclips, or powerpoints instead of writing a journal entry. The objective of the responses is to ensure students are reading and thinking about the assigned readings as well as help them learn fundamental archaeological concepts, basic methods and theories used by archaeologists, and improve critical reasoning and analytical skills. This will help students focus more on the big picture and less on the details or format of a particular assignment; new formats may also even help some students better learn and retain the concepts. While this is a small change, I hope some students will find this more useful than just written journal entries.

3. Please describe an assignment or class material covered in your course that teaches students about global issues or, better yet, teaches them about the areas of the world covered in this initiative: the European Union, Eastern Europe, Russia, Eurasia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. How can you see applying some of the best practices for online teaching and learning to this particular assignment or material?

In previous in-person classes, I showed students a documentary or two during class, in part for variety but also to give them some information on topics and places I don’t know much about. For my online class, I will modify and expand this tradition into occasional “Movie Monday” assignments. Four or five times during the semester, I will require that students watch a documentary on their own time and submit a short summary/reflection paper or video on what they learned from it. Several of these documentaries will focus on famous archaeological sites or phenomenon in Europe and Asia. I already have one documentary I know of that focuses on Stonehenge, which is a well-known archaeological site in Great Britain that students are always interested in. Other potential documentaries include one on the famous “bog bodies” found in Ireland and another on China’s terracotta warriors, both topics students would find interesting.

4. Finally, how do you think learning about global issues and other areas of the world benefits your students in your field of study or discipline?

It is absolutely crucial. Anthropology is the study of human culture, which varies throughout time and space. While it is possible and useful to study contemporary local cultures, it is often useful for students to examine cultures, places, and landscapes far removed, both temporally and physically, from their own experience. It helps them grasp and appreciate the diversity of humanity and to think about the broader historical impacts of past peoples and cultures on the present day.

*Thank you very much for participating in the Global Studies Initiative and completing this report!*