

**EUROPEAN UNION
STUDIES CERTIFICATE**

**A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO
EU STUDIES IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT**

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This paper provides an overview of an initiative by the University System of Georgia (USG) to launch an undergraduate certificate in European Union (EU) Studies. The program experienced numerous hurdles in making it feasible to operate: attracting a sufficient number of students, offering a diversified curriculum of courses focused on the EU, and servicing the courses with qualified faculty. The solutions to these dilemmas required innovative approaches that relied heavily on the application of technology. Although not always ideal from a pedagogical perspective, technology renders practical opportunities that otherwise would not exist, such as the incorporation of institutions in Europe into the program. Moreover, technology demands that students acquire a new set of skills not typically addressed in the classroom environment. The USG's certificate in EU Studies constitutes a model on how to utilize technology to accomplish internationalization of the curriculum and advance pedagogy but it is a model in the process of continual evolution.

BACKGROUND

The certificate is the outgrowth of a USG faculty development seminar to Brussels and Luxembourg in December, 1996 to study the European Union. Thirty-two faculty participated in the ten-day tour and, as a result of the experience, recommended the creation of a formal academic program on the EU. An invitation was extended to all Academic Vice Presidents in the 34-unit University System to send a campus representative to serve on a committee formulating a program draft. A series of six meetings occurred over a period of one year that culminated in a proposal submitted to

the 34 institutions for assessment. Institutional responses were evaluated during a two-day retreat composed of campus representatives. The final program report generated during the retreat was officially delivered to the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for USG level approval.

The report outlined a series of justifications warranting the adoption of the European Union Studies certificate:

- The University System is under a mandate by its governing body, the Board of Regents, to internationalize in the areas of curriculum, faculty development, and study abroad opportunities for students.
- The University System is under a mandate by the Board of Regents to increase institutional collaboration as a means of maximizing resources and of minimizing program duplication.
- In international studies, curriculum and faculty expertise are concentrated in a Western European context, as in foreign languages (French, German, Spanish), history (Western Civilization), philosophy (Western Thought), and art.
- Student interest in overseas study is greatest in EU countries. In the mid-1990s, 71% of U.S. students who studied abroad enrolled in West European institutions. The comparable figure in Georgia for that time period was over 80%.
- The European Union is becoming increasingly important in international studies for reasons of its size (370 million people), wealth, economic strength (20% of world exports), culture, and military power. This importance is likely to expand as economic and political integration deepen and as additional countries acquire membership.
- The state of Georgia is closely connected to the EU in economic terms. Exports from the state to the 15 EU countries totaled \$2.7 billion in 1996. European companies also find Georgia a hospitable place to conduct business; investments from Europe amounted to \$13.3 billion in 1995 and constituted the largest bloc of foreign investors. Approximately 119,000 jobs in the state are supported by trade and investment from Europe.

On the basis of these justifications, the report concluded that "a focus on the European Union can accommodate the process of internationalization on a broad scale. It is an easy, inexpensive, and attractive way to internationalize because (1) few additional

resources would be required for faculty and curriculum development and (2) it taps into existing student preferences. Thus an EU Studies program is building a bridge to where students want to go and where the economic interest of Georgia is directed.”

In August 1998, the Central Office of the University System endorsed the EU Studies certificate, making it the first collaborative curriculum open to all USG institutions. Each President of a USG institution was requested to sign an “institutional affiliation agreement” to join the certificate program and 26 units elected to participate formally (Appendix A).

PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

A program in international studies with a narrow scope, like EU studies, must confront a set of obstacles that makes implementation challenging. Three in particular require special consideration: attracting a sufficient number of students, offering a diversified curriculum of courses focused on the EU, and servicing the courses with qualified faculty. A two-fold solution to these dilemmas was adopted: institutional collaboration and utilization of technological advances.

An adequate pool of students could be generated by aggregating interest from multi-institutional cooperation. We were successful in soliciting the involvement of 26 institutions within the University System of Georgia, with the twenty-seventh (Georgia Institute of Technology) scheduled to join in the upcoming academic year. The assumption was that if only five students enroll per institution, a supply of 130 undergraduates is available to populate program courses. This goal seems a reasonable assumption because, after only the first semester in operation, over 50

students have already returned applications to enter the program. The high level of grassroots support is reflected in the establishment of a state-wide student association that is, in all likelihood, the first of its kind in the United States. This organization shall be used as a recruitment and retention resource.

Institutional collaboration also furnished a vehicle that combined faculty numbers to yield a staff large enough to cover the specialized nature of courses targeted on the EU. In 1998, a survey across the University System identified 370 faculty with expertise classified as Western European studies. The problem, however, is that “Western European” is not synonymous with the “European Union.” It became necessary, as a consequence, to retool the skills of a select group of faculty—distributed among USG institutions—to add at least a dimension on the EU to existing courses. This objective was accomplished by sponsoring two annual workshops, since 1998, on developing course material relevant to the EU. Each workshop has been followed by an academic conference designed to enhance faculty knowledge about current issues as well as to enable exposure to leading scholars. Funding was obtained to pay for one faculty delegate per USG institution to attend the biannual two-day program of events.

Aside from collaboration, the second solution in making the certificate operational was reliance upon technology. Collaboration among institutions dispersed across the largest state—in geographic terms—east of the Mississippi River presented a host of additional impediments that technology was able to resolve. Since the EU Studies certificate is a consortium whose institutions are separated by wide physical distances,

new technologies enabled the delivery of a common curriculum by overcoming spatial separation in a way that would not have been possible several years ago. Two types of technology are integral to this effort: video-conferencing and the Internet.

The State of Georgia maintains the world's largest two-way interactive compressed video network, consisting of 411 installations. The USG is part of this network with 121 sites of its own. Each institution has at least one downlink and two satellite uplinks. In total, Georgia operates 2,400 satellite downlinks. A single site is capable of connecting with sixteen additional sites in a teleconference. A central "gateway" enables access overseas and outside the state. The program has employed these capabilities to broadcast an average of five talks/speeches across the USG as an element of the introductory course to the EU. This system enables leading scholars (Desmond Dinan, Michael Baun) and practitioners (Eric Hayes, Fraser Cameron) to be transmitted to 16 classrooms at a time. Since the technology is interactive, a two-way dialogue can be conducted between the speaker and *any* student at *any* site. For upper-level courses, the video-conferencing system allows an instructor with specialized credentials to broadcast a course state-wide, maximizing the depth and breadth of qualified faculty.

The Internet, however, constitutes the cornerstone of the curricular initiative. Web-based applications are not only cost-effective but also serve a pedagogic function by challenging students to acquire new skills: independent learning, cross-cultural communication, and technological sophistication. To make efficient use of the Internet, the program's steering committee decided to develop a series of web-based courses so

that students could enroll on a transient basis when no classes appropriate to the certificate were provided on their campuses.

This strategy was accomplished in two ways. First, web-based materials were created in a format by which they could be inserted into existing courses with a European theme. A survey in 1998 identified 550 courses already being taught in the University System with such a content. Under program guidelines, at least one-third of a course's material must be devoted to EU topics to be applied toward the curriculum. Since an adequate supply of courses was available, the need was simply to generate materials in the form of case studies and modules (sections of courses) and make them accessible to USG faculty. These materials—password protected on a centralized server—could be adopted as supplements to courses, much like outside reading. In other words, a course on European studies could be adapted to become appropriate to the certificate with no investment of time or effort by the instructor.

The second strategy was to prepare a series of stand-alone courses for uploading on the Internet that deal exclusively with the EU. Since course delivery via the Internet makes geographic proximity less relevant, the possibility presented itself to invite European universities to become fully integrated into the program. The University of Munich agreed to participate as the program's first European partner and, more significantly, to award the certificate jointly with USG institutions. Similar partnership relationships will be arranged with universities in other member states of the EU in the near future. In 1999, the program received a grant of \$430,000 to create 9 web courses during the 2000-2001 academic year, with an additional 15 courses

planned over the next two years. Course content is formulated by teams composed of one faculty member from the University System, one from the University of Munich, and an outside expert. Work on the initial three courses was inaugurated at a workshop in Munich in August, 2000. The courses, and their faculty designers, are the following:

- Introduction to the European Union: Carol Glen (Valdosta State University) and John Van Oudenaren (Library of Congress and Johns Hopkins SAIS)
- EU-US Relations: Paul Harris (Augusta State University), Nicole Schley (University of Munich), and Roy Ginsberg (Skidmore College)
- European Monetary Union: Linda Cooper (Macon State College), Andreas Kiessling (University of Munich), and Kate McNamara (Princeton University)

These courses are scheduled to be offered in Fall Semester, 2001 with students enrolling from both the University System of Georgia and the University of Munich.

On October 18-19, a second workshop was held in Atlanta in cooperation with the Southern Center for International Studies. This event signaled a larger phase of curricular development in which an additional six courses were launched:

- Federalism and Multilevel Governance: Christos Bourdouvalis (Augusta State University) and Claus Giering (University of Munich)
- Environmental Policy: Richard Reiman (South Georgia College) and Doris Fuchs (University of Munich)
- Science and Technology Policy: Nydia Hanna (Georgia State University), Ramon Maruhn (University of Munich) and Juergen Turek (University of Munich)
- Communications and the Media: Frank Barnas (Valdosta State University) and Benno Siebs (University of Munich)
- Law and Legal Systems: Hank Edmondson (Georgia College & State University), Franz Kohout (University of Munich), and Kurt Peter Merk (University of Munich)
- Doing Business in the EU and the U.S.: Karin Roland (Valdosta State University) and Joerg Ramel (University of Munich)

The outside experts remain to be recruited for this set of courses. The plan is to have these courses available for Spring Semester, 2002. When the project is completed, an

inventory of 24 courses will exist, constituting the nation=s largest catalog of undergraduate courses focused on the EU.

The EU was selected as the curricular focus, in part, because it is amenable to analysis from almost all disciplinary perspectives, including those typically excluded from the internationalization process. The EU studies certificate took advantage of this opportunity by dividing the curriculum into four discipline areas: Social Sciences, Humanities & Fine Arts, Business, and Natural & Health Sciences. Students are required to complete one course from three of these disciplines to ensure that they obtain a comprehensive overview of the EU rather than a discipline-specific perspective. An unintended asset is that the certificate is capable of involving faculty from almost all disciplines, increasing the program=s attractiveness to administrators.

Aside from hurdles to surmount, the program also grappled with tangible ways to incorporate the justifications that convinced the University System to support the certificate initially. The most salient was the need to train a workforce competent to function in an EU business environment or, more precisely, in a European corporation operating in Georgia. This expectation was addressed by obliging students to perform either an internship or study abroad experience. The aim is to expose students in a practical way to what they are studying. The selection of a particular experience must be approved by the campus representative as appropriate to the program=s objectives. This requirement endows students with a credential demonstrating at least a degree of familiarity with the European cultural environment. The value of such a credential ought not be minimized in the eyes of potential employers. In an analysis of contemporary

European studies, Christopher Makins discovered that European companies with a presence in the U.S. preferred hiring graduates from European universities rather than American graduates from U.S. universities because the latter lacked the cultural sensitivity to function in a European corporation even in a domestic context (1998). This background deficiency is critical to overcome. Steps, even small ones, are essential to provide an advantage in the competition for jobs. In the long run, the state of Georgia will be able to advertise its “EU trained” workforce.

In summary, the program endeavored to blend traditional instructional methods, technological innovations, and hands-on activities to provide a well-rounded learning experience. This mix of pedagogical approaches should be sufficient to “certify” students as proficient in EU studies.

THE PROGRAM

The certificate is open to students of all academic majors and must be taken in tandem with a formal degree program. Students with a 2.75 Grade Point Average (GPA) and 30 hours of academic credit can enroll in the certificate program after successful completion (“C” or better) of the Introduction to the EU course as well as a course on World or Western Civilization. To assure a consistent learning experience, the program prescribes that students must demonstrate knowledge of five learning outcomes in the final examination of the introductory course:

- the historical origins and development of the EU
- the EU’s governing institutions
- the EU’s policymaking processes
- current EU policies and issues
- EU-USA relations

Once accepted, students must complete four courses from an approved menu of options dealing with the EU, distributed among at least three different discipline areas: Social Sciences, Humanities & Fine Arts, Business and Economics, and Natural Sciences. In addition, students must participate in a senior-level Capstone Seminar and perform either a European internship or academic study abroad experience. Distinctions in foreign language and a thesis (honors) are also possible. To earn the certificate, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in all certificate courses. Upon successful completion of the program, an official certificate is awarded and the achievement is noted on the student's transcript. A joint certificate with the University of Munich is attained by fulfilling a minimum of two co-taught courses from the web-based curriculum.

The EU Studies certificate relies upon two approaches to implement its six course requirement, (1) preparing entire courses devoted to an EU topic and (2) modifying existing courses to incorporate a one-third focus on the EU. The former strategy is difficult to achieve because no institution can offer a regular rotation of EU-exclusive courses while maintaining a diversified overall curriculum. As mentioned, the solution supported by the program was to develop a series of web-based courses so that students can enroll on a transient basis. However, institutions are encouraged to create on-campus courses with an EU emphasis for students to acquire some instruction in a face-to-face encounter. Students at the various USG institutions are furnished a master-schedule outlining when the web-based and on-campus courses are offered to plan their progress through the program.

When concluded, the curriculum ensures that the certificate contains sufficient rigor and depth to validate a student as qualified in the field of EU studies.

CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

- World or Western Civilization
- Introduction to the EU (grade of "C" or better)
- 2.75 entrance GPA (cumulative)
- 4 interdisciplinary courses from an approved menu
- Capstone seminar
- Practicum experience (overseas visit or internship)
- 3.0 GPA in certificate courses

THE ELECTRONIC STRATEGY

A uniform format for the web courses was important to establish in order to ensure a consistent learning experience for students so widely dispersed. Standardization would harmonize what could otherwise disintegrate into a fragmented knowledge base at the various institutions of the program. The first step was to select an on-line platform for the creation of the web courses. This decision was simplified by the fact that the University System had already formalized a contractual arrangement with WebCT (www.webct.com), one of the nation's largest educational companies dedicated to on-line course development. WebCT provides a set of design tools for constructing and managing courses on the Internet. Faculty involved in the program receive instruction on how to use WebCT and obtain technical support both at their home institutions as well as at the USG-level.

Michael Baun, an Associate Professor of Political Science at Valdosta State University, was hired to direct the faculty teams that were preparing the courses. He

issued a set of guidelines to structure how the courses would be placed into a compatible format across the University System. These principles are the following:

- **Comparative focus.** Where appropriate to the material, courses should be comparative in nature, examining similar issues, problems, and policies in the United States and the EU and from the perspective of both.
- **Modular structure.** Courses should consist of a series of one-two week modules. Modules are self-contained course segments dealing with particular issues or topics that incorporate their own learning objectives, reading assignments, case studies, means of assessment, etc. A central database of EU course modules will be created.
- **Multi-media approach.** Courses should utilize a multi-media approach to teaching and learning, making regular use of the technological possibilities provided by WebCT in order to make courses as interesting and stimulating as possible. In addition to assigned readings and screen text, courses should make ample use of visual images (maps, graphics, charts, slides, photos, videos, etc.) and audio supplements (music, speeches, interviews). Multi-media games and simulations are also possible.

While these principles dictate a common course format, each principle was introduced to accomplish a specific pedagogical objective. A comparative focus enhances the transatlantic character of the program. Students gain a broader understanding of the similarities and differences between these two areas of the world and the problems and possibilities they face in unison. The modular structure allows individual modules to be

separated from the web course and “plugged in” to other courses, infusing them with an EU dimension. The multi-media approach not only adds an experience beyond what could be achieved in a typical classroom setting but also constitutes a vehicle to maintain student interest. The European Commission’s Delegation in Washington has consented to unrestricted access to its entire library of audio and visual materials to upgrade courses to their utmost multi-media potential.

In addition to format considerations, a series of design elements was prescribed for each course as a means of defining baseline program expectations:

- **Syllabus.** Courses should have a printable syllabus, which clearly sets out the purpose of the course and its key goals and learning objectives. The syllabus also provides a schedule of lecture topics and reading assignments, a description of projects and methods of assessment, and a statement of course policies and procedures. The syllabus should require students to inform themselves about WebCT and on-line learning before beginning the course, by directing them to the WebCT homepage for its self-tutorial or advising them of other training opportunities.
- **Case studies.** Courses, and individual course modules, should emphasize the use of case studies that focus on specific events, issues, and decisions that elucidate a particular problem or theme.
- **Internet links.** Text for the courses should incorporate numerous URL links to relevant web sites and Internet sources. These can include links to government and NGO web sites, databases, and media sources.

- **Multilingual bibliography.** While the language of instruction is English, each course should include a bibliography of sources that includes the key literature in German and French as well as English. This multilingual bibliography is intended to provide optional sources of material for students who are native speakers or proficient in these languages, and encourage the learning of foreign languages by others.
- **Means of assessment.** Courses should have clearly-stated and appropriate means for assessing student participation and learning. These assessment tools can include tests, essay assignments, research papers and projects, on-line presentations, etc. As a benefit to students, it would be useful to prepare self-assessment (e.g., self-graded tests) opportunities.
- **Student/teacher interaction.** Courses should emphasize frequent interaction among students, and between students and the instructor, of both a synchronous and asynchronous nature. Such interaction can occur through the use of Web-CT tools such as Bulletin Board, Chats, Whiteboard, and e-mail. Interactive television is an excellent distance-learning tool and a means of face-to-face contact. Instructors should consider building several televised sessions into their courses
- **Student teamwork.** Courses should promote teamwork among students at different sites, for instance through the use of joint projects and

presentations. Whenever possible, this teamwork should be transatlantic, linking students in Georgia and Munich.

- **Technology utilization skills.** Courses should facilitate the accumulation of skills in the use of computer and Internet technology. In the process, the confidence of students will improve in their ability to function effectively in the electronic and information age.
- **Research and communication skills.** Courses should incorporate the development of research and communications skills by requiring students to conduct research projects and make written and Internet presentations of their results. Students should learn how to conduct independent research (individually or in teams) using traditional and Internet sources and present their findings in an effective manner.

According to Paulsen (1995), four pedagogical options exist in the context of on-line instruction: interactive discussion, small working groups, student presentations, and simulations. Since active learning is central in increasing student motivation (Astin 1985), the EU Studies certificate is leveraging interest in a way that augments student skills at the same time. It should be apparent that the learning experience acquired by students parallels that of the traditional classroom in most ways. This conclusion should not be unexpected because a classroom is little more than an organized space to promote learning within a community (Palmer 1998).

Still, pedagogic worries—identified by faculty participants at our workshops—continue to be expressed. Two in particular were repeated consistently:

- The lack of personal contact
- The absence of immediate feedback

Part of the fear being articulated is that “the pace of the instructional technology revolution has moved faster than our ability to react to it and assess its utility as a tool to enhance student learning in the classroom (Gizzi and Wilkerson 1998, 1).” Thus misperception is often the cause of complaints; the technology is too new to appreciate, comprehend, and feel comfortable with its possibilities.

These twin anxieties about the on-line platform are legitimate but remedies can be applied to compensate for, if not eliminate, each shortcoming. The lack of personal contact can be corrected through a range of strategies, including e-mail correspondence, video-conferencing, and telephone conversation. Clearly, a line of direct communication can be maintained to cement a personal relationship with all students in a course without diminishing the level of intimacy typically achieved in the classroom. The absence of immediate feedback is related to the desire to ascertain whether students understand the material. To alleviate this problem, instructors can incorporate assessment vehicles (graded or non-graded quizzes), synchronous chats, and bulletin board postings. The feedback is immediate and, if structured properly, comprehensive. Such self-assessment exercises are “a great way to uncover the internal journey of each learner. In fact, in some cases this personal journey may be much more significant than you can observe from the outside (Hanna et al. 2000, 44).”

Teaching in the electronic environment has downsides but numerous alternatives are feasible to remedy the limitations. Yet it should not be ignored that benefits accrue as well. The negatives alone should not be emphasized in assessing web-based

instruction. Students benefit by acquiring skills demanded in the contemporary workplace; the classroom can be internationalized at minimal expense; and a richer, deeper curriculum can be offered. Pedagogy in the electronic context can be done well and even add dimensions that exceed what can be accomplished in the traditional classroom.

CONCLUSION

The electronic format, although sometimes maligned, is in its infancy. Technology is advancing and, in turn, so is our capacity to employ it successfully. Despite some resistance, faculty and institutions are adopting web-based instruction at an accelerating pace.

The EU Studies certificate is inventing a model on how to deliver a curriculum in a collaborative framework that could not have been contemplated a decade ago. The experiment is adding value to the professional and academic lives of its students. That's the bottom line.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS: EU STUDIES CERTIFICATE

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College
Albany State University
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Augusta State University
Coastal Georgia Community College
Columbus State University College & State University
Dalton State College
Darton College
East Georgia College
Floyd College
Fort Valley State University
Gainesville College
Georgia College & State University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Georgia Perimeter College
Georgia Southern University
Georgia Southwestern State University
Georgia State University
Kennesaw State University
Macon State College
Middle Georgia College
North Georgia College & State University
South Georgia College
State University of West Georgia
University of Georgia
Valdosta State University