

"I THINK THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP." HOW MALAYSIAN AND AMERICAN STUDENTS MAPPED THE FILM CASABLANCA WITH CULTURE/CRITICAL TOOLS

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Abstract

As cross-cultural communication has become increasingly important in our globalized world many instructors are implementing a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project in their classes. COIL is a pedagogical path where students can gain intercultural interaction through online and virtual engagements.

In the spring of 2022, two COIL classes came together, one from Malaysia's International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and one from American Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia, to analyze the classic WWII-era film *Casablanca* and see if its themes can still speak across time and societies.

The intention of using *Casablanca* was two-fold:

1. To have students from both cultures immerse themselves in an unfamiliar moment in history through a 75-year-old American film creating, essentially, an equal cultural understanding.
2. To have students experience an engagement with The Other through engagement with the unfamiliar film and culturally unfamiliar peers.

To make modern comparisons to their lived experiences, both sets of students analyzed the film using critical/cultural tools and were then required to reimagine this classic film through a modern reenactment of significant scenes using a variety of film, animation, and storytelling apps. They worked together in groups assessing gender depictions, power dynamics, historical depictions, and religious ideas and implications. This created a triangulation of complexities based on the Asian/Islamic lens, American/multicultural lens, and geographic/technology lens.

This carefully crafted COIL project surprised both instructors and students as we discovered our outcomes and assessments did not line up with what the students learned in the making of the project. We discovered our choice of classic film hindered student learning but helped galvanize student team building. This paper explains best practices and lessons learned from this COIL experience based on in-class experiences and student feedback to help other instructors make informed choices when creating their own multicultural/multimedia projects.

Keywords: Assessments, outcomes, COIL, critical/cultural tools, multicultural, multimedia.