

Summary of student feedback for “Global Issues in Local Perspective” Assignment Sarah T. Romano

Political Science 110, “Global Issues,” University of Northern Colorado
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This is an assignment from my lower-division Global Issues course that has enrollment from students across majors. The objective of this assignment is to have students examine a “global” issue in “local” perspective in order to: 1) learn more in-depth about significant global issues, 2) gain knowledge of local manifestations of issues and problems we study in global contexts, and 3) engage with the local community in which the University is situated.

Students are required to conduct a face-to-face interview and integrate the results, along with peer-reviewed and other sources, into a report on a global issue of their choosing. Training on professional communication and conducting interviews is integrated into class time. Students are expected to demonstrate initiative, independence, and an ability to embed discussion of local manifestations of an issue into discussion of the issue in global context.

The data summarized here reflect student evaluations across three semesters (123 student responses total).

Students were asked to respond to the following questions using a Likert scale, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.”

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
“This assignment increased my understanding of the global issue I examined.”	0	2.4%	9.8%	49.2%	38.5%
“This assignment increased my understanding of the global issue in <i>local</i> perspective.”	0	3.3%	9.9%	44.6%	42.1%
“I learned something about my global issue <i>from my interview</i> that I would not have otherwise learned.”	1.6%	4.9%	9%	35.5%	48.7%

Sample of student comments in response to evaluation questions:

- “What is the most interesting or surprising thing you learned doing this assignment?”
 - *How close to home this issue is. I thought it involved just third world countries, but it affects everyone.*
 - *I learned a lot about poverty both on a local scale and an international scale.*
 - *The most interesting thing I learned was that stigma and discrimination play a big role around HIV locally and globally.*

- *The most surprising thing was that discrimination in the GLBTA community is higher in the Global South.*
- *Factory farming releases greenhouse gases, I had no idea about that.*
- *How vast the issue of sustainability is and how interconnected it is with other issues.*
- *The number of refugees around the world.*
- *Aspects related to public health systems in Subsaharan Africa.*
- *What really surprised me was finding out that rape was being used as a weapon of war.*
- *The many different issues that together make a global issue can't be solved one at a time, in all has to be coordinated in unison*
- *I made a friend in the UNC community. I learned plenty of stuff but I felt this was most important.*
- *Becoming more aware of the issues in my new environment (I'm an out of state student).*
- *Learning about aspects of UNC's energy conservation efforts that I otherwise would not have known about was very interesting.*
- *The amount of people who use food banks to help to feed their families.*
- *How well this local area is progressing on LGBT human rights.*
- *I learned that my issue [violence against women] is a larger issue locally and there is not enough awareness surrounding the issue*
- *I was surprised by the number of diverse immigrant populations there were in this area of Weld County.*
- *I learned that just being a young, female, college student increases chances that I will be sexually assaulted in my years here. Also other sad facts about the topic.*
- *That homelessness was as abundant in the local area as it was.*
- *I learned how to set up and conduct an interview for an assignment.*

➤ “Any further feedback/comments you’d like to share?”

- *I really learned a lot, it was a good way to get hands on experience and see the "real world" context rather than reading about it in a book.*
- *The assignment was great. I really enjoyed interviewing locally. It made me feel like an investigative journalist, and I definitely learned something new.*
- *I loved this assignment and how it led me to connect with my community.*
- *I thought this was more fun than the average research paper.*
- *This is a very nicely designed project. Great milestone points/due dates.*
- *I really enjoyed doing this assignment because it made me more aware of what issues are locally and how it affects globally.*
- *I enjoyed getting to talk to someone in person for this assignment.*
- *I liked having to do an interview. It was so much better than just researching on the computer or in the library. It was great having to talk face to face.*
- *While strenuous, it was good to learn more on an important topic tied to me.*
- *I really enjoyed being pushed to interact with a business in the community and I even was offered an internship/shadowing position there which would be amazing in the future.*
- *I really enjoyed this paper and interacting with a community organization.*
- *It was a good experience! (Especially for learning how to set up and conduct interviews)*
- *I like to know more about the world, but I'm too busy, so this forced me to. Thumbs up!*

When asked whether or not they would consider enrolling in another course that involved working with businesses and/or organizations in the community, 47% said yes. This compares with 10% who said “no” and 42.8% who said “unsure.”

Students interviewed a diversity of individuals in the community and on campus. The issues with which they engaged included, but were not limited to:

- poverty/homelessness
- violence against women
- hunger
- meat production
- immigration
- healthcare
- refugees
- gangs
- discrimination
- human rights
- water scarcity
- environmental sustainability
- hydraulic fracturing
- trade

A sampling of student-selected local places of interviewee work/volunteer include:

- Global Refugee Center
- A Woman’s Place
- Weld County Food Bank
- Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center (SAVA)
- UNCO GLBTA Resource Center
- Sunrise Community Health
- Weld County Republicans
- Servicios de la Raza
- Student Leadership for Environmental Action Fund
- UNCO Hydrofracturing Task Force
- JBS Swift
- Halliburton
- Guadalupe Center
- UNCO Police Department
- UNCO departments including Sociology, Hispanic Studies, and Environmental Studies

Students also provided helpful feedback and suggestions, some of which were integrated into future versions of the assignment. Sample comments include:

- *More guidance on writing final paper [related to integration of interview, use of other sources, structure, etc.].*
- *Make rough draft due in class and do peer editing.*
- *I would have preferred a 10 page limit (v. 6).*
- *Set deadline for interviews.*
- *Students may not be comfortable reaching out to businesses; could help them make connections.*
- *More feedback on outline and notes.*
- *Have students provide stance on their topic, and also the alternative viewpoints.*
- *Allow phone interviews.*
- *Not being from here it was hard to meet with the expert since I don't have a car, the buses don't really work, and the distance was a little too long just to walk or bike (1 hour). Maybe doing the project in groups would help.*
- *The spread of due dates really helped me avoid procrastination. I wish all my classes did that. Also, I'm actually really glad I was able to do this project; it really opened my eyes to mental health and proactive people in the community.*