

# Inter-African Cross-cultural Dialogue:

Accounts of South-South Dialogue  
between the American University in Cairo  
(AUC) and African Universities

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: HOW DO WE DEFINE & DEAL With DIALOGUE?

Ongoing process of 'responsive understanding'; involves both the heart and the mind

a- people participate in dialogue both as individuals and as group-members;

b-power, privilege, and culture are underlying themes

c-transition of dialoguers from the polite/angry mode to meaningful engagement in dialogue is possible with continuous reflection on one's own thoughts and feelings;

d-dialogue facilitators are not supposed to be neutral and should catalyze active participation.

# **APPROACHES**

**Inter and cross-cultural**

**Intergroup Dialogue and role of facilitator**

**Cross-cultural Exchange and Educational Development; relevance regardless of contextual and educational level differences**

**Gaps in practice/research**

**Limitations**

# The Research

## Questions/Methodology

- What are the implications re the development of curricula in various disciplines?
- What are the prospects of cooperation between institutions of higher education in the developing world?
- What are the main lessons learned regarding such venues of exchange?
- What are the main differences/overlapping features between this and other educational experiences in regular classroom settings?

**Qualitative:** Open-ended interviews, focus groups and qualitative questionnaires with students, faculty and staff

**Quantitative:** anonymous surveys conducted with the same sets

# The Project...What is it?

Then (2001): extracurricular dialogue with NY after 9-11

Now: 3 courses ('East-West', 'Arab Spring' and 'Global South') + extracurriculars (face-to-face and vc's...etc)

Team: faculty + staff (dialogue coordinator) + technical crew (Multimedia Services)

# figures

150 average number of AUC students who enroll in our dialogue courses annually

21 # of countries partnered with since 2001

36 # of universities

5 # of continents with established contacts

# **SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE COURSE**

**-Rationale**

**-Multidisciplinary, Capstone level Core Requirement**

**-Partnerships with universities and academic institutions in:**

**Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Tunisia, Palestine, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brazil, India, among other developing countries**

# **Experiences: UWC, South Africa**

**-Department of Political Studies**

**-Context: Mutual Interest; Arab Spring vis-à-vis Transformation in SA**

**-Course: Informal/Supplementary course component; mostly postgrad students**

**-Themes: Socioeconomic and political ramifications of Arab Spring'; 'The Rise of China and India'; 'African Integration' and 'Arab-African Relations'...etc.**

## **AUN, Nigeria**

- **Cultural Studies, formal (compulsory) component of class sessions, mostly undergrad**
- Themes: Culture, Language, Development, Gender, social change...etc.**

**For AUN, the dialogue was an opportunity for the students to “rub minds” with their AUC partners.**

**“Videoconferencing portends something good for Nigeria’s educational sector...It creates an exposure for the learners and their instructors to compare notes on global standards and research abilities as a way of propelling themselves more meaningfully into the future” (AUN 1).**

# GLOBAL SOUTH

## SEMR 412 SOUTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE: PERCEPTIONS & REFLECTIONS FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

A new course featuring video-conferences between AUC students and students from the 'Global South.' This course aims at offering a fresh perspective on the 'Global South.' It will use an interdisciplinary approach to explore the social, economic, political and cultural contexts of a variety of countries/regions in Africa and other developing countries in order to explore the commonalities as well as the differences that exist between them.

SEMR 412 is held on UWs from 2:00 – 3:15pm. It can be taken as Humanities/Capstone requirement, International Studies, or a general elective.

For registration, kindly pay a visit to the Core Office or send an email to: [dialogue@aucegypt.edu](mailto:dialogue@aucegypt.edu)





**2. Enter the answer that best describes your opinion concerning the following:**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Rating Count</b>
The purpose of using the videoconferencing technology is clear to me.	<b>54.3% (19)</b>	<b>37.1% (13)</b>	<b>5.7% (2)</b>	<b>2.9% (1)</b>	<b>0.0% (0)</b>	<b>35</b>
The use of videoconferencing technology in this course encourages me to continue discussions.	<b>42.9% (15)</b>	<b>45.7% (16)</b>	<b>11.4% (4)</b>	<b>0.0% (0)</b>	<b>0.0% (0)</b>	<b>35</b>
I am comfortable asking questions using the videoconferencing format	<b>34.3% (12)</b>	<b>45.7% (16)</b>	<b>14.3% (5)</b>	<b>5.7% (2)</b>	<b>0.0% (0)</b>	<b>35</b>
I would have felt more engaged in a normal class setting	<b>28.6% (10)</b>	<b>14.3% (5)</b>	<b>31.4% (11)</b>	<b>20.0% (7)</b>	<b>5.7% (2)</b>	<b>35</b>
The videoconferencing technology is a barrier to my interaction with the instructor	<b>5.7% (2)</b>	<b>14.3% (5)</b>	<b>22.9% (8)</b>	<b>42.9% (15)</b>	<b>14.3% (5)</b>	<b>35</b>
The instructor uses videoconferencing technology appropriately	<b>45.7% (16)</b>	<b>45.7% (16)</b>	<b>5.7% (2)</b>	<b>2.9% (1)</b>	<b>0.0% (0)</b>	<b>35</b>
I would recommend this course using this technology	<b>42.9% (15)</b>	<b>34.3% (12)</b>	<b>17.1% (6)</b>	<b>5.7% (2)</b>	<b>0.0% (0)</b>	<b>35</b>
The videoconference dialogues have helped me to improve my critical thinking skills.	<b>42.9% (15)</b>	<b>40.0% (14)</b>	<b>11.4% (4)</b>	<b>2.9% (1)</b>	<b>2.9% (1)</b>	<b>35</b>
The videoconference dialogues have caused me to question some of my views.	<b>28.6% (10)</b>	<b>25.7% (9)</b>	<b>25.7% (9)</b>	<b>17.1% (6)</b>	<b>2.9% (1)</b>	<b>35</b>

**Q3. In your opinion, are there any additional/different ways in which the videoconference format could be utilized to better foster dialogue and improve class experience?**

1	More topics different than politics to talk about	May 18, 2014 4:33 PM
2	No	May 15, 2014 3:42 PM
3	No	May 15, 2014 3:41 PM
4	Make sure they are on a different internet server to avoid lag and disconnections	May 15, 2014 1:53 AM
5	We should just make sure that on the other end they have a good internet connection	May 14, 2014 5:03 PM
6	Filter the universities we conference with	May 14, 2014 2:26 PM
7	more conferences readings that were centred around reality rather than academic journals were more interesting and people were able to relate more in class discussions and conferences	May 14, 2014 2:21 PM
8	The whole class should be videoconferences with no regular classes	May 14, 2014 2:18 PM
9	Individual video conference like the AMST 299 is more effective and more dialogue engaging	May 14, 2014 2:16 PM
10	Less politics more culture	May 14, 2014 2:16 PM
11	It was dealt well enough	May 11, 2014 2:04 PM
12	I suggest actually to change the topic because we have been discussing the issue of Egyptian Uprising for the 4 video conferencing sessions between UOB & AUC	May 10, 2014 5:47 PM
13	Let the students from both classes decide on the language in which they want to express their thoughts. That is if the instructors care about the students expressing their thoughts regarding an issue more than the use of a certain language.	May 8, 2014 10:44 PM
14	No	May 8, 2014 8:00 PM
15	I think it would have given better opportunity if both parties prepared question (one by each student) and sent in advance (one the same day but before the conference) to provide opportunity for both parties to contribute equally and to allow shy students to view their points until they get comfortable to talk.	May 8, 2014 5:35 PM
16	The other classes abroad need to be more interactive	May 8, 2014 4:11 PM

# Limitations/Challenges

**Prospects for replicating/scaling activities**

**Sustainability and expansion**

**Technological ‘Arms Race’**

**Resources**