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## On the Borders: A Multiaxial Pedagogical Approach to Community-Based Global Learning

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### Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my "On the Border" co-instructors Suzanne Klatt, David Meredith, and Samantha Searls for their collaborative ideation in bringing our multiaxial pedagogical approach to life. Thanks as well to Lulu Abdun, Sami Hausserman, and Jordan Proce, our student fellows who offered support and feedback in course planning and design. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Interfaith Youth Core, who awarded me two grants to support the work of designing this course and disseminating learnings from it.

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# On the Borders: A Multiaxial Pedagogical Approach to Community-Based Global Learning

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Recent scholarship recognizes that the interconnection between local and global is crucial to experiential learning in higher education (Sobania, 2015; Hartman et al., 2018). Community-engaged teaching and learning on immigration offers a rich laboratory for this insight. Migration across geopolitical borders has sociological and political reverberations well beyond the peripheries of the nation. Culturally, immigrants bring to national interiors customs and ethnic identities from outside of and around state borders. Politically, national borders loom large over everyday life in immigrant communities, shaping and sometimes limiting possibilities for flourishing. As historian Daisy Machado (2013) writes, “the twenty-first-century Latino borderlands are understood as those places where culture, race, identity, politics, and religion intersect in complicated and even violent ways” (p. 79). Borderlife and borderlands exist not only at geopolitical borders, but in diverse locales across the nation, from “the mushroom farms of southern New Jersey” to “meatpacking plants in Iowa” (Machado, 2013, p. 79). They are present anywhere immigrant communities dwell geographically and in public imaginaries.

The omnipresence of borderlife and borderlands offers a frame that blurs traditional boundaries not only between geopolitical centers and peripheries, but also between centers and peripheries in higher education. Taken as a metaphor, omnipresent borderlife can push us to interrogate assumptions about where we learn, how we learn, and from whom we learn. These literal and metaphorical layers of meaning comprised the starting point for integrating global and local, university and community in a Spring 2019 undergraduate social justice studies course at Miami University in Oxford, OH, titled “SJS 350: On the Border: Immigration Justice in Interfaith Perspective.” The course weaved together semester-long community engagement projects, a weeklong educational immersion trip to the U.S./Mexico borderlands, and

content related to immigration in the U.S., particularly the role of religion in migration across the U.S./Mexico border, drawing on the centrality of borders beyond course content to pedagogical praxis. In each stage of the course—exploration, design, and instruction—our teaching team of two faculty and two community partners<sup>1</sup> pressed on disciplinary “turfs” and knowledge hierarchies in higher education. From our process of visioning, planning, and teaching emerged what we came to call a “multiaxial approach” to globally-engaged community-based learning. In this article, I offer a snapshot of this multiaxial approach. In so doing, I intend to contribute to the emergent *community-based global learning* (CBGL) framework as a pedagogical approach to experiential learning in higher education that takes social justice as its core value.

First, I offer a brief overview of CBGL, contextualizing its development in historical trajectories of global learning in higher education. Second, I describe our multiaxial approach and the contributions it can make to pedagogical design within the CBGL framework. Third, I describe how our multiaxial pedagogy emerged in our course context. Finally, drawing on qualitative analysis of student assignments, I discuss how student learning outcomes compared to the course’s transformational learning goal.<sup>2</sup>

## Community-Based Global Learning in Historical Context

In 1968, Roman Catholic priest and social critic Ivan Illich issued a scathing rebuke at the Midwest Regional Meeting of The Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP), a U.S.-Canadian group that organized student service projects to Mexico: “Today, the existence of organizations like yours is offensive to Mexico,” Illich told the students. He continued, “I wanted to make this statement in order to explain why I feel sick about it all and in order to make you aware that good intentions have not much to do with what we are discussing here. To hell

with good intentions” (Illich, 1968). Illich’s ensuing critique of CIASP’s neocolonial paternalism marked the beginning of the organization’s decline. Yet CIASP was only one small organization in a growing movement for international service programs, represented by 1960s-era developments such as the establishment of the Peace Corps (Jacoby, 2009), the inception of short-term mission trips among evangelical Christians (McAlister, 2018), and the deepening institutionalization of study abroad in higher education (Dietrich, 2018). This era also saw a proliferation of domestic campus-based service initiatives tied to democratic civic engagement (Jacoby, 2009).

In the decades following, service-learning and study abroad in higher education grew through programs related to educational immersion travel and international service-learning (Adler, 2019; Bringle and Hatcher, 2011). Such programs tended to share a grounding in Deweyan optimism, student-centrism, and neoliberal free market capitalism (Deans, 1999; Bringle and Hatcher, 2011). This gave Illich’s critique enduring relevance. In the 2010s, a number of scholars of experiential learning in higher education began taking up Illich’s concerns anew. Among them were Longo and Saltmarsh (2011) and Hartman and Kiely (2014), who proposed a change in nomenclature from “international service learning” to “global service learning” (GSL), to underscore connections between global and local and the importance of cultivating students into civically engaged global citizens. They also intended the terminological shift to emphasize mutuality as a value crucial to equitable international community partnerships.

While recognizing the important ways GSL advanced the conversation, Hartman et al. (2018) later argued that it doesn’t go far enough in reimagining the paradigm. Their move to “community-based global learning” (CBGL) denotes a more radical re-visioning of globally-engaged education as community-driven, collaboratively led, oriented toward reciprocal outcomes, and centered on “critical awareness of ideology, hegemony, and unequal power relations” among all parties involved (Hartman et al., 2018, p. 21). The de-centering of students’ volunteer service in favor of long-term community-driven partnerships echoes place-based approaches to community-engaged learning that primarily take a domestic register (Sobania, 2015; Yamamura and Koth, 2018). As with these place-based approaches, CBGL’s commitment to raising critical consciousness among students as well as community and university stakeholders make plain its Freirean inheritances. And, CBGL’s application of Fair Trade principles under the rubric of “Fair Trade

Learning” reveals its careful attention to the power dynamics inherent to collaborative work among partners with structural asymmetries (Hartman et al., 2018). These characteristics render CBGL “a learning methodology *and* a community-driven development philosophy” (Hartman et al., 2018, p. 21). CBGL exists not solely for the benefit of students; it seeks to honor the agency and desired outcomes of all involved.

## A Multiaxial Approach to Pedagogical Design in Community-Based Global Learning

Our “On the Border” course did not begin with CBGL as a framework for course design. Rather, each of us brought moral dispositions and commitments that aligned with those of CBGL, leading to a course design that placed its commitments in context. In this article, I take the CBGL framework as a theoretical starting point and demonstrate how our “multiaxial” approach can contribute to CBGL as a pedagogical expression of its core values such as community-driven and collaborative design, a commitment to fostering just local-global relationships, and the infusion of critically reflexive power analyses through all aspects of the course.

The term “multiaxial” signifies the overlapping dimensions of borders and border crossing that scaffolded the integration of CBGL values (Figure 1). On one axis lies *content*. This included the various kinds of borders our course addressed: intrasubjective, intersubjective, local, and national/global. Throughout the semester we moved fluidly among these borders, interrogating their interconnections using reflective exercises informed by critical and contemplative pedagogies (hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2011; Barbezat and Bush, 2013). Our intention was to cultivate a moral imagination around borders grounded in reflexive awareness of how students’ own social location and stories of self intersect with those of others. We held this together with our interfaith focus by attending to how spiritual and religious resources inform ethical deliberation around borders.

The second axis has to do with *method*, the three modes of inquiry we used to explore these four kinds of borders. Our use of first person inquiry utilized contemplative practices that invited students to attend to phenomenological experiences of the self, and to interrogate and play with self-stories. Through these engagements with first person inquiry, we sought to build critical awareness and empathy, as well as mindfulness of the body and mind’s reactions to course content. In the borderlands of first and second person



Figure 1: *Intersecting Dimensions of the Multiaxial Framework*; Graphic Design Credit: Kelly Figueroa-Ray

inquiry, we created space for students to build critical consciousness around their relationship to others. Using an “I-Thou” framework (Buber, 2004), students practiced re-orienting their self-stories in conversation with stories of immigrant “others.” This re-orientation process was grounded in the recognition that our interdependent relationships with one another are shaped by inequitable systems and structures.

Finally, we used forms of third person inquiry that asked students to practice traditional forms of critical analysis to interrogate borders of knowledge. Weaving together multiple kinds of texts (written, visual, and lived) on immigration, we challenged students to question the centering of “privileged knowers:” those whose knowledge is centered because of its location in scholarly books or journals, or its association with particular institutions or publications. While such texts are important, we endeavored to help students recognize the often hierarchical and exclusionary nature of knowledge production. Placing in conversation traditional and non-traditional “texts” such as memoir, film, and conversations with immigrants, we prompted students to look for subaltern knowledges rendered invisible by hegemonic discourses.

In moving between three modes of inquiry to examine four kinds of borders, our learning

goal was for students to recognize how borders offer multiple affordances (Keane, 2017). Borders contain the potential to fragment the self and keep us at remove from the distant suffering of others. Yet they also present opportunities to engage self and others in risky ways that deepen capacity for empathy and solidarity. Flowing from this cognitive learning goal was a transformational one. We aimed to create a compassionate but challenging space for students to re-orient their subjectivities according to newly clarified relationships of accountability. In this regard, we intended for attention to the U.S./ Mexico borderlands to extend to transformational learning on just relationships across borders more generally. This echoes Hayes and Cuban’s (1997) call for a “border pedagogy” in which “border crossing serves as a metaphor for how people might gain a more critical perspective on the forms of domination inherent in their own histories, knowledge, and practices, and learn to value alternative forms of knowledge” (p. 75). Additionally, we recognized that to be ethically meaningful transformational learning must extend beyond itself. It must lead students to critically informed forms of solidarity and social action as an expression of moral agency (Doerr, 2019).

Hartman et al. (2018) argue that core to CBGL is the integration of biography, experience, and text through critical reflection in classroom discussions and low stakes written assignments, in order to understand oneself and others as cultural beings, cultivate cultural humility, and develop intercultural competency. They write:

Continuous and careful support in the process of “crossing borders” in CBGL contexts provides significant opportunities for intercultural learning (Kiely 2004, 2005); that is, educators should design CBGL programs so that students have multiple and diverse opportunities before, during, and after participation to critically examine their assumptions, the assumptions of others, and the sources and solutions to social problems, as well as opportunities to develop the skills, attitudes, and behaviors to affect positive individual and social change. (p. 97)

Though the authors helpfully unpack this directive with guidelines, case studies, and example assignments and activities, their account would benefit from a pedagogical approach to which educators and community partners can turn. Our multiaxial model offers a complement to CBGL because it contributes a pedagogical framework for border pedagogy that helps students locate and revise their narratives of self within fields of power with marginalized

“others.” The goal of this learning is to move to deeper forms of solidarity and meaningful social action.

## **Multiaxial Emergence: “On the Border” Course Exploration**

“On the Border” was born of a process akin to what Black feminist social change theorist adrienne maree brown (2017) calls “Collaborative Ideation,” an iterative practice of collaborative visioning and dreaming for the emergence of more just and equitable futures. In July 2018, a Miami University colleague and I hosted a lunch at Education Matters, a community nonprofit in Cincinnati’s Price Hill neighborhood. As university employees in contingent faculty/staff hybrid positions, we were located outside of traditional departmental structures. We had spent months prior to this meeting strategically maneuvering through university bureaucracies to find a departmental home for a community-engaged course on immigration justice. Still, we had assets to leverage from our individual expertise, existing community relationships, and positions within the institution. I co-directed an Interfaith Community Engagement Initiative with a dedicated endowed fund and several paid student fellows. I had also secured a grant for course development. My colleague Suzanne Klatt was the director of Miami’s Center for Mindfulness and Contemplative Inquiry, which offered us a nontraditional classroom space that disrupted “banking model” postures for learning (Freire, 2000) and signaled our intention to engage students as whole people. Suzanne also brought expertise in contemplative pedagogies and disciplinary grounding in social work, which complemented my training in religious studies and social ethics.

We invited several community partners to the meeting, all of whom were part of or worked closely with local immigrant communities. We asked them to help us hone our ideas for a multifaceted, community-based learning experience that would conscientize students on issues of immigration justice and that would also benefit their work. We also invited them to discern whether they would like to join us as partners in designing and teaching the course, labor that would be financially compensated thanks to our funding. From this initial meeting, ideas for mutually beneficial community projects emerged, as did our two primary partners: Samantha Searls, Program Manager for Human Trafficking and Immigration at Cincinnati’s Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC), and David Meredith, an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church (UMC) heavily involved with the UMC’s ECLIPSE Immigration Legal Clinic in Hamilton, OH. Over the following six months,

the four of us met at least once per month to design the course, weaving together classroom content with local community engagement and an immersive travel component to Tucson. The student fellows created fundraising resource packets for students to raise travel funds outside of what we were able to subsidize, making the course available to students without the financial resources for travel. They also workshopped drafts of the syllabus with the teaching team and helped to promote the course on campus.

These logistics illustrate how border crossing was baked into our course from its inception. The design and implementation of a new non-traditional course by two contingent faculty/staff transgressed ways in which institutions of higher education discipline their employees as to when and how they are to show up (or not show up) as teachers, leaders, innovators, and knowers. Perhaps even more radical is the compensated and co-equal involvement of community partners and students in the thought work and logistical labor necessary to design such a course. To be sure, we occupied a privileged position in having a dedicated fund that allowed us to structure our process this way. This exposes that just and equitable course design and instruction in CBGL requires financial resources—an insight that runs counter to the elevation of revenue generation as a central good in higher education. The next section will offer a description of how these resources and planning processes came together in the course design and instruction.

## **Multiaxial Pedagogy in Practice: “On the Border” Course Design and Instruction**

Our multiaxial pedagogical framework was present in each of the course’s three learning environments, the classroom, the community, and the U.S./Mexico borderlands, and in course assignments. This section offers a description of how each of the environments and modes of learning students engaged intersected with our multiaxial framework in mutually reinforcing ways.

### *The Classroom*

One of our two weekly class sessions was dedicated to classroom meetings in the Mindfulness Center. Each class session began with a contemplative practice in the mode of first or second person inquiry intended to help students connect the day’s topic with contemplation on borders in themselves and between self and other. The topic of each class session related to four course units. In the first unit, we introduced the central theme of borders and borderlands, and then moved to an examination of the history, politics, and cultures of the U.S. southern border. Here, we

engaged texts and media such as the three-part *Radiolab* series based on Jason de León's *The Land of Open Graves* (Abumrad & Krulwich, 2018), the film *Who is Dayani Cristal* (Silver, 2013), and academic literature related to histories of the U.S. southern border and border policies, and trauma and resilience among various immigrant populations. In the second unit, we drew this literal focus on borders to reflection on borders in personal and intersubjective registers, engaging texts such as Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Anzaldúa, 1987), work by Susan Sontag (2003) and Emmanuel Levinas (1985) on ethical relationships with suffering others, and primary source news articles on the proposed border wall expansion, for which our secondary texts became an analytical lens. Our third unit moved to exploring how religious and secular humanist communities articulate immigration ethics in ways particular to their traditions, and how they draw on networks within their communities to mobilize for social action. Our final unit oriented around first person migrant narratives through engagement with memoir.

### *The Community*

Our second weekly class session centered learning in the community. For the first several weeks, we oriented students to local borders and borderlands. Samantha and David offered an overview of local immigration realities in national context. They also led a border crossing simulation developed by the UMC, and a community field trip to nonprofits and houses of worship that provide services to immigrants. During the fourth week of the course, students signed up in teams for one of three local immigration advocacy projects developed by the teaching team. Each project was oriented toward the development of a product from which our community partners told us they could benefit. One project asked students to develop strategic communications in English, Spanish, and French for various ECLIPSE Immigration Legal Clinic constituencies. Another asked students to assemble a toolkit that IJPC could offer as a resource to public school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. The third group conducted audio interviews with immigrants in the Miami University community and edited them into human interest stories for IJPC's use. Once these teams were set, students spent the weekly community class session working on their projects with their partner organization.

### *The U.S./Mexico Borderlands*

The third course learning environment was the U.S./Mexico borderlands near Tucson, AZ, to which all four members of the teaching team traveled with

the students during the university's spring break. We partnered with BorderLinks, a Tucson-based organization that creates experiential learning opportunities that expose groups to political and social realities for migrants at the U.S./Mexico border. The teaching team made explicit connections between the social and political realities of Cincinnati immigrant communities and the global realities we witnessed at the U.S./Mexico borderlands: our presence in an Operation Streamline courtroom, our walk in the Sonoran Desert, our visit to an ICE detention facility. Prior, during, and after the trip, we also continually prompted students to interrogate the ethical complexities of our presence at the border, acknowledging that our travel risked turning immigrant "others" into "moral commodities" under the Western gaze, objects that exist primarily for our own ethical transformation (Williams, 2020). We asked students to grapple with the question of whether we should have traveled to the border at all through assigned texts exposing the problematic aspects of immersion trips. The ethics of our presence at the border is a question crucial in its own right; it also served to heighten student's attention to their positionality as we moved through borderlands holding suffering and atrocity, as well as rich cultural communities and traditions.

### *Course Assignments*

Course assignments were designed to move fluidly between these classroom, community, and travel environments along our *content* and *method* axes (Table 1). Each week during the course and each day during the trip, students were asked to complete a page-long three-part journal entry divided into three vertical columns. In the left column, students described an aspect of their experience engaging with the community from a first-person perspective. In the middle, they analyzed how the course texts related to that experience. In the final column, students journaled on how their reflections could be applied to national or local immigration policy and/or immigration as a social justice issue. We scaffolded the journals with three critical reflection assignments (CRAs) and an Op-Ed paper designed to give students practice in engaging our four kinds of borders using first, second, and third person modes of inquiry. The first CRA facilitated reflexive attention on the self in conversation with social location and positionality. The second CRA drew these reflections on the self into conversation with stories of immigrant "others." The third CRA and the Op-Ed each invited students to take steps toward meaningful social action through practice with public analysis and public storytelling as forms of advocacy. Finally, the team-based Community Advocacy

Table 1: “On the Border” Course Assignments

ASSIGNMENT	CONTENT AXIS: BORDER(S) ADDRESSED	METHOD AXIS: MODE(S) OF INQUIRY ENGAGED
Three-Part Journals	personal, interpersonal, local, national/global	first, second, third
CRA 1	personal	first
CRA 2	personal, interpersonal	first, second
CRA 3	Personal, interpersonal, local, national/global	second, third
Op-Ed	local, national/global	third
Community Advocacy Projects	personal, interpersonal, local, national/global	First, second, third

Projects drew together all four content and method axes. They prompted students to practice critically reflexive self-awareness in interpersonal context, as they worked with partners on community-driven projects connecting global and national immigration policies with the experiences of local immigrants.

### *Classroom Diversity*

Through engagement with assignments and three learning environments, our multiaxial approach offered students the scaffolded pedagogical experience Hartman et al. (2018) argue is critical to meaningful and effective CBGL. We contextualized the multiaxial approach according to the students in the course. Miami University is a historically white institution with a majority middle and upper middle class student body. Our course in some ways reflected these demographics, but in other ways did not. Racially, thirteen of the eighteen students in the course identified as white, three as Latina, one as African American, and one as a multiethnic Arab and European American. These students came from a diversity of socioeconomic classes. As an elective, the course attracted a self-selected group—but for different reasons. Some students were already involved in immigration advocacy. A few had at least one immigrant parent. Other students were interested in international relations and/or social justice, but had little exposure to immigration as a justice issue.

This diversity meant we could not presume students came to the course at the same starting place. Classroom activities and assignments had to be pitched in a way that would allow students who had done very little previous reflection on their own positionalities to begin that work, while also creating space for those who had done initial work already to go deeper. We also walked a balance not to center the white students’ growth, recognizing there were multiple racial and ethnic experiences and identities present. These variances called for skilled facilitation, particularly in reframing moments of tension as opportunities for learning. One such moment came during a pre-course

information session. A white male student asked earnestly whether students had a legal obligation to tell the university if they learned someone was undocumented. Another student, a white woman whose boyfriend was undocumented, loudly gasped and exclaimed, “No!” Rather than allow the moment to pass or escalate—which could have led the first student to do harm to the immigrants with which he would be working and resulted in his withdrawal from asking authentic questions out of fear of public shaming—we paused our session and asked students to unpack the interaction. This led to a fruitful discussion on just and unjust laws, and why reporting an undocumented person would run counter to the values of the course.

As stated earlier, the course’s transformational learning goal was for students to re-orient their subjectivities according to relationships of accountability with immigrant “others,” and to participate in meaningful social action following from these relationships. In the next section, I offer insights from qualitative analysis of student journals to compare actual learning outcomes to the course’s transformational learning goal.

### **Qualitative Analysis of “On the Border” Student Learning Outcomes**

To develop a picture of how student outcomes related to the “On the Border” transformational learning goal, I coded representative journal entries from a random sample of 12 students, or two-thirds of the students in the course. To create the sample, I randomized the order of the student roster and eliminated every third student. For each of these students, I coded weekly journals 1, 4, 7, and 10 and trip journals to create a sample spanning the length of the course. I used emotion and values coding (Saldaña, 2021) to examine students’ feelings and beliefs about their relationship to immigrant “others” over the arc of the semester.

Emotion coding revealed that during the first half of the course students expressed mostly negative feelings regarding their privileged positionality relative to immigrants vulnerable to U.S. immigration policy



and enforcement. Negative feelings such as *guilt* and *awkwardness* were often expressed in tandem with feelings of *frustration*, *being overwhelmed*, and *powerlessness* related to a perceived inability to make meaningful contributions to positive social change. As the course progressed expressed feelings began to shift, particularly following the immersion trip. While negative feelings did still appear, their frequency diminished to almost total absence by the final journals. In their place students expressed feeling *empathy*, *energized*, and *empowered*. A number of students attributed these more positive feelings to their experience completing CRA 2 and CRA 3, which asked them to re-orient narratives of self in relationship to immigration justice, and to the Community Advocacy Project, through which students developed products that met expressed needs of local immigrants and immigrant advocates.

By contrast, values coding revealed that students' values remained relatively stable throughout the semester. Students consistently placed value on things like *dignity*, *compassion*, *inclusivity*, and *education*. This consistency is likely because the course was a 300-level elective, and therefore attracted a self-selecting group of students who already placed value on social justice, even if they did not know much about immigration as a justice issue at the start of the course. Notably, however, value statements related to *community collaboration* began to appear with more frequency in later journals as students processed their experience not *doing for* but *working with* community partners through their Community Advocacy Projects.

In second round coding I synthesized these findings into two themes: *deconstruction* and *reconstruction*. Deconstruction often came up in the register of disruption to previously held beliefs and tended to evoke negative feelings. For example, in their trip journal, Jesse,<sup>3</sup> a white gender nonconforming student, wrote:

Yesterday we went to a taqueria down the street. I felt kind of awkward and out of place. I didn't know exactly how to act. I felt embarrassed when [another member of our group] told us that other patrons had rolled their eyes when our group commented on how "authentic" the place was. . . I think part of the reason we went there and at least the reason I felt good about going there was because it was "authentic"/not a gentrifier bar. Very "ethical tourist" of me. But in going there, and being so obvious about it, we forced people who didn't ask for us to be there and come into their community to confront our interpretations of them.

Here this student is grappling with a disruption to their belief that it is unambiguously "good" to

patronize businesses "authentic" to the local community, rather than those complicit in displacement of local persons and culture. While there is much truth to this, this student is also realizing that the way we showed up at the taqueria contained its own kind of problematic gaze onto the local community.

Another way deconstruction arose for students was in wrestling with the ethics and efficacy of working within institutions for incremental change, versus organizing outside of institutions to push for radical transformation. For example, in her trip journal, Nadia, a female multiethnic Arab & European American student, spoke about her struggle with her classmates' reactions to our talk with an Operation Streamline<sup>4</sup> court-appointed defense attorney:

When we talked to the lawyer, it was refreshing to hear that [she] did not agree with the system either. Some others in the group criticized her later because she mentioned that she also worked in an activist group and they felt that she mentioned that to us to make her[self] seem like less of a terrible person, and in a way [that was] demonizing her further. However, I think that the point she was trying to make is that she is trying to help people in the best way that she can . . . I think that the fact that she was conflicted when she talked with us shows her humanity and shows that even people who are in the system don't necessarily agree with it. They work in the system in hopes that they can change it. But in order to change the system, you have to understand it.

Throughout the immersion trip, Nadia wrestled with how to reconcile her interest in the often slow and incremental work of policymaking with radical forms of activism. While waiting to enter the Operation Streamline courtroom, Nadia tearfully confided in me that she felt overwhelmed by pessimistic appraisals of the ability to create meaningful change from within established institutional structures. Such a suggestion ran counter to narratives she had heard her entire life as the daughter of an intelligence analyst.

Nadia was not alone in these struggles. About half-way through the semester, Justin, a white male student in the class, asked if I had time to meet for coffee. Justin had a passion for creating equitable and inclusive educational environments for children. He confided in me that the course was causing him to question whether working within the public education system—how he had always imagined his career—would allow him to make the kinds of changes he wanted to see regarding educational equity. He was wrestling with whether a career trajectory in community educa-

tion outside of the public education system would allow him to be more authentic to his ethical ideals.

If student outcomes stopped at deconstruction, the course would have failed them. At the same time, to attempt to tie things up neatly for students would have offered a cheap reconstruction akin to a precarious house of cards. We sought to offer students tools for reconstruction and to help them embrace this challenge as a nonlinear, iterative, and lifelong process. This framed reconstruction in the register of clarifying new questions, rather than discovering definitive answers. For many students, the positive feelings that were expressed with more frequency toward the end of the course related to this complexity. In their final weekly journal, Jesse reflected on the experience of completing the final CRA, which focused on helping students develop their public narrative for the purpose of community organizing:

It feels weird to talk about myself when I am trying to advocate for a community I am not a part of. It kind of feels like compromise between values (listening to others) and practicality (getting people to care). I think maybe this tells us about larger tensions between what is practical and what is ideologically pure. I have this impulse that I need to do things perfectly or not do them at all, and it comes out a lot when political subjects come up . . . But a lot of times being ideologically pure paralyzes you.

Jesse is here recognizing that their penchant toward ideological “purity” can often cause inaction, which is itself a compromised ethical position within relationships of accountability to marginalized “others.” They are also beginning to recognize that they can engage in meaningful social action even as this tension remains.

Jesse was one of the students that challenged Nadia, because of their strong convictions that just social change was most likely to come through radical activism. Just as Jesse was challenged to interrogate this perspective, Nadia was prompted to reexamine her trust in policymakers to create more equitable futures. Her experience in the course led her to double major in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, with a specialized track focused on migration. In a profile piece for the university, Nadia shared her experience in the course:

There are many things about our government’s policies towards migrants that could be changes [sic] for the better, but are instead being neglected or making the situation worse. Our last day with BorderLinks was spent looking at our next steps—what each of us could do to help people who are caught in our immigration

system. While others in the group will go on to do fantastic direct advocacy work, I decided that my goal is to work in public policy to improve some of these conditions.

Nadia did not radically alter her career trajectory, but she was prompted to ask questions about whether policymakers are honoring their ethical responsibilities to immigrant “others.” And, she was clarifying what it meant for her to maintain her integrity while working within a system with which she may not totally agree.

Students also reconstructed meaning in terms of local social action. For example, in his final weekly journal, Justin reflected on his work on the IJPC school policy toolkit:

I see our work on this toolkit as an important step towards building relationships in the community. By reaching out to the Talawanda school district, we are establishing a relationship with them which will hopefully continue after this class is finished. Additionally, since this toolkit is more general resource wise, we have the ability to share it with many other school districts. Through building this network of relationships with various school districts, we are providing an opportunity for future work to be done as well as improvements to be made to the current toolkit.

Justin here articulated a sense of reconstruction that extends beyond the self to expressions of social action within relationships of accountability. His final words indicate the recognition that such action is never final. It can always become more deeply attuned to contextual calls for justice.

While the course’s transformational learning goal was not equally realized by every student, student assignments affirmed that the course’s multiaxial pedagogy did move most students into a deeper and more complex understanding of their relationships of accountability to immigrant “others,” and of possibilities for meaningful social action emerging from that understanding.

## The Promise of Multiaxial Pedagogy

In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks calls education “the practice of freedom.” She borrows the term from poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault. For Foucault, the practice of freedom deepens our recognition of how pervasively domination systems have captivated our subjectivities. It offers us opportunities to reorient the self in ways counter to an unreflexive captivity to status quo power

arrangements. In so doing, we deepen our moral agency as we clarify the nature of just relationships with those who occupy different subject positions than our own in fields of power (Laidlaw, 2014).

Multiaxial pedagogy is intended as a flexible paradigm to help educators—particularly but not exclusively those working within the CBGL paradigm—to ground their experiential courses in the practice of freedom. Globally-engaged experiential education quite literally involves border crossing. By metaphorically extending the idea of border crossing to the intrasubjective and intersubjective domains, students gain a concrete framework in which to place the self in conversation with other, with communities of “others,” and with geopolitical realities. Offering three modes of inquiry for this conversation challenges students to do this reflection not only as cognitive knowers, but also as relational, embodied selves. ■

## Notes

1. I have permission from the other members of the teaching team to write this article as a single author. They declined co-authorship due to other commitments.
2. I coded assignments with students’ informed consent and IRB approval.
3. All student names are pseudonymous.
4. Operation Streamline (OS) is a zero-tolerance initiative that criminally prosecutes large groups of immigrants en masse who have crossed the border outside of legal points of entry and/or with false documentation.

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