

Planning and Implementing Course-Integrated Interdisciplinary Travel

TEDDI S. DEKA

Missouri Western State University

JAMES R. CARVIOU

Missouri Western State University

Abstract

Many students aspire to incorporate travel into their college experiences, yet they face significant challenges, particularly regarding affordability. This paper proposes a model for collaborating on meaningful travel experiences to enhance student travel while lowering costs. Course-integrated interdisciplinary travel involves a shared travel experience between two college courses. Students collaborate on learning how to travel and planning leisure activities. Faculty members establish overarching goals, select countries to visit, and choose specific sites within each country relevant to both courses and tourism. This paper discusses identifying faculty collaborators, selecting countries and sites to visit, planning the trip, creating a timeline, and recruitment. The authors include an example of designing a course-integrated interdisciplinary travel experience.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING COURSE-INTEGRATED INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAVEL

Consider a typical college classroom experience. It may not be surprising to envision this scenario: Students filter in, take their seats, and listen attentively as the professor lectures on the topic, illustrating key points with a PowerPoint presentation. Professors often desire to enhance learning by introducing discussions and projects that encourage deeper comprehension (Singleton & Newman, 2009). These additions signify intentions to extend learning beyond the traditional teacher-centered approach (Serin, 2018). Now, imagine an even broader expansion, where discussions and projects extend to other sites, enabling students to see, hear, and interact with the subjects they covered in class. If this sounds intriguing, please continue reading.

Extending learning beyond the classroom, particularly through site visits, can create inspiring educational opportunities that cannot be realized within a conventional classroom setting. These visits include field trips, retreats, and extended national or international journeys emphasizing education over tourism, aiming to enhance classroom learning (Ritchie, 2003). Educational tourists seek to experience locations where significant events took place, absorbing the sights, sounds, and scents of these places. By visiting these sites, educational tourists can explore the broader culture around them while participating in typical tourist activities such as sightseeing and shopping (Carr & Axelsen, 2005).

Educational tourism, particularly study abroad experiences, has a significant impact and leaves lasting memories for college students (Paige et al., 2009). Notable effects include cultural competence, cognitive achievements, and personal growth (Stone & Petrick, 2013). Students also gain travel skills, including packing, navigating TSA procedures, using public transportation, and overall travel safety. Despite these benefits, only nine percent of college undergraduates participate in credit-bearing study abroad programs, which include short-term (eight weeks or less during the academic year or summer), mid-length (quarter or semester), and long-term (one year or more) (Institute of International Education, 2024). The most significant barriers to participation include personal finances, the affordability of trips (Houser & Bornais, 2023), lost wages while away, and the difficulty of taking time off work to travel (Vernon et al., 2017). Additional barriers include safety concerns expressed by students or their families, as well as the desire to maintain good grades (Vernon et al., 2017).

To address these barriers, this paper introduces the course-integrated interdisciplinary travel model as an affordable and adaptable approach. It examines strategies for selecting collaborators, identifying travel sites, establishing planning timelines, and integrating shared projects into the curriculum. Examples of past collaborations illustrate how this model reduces costs, fosters interdisciplinary learning, and provides students with valuable cultural and intellectual experiences.

THE COURSE-INTEGRAATED INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL

One way to reduce travel expenses is by creating interdisciplinary travel experiences. Increasing the number of traveling students lowers the per-student cost and provides opportunities for collaboration on mutually interesting projects. Our approach, the course-integrated interdisciplinary model, encompasses two important aspects. First, travel is just one component of a standard three-credit course that meets regularly throughout the semester. Second, two classes share the same travel experience. The purpose of travel is to deepen understanding of the information presented in class and enhance exploration of course topics, including the surrounding culture.

These distinct classes come together to learn how to travel, visit sites relevant to each discipline, and collaboratively share content to expand interdisciplinary skills. This model necessitates careful consideration of which classes will pair best, travel locations, sites to visit, timing, the integration of coursework, and collaboration in the planning process. The model requires consideration of how students will intellectually engage with the curriculum of both courses. Faculty must ensure that there is a clearly defined connection that is recognizable to students. Some disciplines will fit together better than others, which is explored through the various types of opportunities available for collaboration. Then, once collaboration is solidified, the focus shifts to travel opportunities for students who will enroll in the courses.

TYPES OF COLLABORATION

Deciding whom to collaborate with is often the first step in building a strong interdisciplinary travel experience. Shared-discipline collaborators are members of the same or closely related departments who teach unique courses and can easily share travel experiences. Another way to collaborate is by pairing a discipline-specific class with a language or culture class. These discipline-culture collaborations are particularly beneficial since one of the collaborators is likely to have experience in the language or culture of the travel destination (Cann, 2000). An example of a discipline-culture collaboration is described in Cann's (2000) recollection of a partnership involving travel to Brazil, with students enrolled in a Marketing course. The students chose to simultaneously enroll in either a Cultural Diversity course or a Spanish course. Through this collaboration, Cann (2000) noted that students gained language and cultural knowledge of the area, along with immersion into the world of international business and marketing through a Brazilian lens. Students gained an enriching experience not offered through their traditional curriculum in the major (Cann, 2000).

Third, instructors may teach courses from unique disciplines but often discover commonalities within those fields (see Dugas & Morgan, 2021; Stumph et al., 2021). These nonshared-discipline collaborations create numerous opportunities for distinctive experiences and strongly emphasize interdisciplinary teamwork among faculty members and students. Dugas and Morgan (2021) described a collaboration involving two courses traveling to

Ireland. The titles of the courses were Cultural Geography, and Culture, Communication, and Place. The two faculty members defined key concepts presented in each course and how these concepts overlapped and connected through the planned experiences while traveling. The co-authors explained that, "...students demonstrated, through discussion performance and essay content, knowledge and the application of skills concerning cultural observation, description, and interpretation and analysis of their acculturative experiences" (Dugas & Morgan, 2021, p. 141). This trip exemplifies a successful interdisciplinary collaboration for study-away courses across various academic disciplines. The collaboration highlights the opportunity to bring students, faculty, and the academic community together through shared experiences.

Another example of nonshared-discipline collaboration, described by Stumph et al. (2021), involved three courses traveling to Italy for six weeks. The courses were team-taught by instructors from the College of Engineering and the School of Business. The curriculum and trip incorporated key educational components related to business, culture, and leadership, attracting students from a diverse range of majors. Students engaged in several week-long opportunities while traveling, which were (1) Geography and Art, (2) Language and Culture, (3) History and Religion, (4) Leadership, Business and Law, and (5) Travel in Italy. This allowed for exposure to new and exciting educational opportunities both within the university population and extended to global literacy surrounding travel, culture, leadership, and business. The authors noted the effectiveness of the team-teaching model for working on shared goals across several disciplines (Stumph et al., 2021).

Choosing a nonshared-discipline collaborator should start with individuals who are interested in creating collaborative opportunities and have experience traveling with students, such as attending conferences or participating in field trips. Collaborators who share their course designs and objectives often find common ground for developing unique travel experiences for students (Cann, 2000; Dugas & Morgan, 2021). Students then glean from rich opportunities that can have a lifetime of influence on their careers and overall aspirations. Interdisciplinary collaboration builds relationships between departments and faculty. Such collaborations also provide opportunities for students to work together across disciplines. Employers increasingly value interdisciplinary collaborative skills, yet students seldom collaborate with peers outside their disciplines (Becerra, 2021).

TRAVEL SITE SELECTION

Sometimes, the travel site is established before individuals decide to collaborate. This occurs when the university has an ongoing relationship with a site or when a faculty member has a connection to a site. Otherwise, travel locations often emerge from discussions of common goals among potential collaborators. Collaborators should consider whether the sites offer various opportunities for each discipline and whether visiting the cities would engage the students. Additionally, students should have plenty of opportunities to

explore other city sites to enhance their projects and contribute to travel planning (Ransbury & Harris, 1994).

Some universities employ global engagement staff to facilitate trip planning, while others, particularly those just starting to offer travel opportunities, may not provide any support. Travel agencies specializing in educational tourism are excellent resources for trip planning and can be found by searching online for 'college educational tourism'. While some companies offer pre-determined itineraries that may suit specific programs, others provide comprehensive customization, which is appealing for faculty collaborators from various disciplines. Faculty members should verify provider regulations by consulting with university administration and reviewing the policies outlined by the university's Study Abroad or similar office (Craig et al., 2025). Faculty, on-campus staff, educational travel companies, the internet, and discipline-related journal articles are all valuable resources for identifying sites to visit.

EARLY PLANNING

Establishing a realistic timeline for planning a course-integrated travel experience is essential. Typically, universities schedule course offerings one year in advance, so the related travel experience must also be organized ahead of time. **Figure 1** presents a suggested timeline starting two years before the planned travel. Much of this timeline depends on whether the university has established mechanisms for planning and implementing course-integrated study away trips. Having two classes from different disciplines may increase the number of approvals needed for travel (from different chairs and deans) and formats (syllabi that comply with departmental and college standards) (Cann, 2000). Approval might also involve the university's Curriculum Committee and Faculty Senate if new classes are introduced and existing course offerings are not utilized.

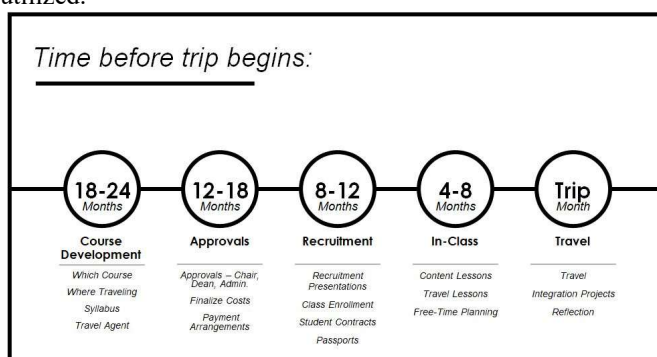


Figure 1. Two-Year Planning Schedule for Course-Integrated Travel

Note: Establishing a new course may require additional planning time, depending on the university's course approval process.

A second component of early planning is recruitment. Key factors such as course requirements, eligibility, trip destinations, timelines, and overall expenses are crucial for effective advertising. Recruitment should commence one year

before the trip (Craig et al., 2025). The university's study away team, Marketing Department, and any educational travel company involved can provide valuable assistance. Creating a theme for the trip that unites both courses is an effective strategy for posters or digital advertisements. Online design tools like Adobe Express (<https://adobe.com/express>) and Canva (<https://www.canva.com>) offer options for crafting engaging and visually appealing posters with images and attention-grabbing designs.

Including a QR code that links to a survey tool, such as Google Forms (<https://workspace.google.com/products/forms>), allows interested students to submit their names and email addresses for future contact. Participating in university-hosted fairs (such as study away and freshman registration) and spreading the word through faculty, advisors, students, and student organizations are excellent recruitment methods (Craig et al., 2025). Another early recruitment strategy is to establish and initiate fundraising efforts for interested students. Two simple methods include online catalog companies that typically offer 50% return and local restaurants that encourage students to bring in customers during slower evenings, providing up to 30% of their earnings.

Collaboration between classes can vary from superficial to quite extensive. If the two classes are scheduled to meet simultaneously, they can conduct joint sessions focused on the travel experience, including discussions about what to pack, safety, and traveling in groups. They can also come together when planning their outings and excursions during their free time. All students will visit the same sites, enabling them to meet and discuss how those sites relate to their learning, regardless of which course they are enrolled in. Finally, teams of students from both classes can collaborate on overarching projects where members contribute to a joint product. According to Craig et al. (2025), interdisciplinary travel facilitates topic understanding and critical thinking because students are exposed to multiple perspectives while developing multicultural competencies.

One Example

This example illustrates a nonshared-discipline collaboration between psychology and journalism, led by the co-authors of this paper. Both instructors bring experience in guiding students' travel to conferences. Such travel opportunities demonstrated clear benefits for students, including presenting their research at conferences, engaging with other students and faculty, exploring the host city, and learning how to travel. A shared commitment to enhancing travel experiences led to the development of course-integrated interdisciplinary travel experiences in psychology and journalism classes. To date, three collaborations have taken place: London/Paris (2022), New York City (2024), and London/Vienna, scheduled for 2026. The London/Vienna collaboration pairs an upper-division psychology elective titled "Madness to reason: The history of psychology in Europe" with an upper-division journalism requirement titled "Multimedia storytelling." These courses, offered in Spring 2026, are established offerings at the university. Both courses are also available as Honors

Colloquia, allowing honors students to enroll in either class to fulfill a portion of their Honors Program curriculum.

Choosing travel locations is essential for the psychology class, as historical sites play a significant role in this course's theme. Fortunately, larger metropolitan areas include points of interest for the journalism class. London and Vienna were chosen because both cities have well- established and rich legacies in psychology and journalism. Both cities are intentionally woven into the course content, emphasizing contributions to psychology and journalism.

Table 1 includes a list of sites related to psychology, journalism, and tourism. This table also functions as a worksheet for organizing trip content. For each city visited, one-third of the locations relate to one discipline, another third to the other discipline, and the final third to tourism. All students collaboratively visit each site. The trip schedule intentionally includes free time for students to explore sites they have researched before the trip, enhancing their projects.

Courses			
	Psychology Sites	Journalism Sites	Tourist Sites
City 1: London	Freud Home St. Mary's Museum Jack the Ripper Tour	Fleet Street Tour The Guardian Charles Dickens Museum	London Eye/Thames Cruise Harry Potter Studios London City Tour
City 2: Vienna	Freud Museum/Tour Viktor Frankl Museum Fools Tower	United Nations Albertina Museum Wien Museum	Schönbrunn Palace Prater/Vienna City Tour Mozart Apartment

Table 1. Site Visit Examples by City

Students from both classes meet during the Spring semester, similar to a standard class. The course content primarily covers distinct topics, but students in each class collaborate in various ways. The courses meet simultaneously, and students come together for travel lessons, which include preparation, packing, group movement, and safety during travel. Additionally, pairs of students from each class choose themed projects related to the travel site and course content. For the London and Vienna excursion, the themes span both classes. Student pairs must enhance at least one of their themed projects with information gathered from visiting a site relevant to their theme upon returning from the trip, and present it publicly. The trip takes place after finals week, extending the semester to the week following their return, allowing students to present their integrated projects.

Planning for this collaboration began two years in advance, including the selection of a travel company to customize the trip within a reasonable budget. The university's Office of Applied Learning approved the proposed classes and travel. The theme, "Visions of mind: Exploring media and madness in Europe," was created to promote the program, along with a graphic poster. Recruitment efforts began one year before the trip, extending into the summer during registration fairs for incoming freshmen. Potential travelers filled out a Google

Form (<https://workspace.google.com/products/forms>), accessible through a QR code on recruitment materials, which linked them to a video presentation about the specifics of the trip. The preparation allowed for enrollment during the semester before the class would ensue, when students typically register for classes. Preparations continue throughout the academic year, including fundraising efforts, combined “how to travel” workshops, and coordinated explorations of free-time sites.

The course-integrated interdisciplinary model can be applied to various travel experiences. One possibility is a weekend retreat featuring two distinct courses centered around a common theme. For example, two classes—one focused on World War II history and the other on Japanese culture and events—participated in a retreat in Independence, MO, where they visited the Truman Library and engaged in the Decision Center, which analyzed the Berlin Blockade and the Hiroshima bombings (Deka et al., 2016). This example was implemented by one of the co-authors and two other professors specializing in different disciplines (History and English). The example was presented at the 2016 meeting of the National Collegiate Honors Council, held in Seattle, Washington. Another option is a week-long trip to a major domestic city that provides numerous opportunities for two classes. For instance, in 2024, the Psychology of Gender class traveled to New York City alongside the Multimedia Storytelling class, collaborating on travel lessons and exploring sites relevant to both classes. This trip was carried out by the co-authors and implemented in the Spring of 2024. Both examples served as catalysts for designing interdisciplinary study away courses across campus in future iterations.

CONCLUSION

The course-integrated interdisciplinary travel model achieves several goals. It increases the affordability of travel, a noted barrier for many students (Houser & Bornais, 2023). It fosters collaboration among students from various majors, which builds recognized and desired skills for employment marketability (Becerra 2021). It enhances cultural competence, cognitive achievements, and personal growth, which are noted benefits of educational travel (Stone & Petrick, 2013). It encourages collaboration among faculty members and departments, adding to future opportunities for students. This paper highlights planning aspects, including finding collaborators, city selection, sites to visit, and establishing a timeline, hopefully inspiring interest in offering such opportunities while providing insight to begin planning.

Study away opportunities integrate applied learning through the incorporation of recognized and desired skills sought by a global marketplace of employment and exploration (Cann, 2000). Interdisciplinary pedagogical approaches to instruction and the implementation of course offerings enable the cultivation of a more informed and qualified workforce (Becerra, 2021). This is evidenced by students graduating with a global lens on their academic disciplines as well as other offerings and opportunities available to them

(Stumph et al., 2021). Through applying their experiences and awareness of cultural similarities and differences, students are better equipped to be effective in their careers and beyond. Students who participate in these interdisciplinary experiences emerge as informed and engaged citizens within the greater global marketplace of ideas and opportunities (Dugas & Morgan, 2021).

The co-authors experienced such connections first-hand with feedback given from former students reiterating the inquiry from employers about their study away experiences and wider awareness of its connection to their specific career field. This is especially relevant when it comes to employers seeking candidates that can communicate ideas beyond their contextual environment. The co-authors conclude that interdisciplinary study away has the potential for lifelong impact on participants.

REFERENCES

- Becerra, I. (2021, July 21). The need for interdisciplinarity in higher education. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/07/22/the-need-for-interdisciplinarity-in-higher-education/>
- Cann, C. W. (2000). A case in point: An interdisciplinary approach to the short-term study abroad. *Marketing Education Review*, 10(1), 67-72.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2000.11488697>
- Carr, N., & Axelsen, M. (2005). Sightseeing: An integral component of the study abroad experience. *Tourism*, 53(1), 77-83.
- Craig, J., Sharma, R., & Zettler, H. (2025). Justice beyond borders: Best practices in organizing and implementing interdisciplinary study abroad programs. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 1-15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2025.2500333>
- Deka, T.S., Bersyl, S., & Trifan, D. (2016, November). Planning and implementing course-integrated honors retreats [Conference session]. *National Collegiate Honors Council, Seattle, WA, United States*.
- Dugas, D. P., & Morgan, E. (2021). Ireland in focus: Interdisciplinary study abroad and the benefits of collaboration. *The Geography Teacher*, 18 (3-4), 138-141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19338341.2021.1931922>
- Houser, C., & Bornais, M. (2023). Student perceptions on the benefits and barriers to study abroad. *The Canadian Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 14(1), 1-24.
<https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotlrcacea.2023.1.11091>
- Institute of International Education (2024). Open doors report on international educational exchange. Retrieved from <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/u-s-study-abroad/>
- Paige, R. M., Fry, G. W., Stallman, E. M., Josić, J., & Jon, J. (2009). Study abroad for global engagement: the long-term impact of mobility experiences. *Intercultural Education*, 20(sup1), S29-S44.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980903370847>
- Ransbury, M., K., & Harris, S. A. (1994). Study abroad: The reality of building dynamic group learning. *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching*, 5(2), 97-107.
- Ritchie, B. W. (2003). Managing Educational Tourism. *Channel View Publications*.
- Serin, H. (2018). A comparison of teacher-centered and student-centered approaches in educational settings. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 5(1), 164-167.
<https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v5i1p164>
- Singleton, A., & Newman, K. (2009). Empowering students to think deeply, discuss engagingly, and write definitively in the college classroom. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 20(2), 247-250.
- Stone, M. J. & Petrick, J. F. (2013). The educational benefits of travel experiences: A literature review. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(6), 731-744. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513500588>

- Stumph, C. F., O'Connor, K., & Coffman, J. (2021). Team teaching an interdisciplinary short-term study abroad experience: Innovations in course design and collaboration. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 21(13), 23-26. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v21i13.4784>
- Vernon, A., Moos, C., & Loncarich, H. (2017). Student expectancy and barriers to study abroad. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 21(1), 1-9.