



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Program in Prague

Suggested US semester credit hours: 4 credits

Contact Hours: 60

Course Level: 300

Course length: Semester

Delivery method: Face to face

Language of Instruction: English

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Professional Development Project is a dynamic field-based learning experience that provides students participating in the Reimagining Europe program in Prague with the opportunity to learn more about their professional areas of interest through structured and creative application of theory to practice. Through a combination of visits and experiences that will occur as a group, students will actively survey an industry of their Reimagining Europe learning community. The accompanying research project encourages students to pursue individualized lines of inquiry while gaining practical knowledge of their professional areas to provide context to their learning. This combination of research and professional development gives the Professional Development Project its unique flavor.

COURSE DELIVERY

The Professional Development Project is comprised of two essential elements: a methodological and contextual seminar and a practical industry survey. The methodological and contextual seminar is delivered by faculty from Prague College and includes readings, lectures, and discussion of local business practices, key issues for organizations associated with the learning communities of the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe program. It also includes discussion of the students' areas of professional interests, and culturally-specific training for students' constructive interaction with local industry.

The IFSA-Butler Resident Director in Prague organizes and directs the practical industry survey component of the course. With guidance, students will visit local organizations as a group and will gain first-hand knowledge of operations and issues. Discussion with industry leaders will complement these visits. Preparatory group discussions prior to field visits and reflective group exercises following visits will enable students to compare and contrast their observations, challenge and confirm their prior thinking, and sharpen their understanding of the issues that impact their learning communities. Other professional events, such as networking events, will augment the course. The practical components of this course will comprise 40 hours of 60 total contact hours.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Students will identify and develop a personal area of professional interest, which will serve as the basis for their Research Proposal and Research Paper. Individual meetings with faculty will help students focus their interests and will acquaint them with resources, while challenging their thought processes.

Students are expected to read or view assigned resources in advance and be prepared to actively discuss them in class. In each meeting, the instructor will overview the topic and then facilitate a group discussion, drawing out relevant themes, following up on specific lines of inquiry, and prompting students' thoughtful engagement with the topic. Students are encouraged to bring their prior learning experiences into class discussions (based on experiential learning theory) and to make cognitive connections between this course and others in the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Program in Prague whenever possible (based on the philosophy of integrative learning).

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to write a single page Response Paper following each industry visit, professional event, or each presentation by an industry leader. These papers should not simply summarize the event but should indicate specific areas of personal interest for the student, answering such questions as: What more do you want to know about this topic? How does this topic relate to your personal area of professional interest? How did this visit or discussion challenge or affirm your thinking? What new knowledge did you gain? Your voice should be heard in the Response Papers.

A Research Proposal causes students to identify and describe a topic and problem for investigation. The Research Proposal must be approved by the course instructor before the student commences research. Because the Research Proposal also requires students to build off of their learning, this assignment also assesses mid-term knowledge of the methodological and contextual seminar.

A Research Paper (10 pages) will assess the student's ability to synthesize the varied learning experiences that comprise this course, drawing on the content of the methodological and contextual seminar to undergird assumptions and assertions reached regarding the industry visits. The Research Paper is the formal representation of the student's investigation of a self-identified topic and problem. The Research Paper should include an introduction to the context surrounding the problem, a discussion of the problem, a related hypothesis, a description of the ways research was conducted, a presentation of the findings, and a discussion and conclusion. The course instructor will give the specific guidelines for the Final Paper.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Become aware of local business practices in Prague
- Understand and evaluate the issues that impact their learning communities
- Gain new perspectives on their aspired professional areas
- Become aware of culturally-specific business practices, perspectives on work ethic, constructive interactions, and related issues

COURSE SYLLABUS

- Increase intercultural skills through guided consideration of varied perspectives
- Strengthen critical thinking skills
- Strengthen creative problem-solving skills
- Strengthen academic writing skills
- Strengthen oral presentation skills
- Strengthen collaborative learning and teamwork skills
- Strengthen critical reflection skills
- Become familiar with resources available for further research on Czech and European business practices and issues, as well as culturally-specific business behavior
- Make cognitive connections between learning in this course and other learning experiences in the IFSA-Butler Reimagining Europe Program in Prague

EVALUATION METHODS

The course instructor will provide specific requirements and grading rubrics for individual assignments for the course.

Your final grade in the course will be comprised of the following course requirements:

Participation – 20%

(10% for the seminar and 10% for the practical components)

(Participation includes attendance, preparation, engagement in discussion, civility, and respect)

Response Papers (Total) – 20%

(1 page each, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font)

Research Proposal – 20%

(2 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font)

Research Paper – 40%

(10 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font)

Timely Submissions

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be accepted at the discretion of the course instructor and generally only in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any academic endeavor must be based upon a foundation of honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by principles of academic integrity and must be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work while studying abroad. Any academic work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill an academic requirement must represent a student's original work. Any act of academic misconduct, such as cheating, fabrication, forgery, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty, will subject a student to disciplinary action.

COURSE SYLLABUS

IFSA-Butler takes academic integrity very seriously. Students must not accept outside assistance without permission from the instructor. Additionally, students must document all sources according to the instructions of the professor. Should your instructor suspect you of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty, you may receive a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action may result. The incident will be reported to the IFSA-Butler resident director as well as your home institution.