

RETHINKING CONCEPTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a new pedagogical approach that connects Sophia students to universities around the world. Utilizing practical communication tools such as Zoom and Google Classroom, COIL allows Sophia students in Japan and elsewhere to engage with students at overseas institutions and participate in meaningful discussions and collaborative exercises. Seamlessly incorporated into Sophia's curriculum, COIL sessions are conducted as part of existing courses and enhance course material by providing students opportunities to engage with the diverse perspectives of students in various countries.

and local communities; and contribute to eliminating educational inequality. By academic year 2022, Sophia intends to incorporate COIL into 40 courses, with 1,760 participants each year.

The timing of COIL's launch is noteworthy, since it came just before the coronavirus pandemic, which shut down international travel and thus halted conventional study abroad programs. Higher education institutions have long considered ways to enhance cross-cultural learning without requiring students to study abroad, but the pandemic has further highlighted the need to rethink conceptions of international collaboration in higher education. With its accessible approach building upon the robust existing international network, COIL has proven to be a formidable

THE EXCITING FUTURE OF COLLABORATIVE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

From sustainability to global equity and world peace, the challenges of this century can only be met through inclusive international collaboration. For higher education institutions, cultivating global citizens capable of productively participating in these partnerships is a primary responsibility. To this end, Sophia has introduced a new approach to international education that connects students around the world while fostering mutual understanding.

Launched in 2018 as part of an initiative funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to enhance Japanese universities' international presence, COIL at Sophia began as a project in partnership with two Japanese universities, Ochanomizu University and the University of Shizuoka, and ten U.S. institutions, most of which are Sophia's long-standing student exchange partners.

COIL has since expanded to encompass collaborations with universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mongolia, among other institutions worldwide. Sophia's expanding network of partner institutions reflects COIL's goals: to provide globally connected educational opportunities, especially to those who have limited access due to financial, physical, and curricular restrictions; enhance multifaceted programs that utilize the resources of partner institutions

platform that allows students to learn in an international environment amid an uncertain global landscape.

EXPLORING DIVERSE TOPICS FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Topics covered in COIL sessions are incredibly broad. As COIL is not a stand-alone curriculum but an approach employed by faculty across the university, it can be applied to a wide array of subject matter, from educational equity and nursing to peace education and art history. Professors introduce students to a diverse range of perspectives, and through lively discussion and collaboration with students in different countries, encourage them to think critically about their course material from a global perspective. International collaboration of faculty members is another important aspect, through which innovative pedagogies and effective course design

are formed across different educational cultures and systems.

The perspectives fostered by COIL are especially important when examining international issues such as the pandemic's effects on education and health; this was highlighted in a session with Loyola Marymount University, in which students in Japan and the U.S. discussed the pandemic's effects on education equity.

Commenting about the pandemic's impact on education, a student in the U.S. noted that financial disparities have been a significant obstacle for many families transitioning to a remote learning environment. They noted that setting up a stable learning environment requires adequate equipment and internet service, as well as basic computer skills. They also observed that many families are unable to purchase the necessary equipment, which has exacerbated education inequities in the U.S. One Japanese student added that language barriers too have contributed to education inequities, explaining that non-Japanese parents who live in Japan but do not speak Japanese face challenges in coordinating with schools to set up remote learning environments for their children. As this exchange illustrates, cross-cultural dialogue allows students to learn about new perspectives and identify commonalities between cultural contexts from which solutions can be developed.

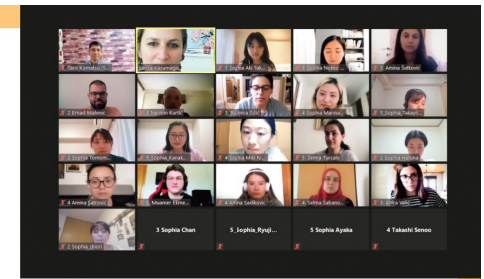
The importance of cross-cultural dialogue surrounding the effects of the pandemic extends to public health, a topic discussed at sessions with UCLA. Attended by students from both institutions, the sessions examined the social factors that impact mental health in the U.S. and Japan. Students examined case studies of patients in the U.S. suffering from mental health issues and applied their findings to an analysis of the mental health issues affecting Japanese healthcare workers amid the pandemic. Students came out of the sessions equipped with new ways of thinking about mental health and were inspired to learn more about the social determinants of health in other countries.

ENHANCING EDUCATION THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

Group discussions and collaborative exercises are central to COIL. Students frequently participate in breakout discussions where they discuss a topic in depth or examine a case study in a group with students from partner universities. Depending on the structure of the session, students may also join group projects that require them to coordinate with each other outside of the sessions.

In a session with the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina, students from both universities engaged in fruitful discussions about peace education. Drawing from their own experiences of how historical conflicts are treated in the classroom, Japanese and Bosnian students prepared presentations and shared their findings in groups. Following the presentations, students freely asked questions, which sparked productive dialogue about how pedagogical approaches centered on peace can prevent conflict.

The sessions with the University of Montana further illustrate COIL's collaborative potential. In these sessions, students from both universities worked in groups to plan their own theatrical production. Students focused on the theatrical adaptations of the



story *Madama Butterfly*, which, as a story written by an American, set in Japan, and later adapted into an Italian opera, intersects several cultural boundaries. After stimulating debate about the thematic elements and theatrical traditions, students were assigned to groups and tasked with producing their own adaptations of the story. Reflecting the diverse perspectives of their creators, the inventive adaptations they produced accentuate the boundless possibilities of international collaboration.

GLOBAL COLLABORATION FOR OTHERS, WITH OTHERS

As these cases demonstrate, participants in COIL sessions find new perspectives on important issues in their own fields through cross-border collaborative learning, experiencing cultural differences and other educational systems along the way. However, there are critical questions that need to be answered. How can students build on such experiences and, rather than keeping them as mere personal gains, contribute to the common good? How can Sophia better utilize its resources and institutional experiences through its education platforms to tackle educational inequality? While Sophia endeavors to answer these questions through all the educational programs at Sophia, they are especially salient to COIL and other online programs because of their immense reach and potential.

One way to answer these questions is through global engagement and collaboration with Jesuit Worldwide Learning: Higher Education at the Margins (JWL), which has been an important project to Sophia over the years.

JWL is a global partnership of organization and institutions, through which a number of higher education institutions and individuals collaboratively provide online and blended education to students at the margins. Most recently in tandem with local educational institutions, Sophia conducted a social engagement program to learn about educational inequalities in Myanmar in Fall 2019. After the initial program, follow-up online sessions have been held between students in the two countries. Commencing in Fall 2021, a Sophia faculty member is planning to offer an online course on the JWL platform.

It is Sophia's aim to build upon the ideals of the university's motto, "Men and Women for Others, with Others," by further bringing to bear its educational resources and expertise while providing engaging learning opportunities for students both in Sophia and at the margins.



CASE 1

Professor
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Associate Professor
LARISA KASUMAGIC
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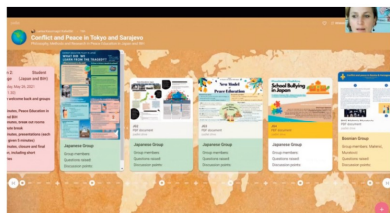
FOSTERING EMPATHY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Education plays a central role in shaping our ability to empathize across cultural and geographical borders. This is especially true when it comes to history, the memories of which can either hinder or aid peacemaking efforts between nations, ethnic groups, or political factions, depending on how they are transmitted from one generation to the next.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) sessions organized by Sophia Professor Taro Komatsu and University of Sarajevo Associate Professor Larisa Kasumagic demonstrated how cross-cultural dialogue can foster the mutual understanding and critical thinking skills needed to prevent future conflicts.

Focused on the topic of peace education, the sessions brought together students from Sophia University and the University of Sarajevo to discuss their observations on how issues of war and peace are treated in the education systems of their respective countries. In the most recent iteration of these COIL sessions, students split into working groups and gave presentations on specific aspects of peace education. Afterwards, all groups convened to present their findings to the rest of the class.

Although Japan and Bosnia and Herzegovina differ significantly in terms of sociology, economics, and demographics, a commonality between them is the presence of historical trauma and associated political tension. The Japanese students centered their presentations



on Japan's experiences in World War II as both aggressor and victim and how this history is represented in the classroom, while the Bosnian students focused on the pedagogical treatment of the Bosnian War, and how the war's legacy continues to affect their nation's education system.

Students from both universities noted that many teachers hesitate to discuss sensitive historical events. "For instance, it's still very difficult for teachers in Japan to talk about what Japan did and went through in World War II," Professor Komatsu explained. He went on to emphasize the importance of becoming comfortable with such topics: "Although people need time to become comfortable speaking about it, we cannot wait too long because we don't want another conflict to occur."

In their discussions, Japanese and Bosnian students agreed that the formal education systems of both countries need to better incorporate peace studies into their curricula. Professor Kasumagic noted that, in both countries, peace education is a largely ignored aspect of formal education. "Both groups of students have realized that peace education is more of a priority for NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and private schools in Japan, but that very little attention is given within the formal curriculum, especially with regard to training teachers," she said. After their discussions, students left their sessions with a greater understanding of the importance of raising awareness of peace education as a crucial pedagogical tool.

One of the goals of the course is to encourage students to think critically about how education can perpetuate or prevent conflict. "Education can equip students with the tools and skills necessary to learn how to cope with the consequences and traumas of war, and peace education can be used as a preventive strategy," Kasumagic said.

In addition to being settings for intellectual growth, courses are also where students can bond with each other and form friendships across national borders. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, COIL sessions are currently limited to online formats, but once international travel becomes feasible, Komatsu hopes to blend both online and in-person sessions.

Art interpretation is a constantly evolving process. In the realm of theater, for example, the production and perception of a work can vary significantly depending on the cultural context of its performance.

In Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) sessions between Sophia University and the University of Montana, students examined this dynamic quality of performance art using a multifaceted approach, drawing from studies of artistic representation, aesthetic interpretation, and theatrical design.

Organized by Sophia Associate Professor Noriko Murai and University of Montana Professor Alessia Carpo, the most recent series of sessions asked students to critically analyze the theatrical adaptations of short story *Madame Butterfly*. Written in 1898 by American John Luther Long, it is a tale of an American naval officer who arrives in Nagasaki and "marries" a 15-year-old Japanese girl for convenience, then leaves Japan shortly after their union. The story was dramatized as a one-act play in New York in 1900, and subsequently adapted into the opera *Madama Butterfly* that premiered in Milan in 1904.

As an Italian opera based on a story set in Japan and told from the perspective of an American, *Madama Butterfly* intersects several cultural contexts. The opera's source material also represents one of the earliest archetypal images of the Japanese woman.'

"The myth of Madame Butterfly is one that's appealing to the West," explained Murai. "It's an image of Japan that entertains the Western visitor, and it's a feminized image of Japan, so there's a theme of conquest that runs through it. This is reflected in how the Japanese woman in the story continues to love the American naval officer even after he leaves. In addition to its representation of Japan, the story expresses the dynamics of an intercultural relationship that takes place in the context of a military man moving around the globe."

The class also considered the contemporary relevance of the Madame Butterfly myth by studying its more recent variation in David Cronenberg's 1993 movie *M. Butterfly*. The film is an adaptation of David Henry Hwang's 1988 Tony Award-winning Broadway play loosely based on the relationship between two men, a French

diplomat and a Chinese opera singer.

Madama Butterfly's thematic elements were a major topic of conversation among students from both universities, who freely shared their thoughts in group discussions via the course's online forum. Another topic that sparked lively debate was the opera's representation of Japanese characters by non-Asian performers, which raised incisive questions about casting conventions and representation in opera.

"Considering there are a lot of problems with the story, it was surprising for me that students were most offended by the white performers playing Japanese roles," Carpo commented. "It was a bit hard to explain that this is a convention in the opera world, where you aren't picked for your looks, but for your voice style. It's this kind of exchange that makes international collaborative learning interesting. It brought to the surface something that wasn't necessarily an issue for me, but was for my students."

The COIL sessions concluded with a group project that asked students to propose a preliminary concept for their own adaptations of *Madama Butterfly* or *M. Butterfly*. After being assigned to their groups, students were free to contact each other using their preferred method of communication, whether e-mail or social media. In their projects, students reimagined the story of Madame Butterfly by variously altering its setting, subverting thematic elements, or changing aspects of its production such as casting and costume design. Students also used mood boards – a type of visual collage used in theater to convey a general feeling – to establish the tone of their production. The students' adaptations covered a wide variety of production styles, reflecting the creative potential of international collaboration.

These sessions were conducted over the course of three weeks, but for future editions the professors hope to conduct sessions over a longer period, giving students more time to get to know each other and collaborate. Although not yet finalized, the next series of sessions will likely deal with contemporary issues of gender and visual representation.



CASE 2

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Professor
ALESSIA CARPOCA
School of Theatre and Dance, University of Montana

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION ILLUMINATES NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ART

CASE 3

Associate Professor
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 Department of Nursing, Sophia University

Associate Adjunct Professor,
BENISSA E. SALEM
 Department of Nursing, University of California, Los Angeles

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION CONNECTS NURSING FACULTY AND STUDENTS ONLINE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities cross nationally to connect nursing faculty and students online. International nursing education collaboration shed light on new perspectives on ethical principles, social justice, the intersection of culture, and the social determinants of health among underserved and under resourced communities.

In the field of nursing, Sophia's Department of Nursing is driving international collaboration through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) program. Through COIL, the Department of Nursing has developed a robust platform for universities around the world to collaborate on courses that cover a wide range of topics, such as sex education, health equity, and mental health. One of Sophia's partners is the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), with whom Sophia University faculty have collaborated on lectures and group discussions.

Associate Professor, Yae Yoshino (Department of Nursing) is one of COIL's most active educators. She has given lectures at COIL sessions and regularly coordinates with UCLA to allow Sophia students to participate in online UCLA undergraduate and graduate courses.

Over the course of her career, Yoshino has developed a collaborative relationship with UCLA as an educator and researcher, and it was through her work with UCLA that she befriended Dr. Benissa E. Salem who was invited to Japan as a PhD student with other UCLA School of Nursing faculty to lecture.

Salem's research focuses on addressing health disparities among vulnerable populations, particularly middle-aged and older people experiencing homelessness. Some of her recent sessions, which were attended by faculty and students from UCLA and Sophia University focused on ethics. Other sessions in her Secondary Prevention course centered around screening for mental health including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In most classroom sessions, students are asked to examine case studies in groups and share their findings with the entire class.

In one session, participants were tasked with screening a 42-year-old

veteran of the U.S. Navy who has normal physical findings but had a history of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, asthma, and hypertension. In the same session, reading material was integrated on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of Japanese healthcare workers. Students discussed similarities and differences between the U.S. and Japanese healthcare workers during the unprecedented pandemic and learned from one another.

For some of her sessions, Salem invites experts in various disciplines to provide professional insight into the course material. "This is especially useful for new students who are embarking on their nursing careers because it broadens their horizons" she said.

In addition to the international perspectives gained through such comparative exercises, the value of cross-cultural collaboration derives from the learning environment, where students are exposed to varied education styles. Yoshino noted that Japanese students were impressed by the open learning environment of UCLA courses where students commented frequently and spoke casually with the faculty. "In Japan, the environment is more hierarchical, and students never call professors by their name," she explained. "In the UCLA sessions, the Japanese students felt welcomed and relaxed and gained a new perspective on how the classroom can be warmer and friendlier."

In future sessions, Yoshino and Salem hope to shed more light on the commonalities between Japan and the U.S. in terms of homelessness, social disparities, and mental health. "Cross comparisons are really unique learning opportunities because there are similarities but also cultural considerations unique to both populations. When I traveled to Japan, I was able to see some of the dynamic factors that impact homelessness and the similarities and differences across the nations," Salem said.

Yoshino echoed these sentiments, remarking how these sessions present important opportunities for students to learn about the factors that impact homelessness in other countries: "Our goal is to identify what we have in common and what the differences in these populations are, and then explore what we can learn and develop from these observations."