Honors Experiential Learning Project Proposal Form – Global Studies

Project Information

1. Provide a brief overview/abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

With the rise of climate change, environmental health issues, and resource depletion recognized throughout the world, many countries are discussing topics in sustainability. Specifically within the field of architecture, many countries have developed detailed plans to maximize energy efficiency within buildings as well as implement other elements of green design. Ireland, however, has gone beyond the standard topics of sustainable design. For example, in Ireland’s Government Policy On Architecture 2009-2015, strong weight is given to the cultural and historical relevance of architecture. Not only must we consider our ability to sustain the human race for generations to come, we must also consider the stories we leave behind and the values we choose to build the future’s foundation upon. As stated in the Government Policy On Architecture 2009-2015, “architecture of today is the heritage of the future.” By travelling to Ireland for one week, I will study the impact of preserving a country’s historically relevant architecture on the culture, atmosphere, and “sense of place” within a given city. I hope to develop an understanding of how sustainable design can harmonize with historical preservation and adaptive reuse to create environments that foster a sense of place and evolve the human experience.

2. Clearly state how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work (refer to the first two pages of this document with the full description of what is expected in each of these areas).

Substantial Content and Quality within Global Studies Theme

This project is part of a larger analysis of how different countries have approached the current world issue of climate change, environmental health concerns, and resource depletion in regards to architecture. Ireland understands its interdependence with other countries and like other countries has indeed implemented policies and systems to foster sustainable infrastructure and redevelopment to combat environmentally related world issues. Furthermore, Ireland is particularly unique in its approach to these world issues due to the country’s assiduous value of history and culture. Numerous policies have been put into place in efforts to preserve historically and culturally relevant architecture not solely for the purpose of conserving resources, but in efforts to engender a sense of place, belonging, and culture. Ireland has recognized these issues and an opportunity to establish something more than sustainable solutions; Ireland has manipulated this time of redesign to boldly establish their identity as a valuable destination and rich culture within the global community.

By studying architectural renovations, preserved historic buildings, and new construction projects in Ireland, I will develop a fundamental understanding of how Ireland represents their culture through architecture differently than other countries. I will gain an appreciation of Irish culture by studying how it is expressed through architecture and how people view and interact.
with these spaces. I have researched Ireland’s buildings of the month as recorded throughout the past two years and read why these buildings were rendered important to the culture of Ireland. I have scheduled in visits to a few of these places in our itinerary. When there, I plan to sketch these buildings to understand the particular details that have become iconic in Irish culture. I also hope to interact with locals and converse with them about what makes these places significant for them. I have also researched and scheduled visits to the historic castles of Ireland. While these castles are no longer in use, they still hold strong historical significance and contribute greatly to place making in Ireland. When visiting, I intend to sketch and analyze these buildings for their historic significance and recognize references to their style through more recent architecture in Ireland. Through this analysis, I will generate ideas of how architects might incorporate various elements of iconic architecture through new projects in order to preserve culture and create a sense of place within communities.

Ultimately, I will consider how other countries may follow suit in terms of restoring value of historic architecture in efforts to foster a sense of place and belonging within communities. While many countries are taking great strides in improving efficiency of building, much character and cultural identity has been mitigated by these efforts. Through studying Ireland’s efforts to restore cultural identity and bolster values of history, community and place, I will be better suited to approach the sustainable design challenges of today with a more holistic understanding of the opportunities at hand.

Itinerary (some specifics subject to change):

SATURDAY
Depart for Ireland

SUNDAY
Morning: National Museum of Ireland
Afternoon: Trinity College
   Dublin Castle & Dubh Linn Gardens
Evening: Hurling Match
Night: Temple Bar District

MONDAY
Morning: Travel to Galway
Afternoon: Tour Menlo Castle in Galway
   Kylemore Abbey
   Galway City Museum
   Clontuskert Abbey
   Galway May Institute of Technology
   Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed Into Heaven
Evening: Marble Hill in Galway
Night: Music in downtown Galway

TUESDAY
Morning: Visit the Monksfield house in Galway
Afternoon: Travel to Doolin
   Doonagore Castle
   Doonmacfelim Castle
   Doolin Cave
   Aillwee Cave
   Doolin Village
Evening: Explore Fisherstreet
Night: Historic Music Pubs: Mc Dermott’s, McGann’s, O’Connor’s

WEDNESDAY
Morning: Bike to Cliffs of Moher and around rural Ireland
   O’Briens Tower
Afternoon: Bike back to Doolin
Evening: Travel to Galway
Night: Visit cinema in Galway

THURSDAY
Morning: Galway City Museum
Afternoon: Connemara National Park
Evening: Travel to Dublin
Night: O’Connell Bridge

FRIDAY
Morning: Museum
Afternoon: Guinness Factory
   Custom House
   Sean O’Casey Community Centre
Evening: Georges Street Arcade
   Samuel Beckett Bridge
   Grand Canal Square & Grand Canal Theater
   Convention Center
Night: Messrs Maquire
   Dublin Spire

SATURDAY
Morning: Depart for America

Connection to Academic Goals and Theories

Throughout my time at UC I have grown increasingly involved in the sustainability movement, within and beyond the field of architecture. I worked in UC’s Office of Sustainability as a sustainability advocate where I learned the vast impact and value that sustainability can have on a community. My job as a sustainability advocate entailed working with other sustainability advocates and interacting with the UC and general Cincinnati community. Through these activities I developed a sense of belonging, place, community, and culture that I had never felt
before. I realized that this was due to the common value of human life and common recognition of human interdependence that we all felt. It is due to these experiences that I have a strong investment in the sustainability movement.

Because I possess a lifelong and assiduous love for architecture, the field of architecture has become my primary outlet for my efforts in the movement. This has led me to become President of Students for Ecological Design where my student group addresses topics of sustainability through a design perspective. Through SED, I have twice attended Greenbuild, an international green building conference, where professional architects and people in related fields gather to attend seminars and discuss the latest issues and developments in the sustainable design movement. While Greenbuild has highlighted some very exciting developments in the movement, I have noticed a serious lacking of discussion over the role of cultural and historical factors in sustainable buildings. Instead, many conversations revolve around energy efficiency, new renewable energy sources, reduction of toxicity in building materials, etc. While these are all essential developments, I strongly feel that the sustainability movement will never achieve its greater goal of eliciting a value of place and environment in people if professionals disregard considerations of historical and cultural factors. That is, nobody is going to preserve entryways of LEED Platinum glass boxes and showcase them in art museums the way they have for Louis Sullivan’s ornately detailed architecture. It is difficult to connect personally with architecture whose only value is efficiency. It is for these reasons that I have grown so inspired by Ireland’s efforts to include a value of historic preservation and culture of place in their Government Policy On Architecture 2009-2015. These policies go beyond enforcing levels of energy efficiency and LEED certification and address the fundamental issue at hand: a need for humans to value their environment as an identity no separate from themselves. By studying Ireland’s methods of restoring historic buildings and creating new spaces that reflect and foster culture, I will gain an understanding of how I might achieve similar initiatives in architectural projects of my own.

THEORIES/CONCEPTS

The sustainability movement in architecture marks a cultural paradigm shift.

Historical preservation works to maintain a sense of place and, in turn, allow people to develop a sense of value to the holistic environment in which they live. It is this value that is fundamental to the sustainable design movement.

New construction must not ignore existing historical and cultural conditions of its site. It is by responding to historical and cultural factors the way quality architects typically respond to geographical site factors that we can engender an architectural form truly valuable to society.

In order to develop a greater understanding of these theories and concepts, I will read the following essays, articles, and documents:

*Sustainable Architecture, Planning and Culture - Beyond the mechanical and unambiguous* by Tania Katzschner

*The request of sustainability and architecture as cultural paradigm* by Nikitas Chiotinis
Initiative, Independence and Creativity

As the only architecture student in this group, some of my interests and intentions within this trip are inherently disparate from other group members. I have done a great level of independent research regarding specific buildings and sites that I think are essential to the achievement of my learning objectives. When we visit sites together as a group, each of us may have different activities planned. I plan to read articles about the site’s design and impact, sketch various building details, and analyze the existing use and impact of the space. Each member of the group has different objectives to achieve out of their experience at the site. Simply recognizing everyone’s interests and working together harmoniously will allow us to each achieve our goals. At the same time, I hope to learn from the interests of others in the group. I think that if we each focus on different aspects of a single place, we can learn a great amount from the various viewpoints. I personally aim to indulge in the perspectives of others on the trip and then tie back what I have learned from these members into my personal objectives.

Reflection & Dissemination

I plan to keep a journal with me at all times during this trip. This journal will contain a hybrid of sketches, site observations, and reflective journal entries. As I will also have a camera with me during this trip, I aim to post the richest photos to the University Honors Facebook Page. I will post excerpts from the journal and a handful of telling photos onto my iWebfolio along with a thoughtful and comprehensive reflective essay on my experiences. In addition to sharing my experiences with the honors community, I plan to take my experiences to my student group, Students For Ecological Design (SED) where I will discuss what I have learned with my peers.

Advisor

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Approximate Budget
Airfare: $1200
Lodging: $300
Museums/Events: $100
Food/Misc: $200

Total: $1800