



# The Global Classroom in American Politics



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### The problem:

Only a small proportion of students get to undertake an 'international experience' (a semester or year on exchange) for a variety of reasons – prohibitive costs, environmental concerns, physically unable to travel.



### The solution?

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) attempts to bring the international exchange to the student, using a virtual learning environment to share content, classes and assessments, and to build learning networks across institutions.

## Professor Richardson Dilworth

Department Head,  
Department of Politics  
Drexel University

[rd43@drexel.edu](mailto:rd43@drexel.edu)

Course: PI3074  
American Politics

Level 3: Honours Option in  
Politics and International  
Relations

Two 1-hour lectures and one  
2-hour tutorial per week

Course: PSCI110 American  
Government

Level 1: Introductory course in  
Political Science

Two 2-hour lectures/ tutorial  
hybrid per week

### Shared Formative Assessment:

Email exchange between students paired across cohorts debating the merits of the US Electoral College.

Mirrors *The Federalist Papers* and letters of Founding Fathers promoting the constitution.

### Rationale

- Learned from experience as an International Exchange tutor the value of exchange experiences.
- Wanted to find ways to extend this opportunity to those who cannot participate in physical exchanges.
- Considered COIL a good fit for my American Politics course.

### Plan

- Secured a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship in Philadelphia.
- Identified an enthusiastic COIL partner at Drexel University – Professor Richardson Dilworth.
- Discussed how to merge our individual courses (both were due to be revised).

### Development

- 'Zoomed' several times to consider options on course content, textbooks and assignments.
- Re-organised our content and decided upon delivery sessions.
- Synchronised lecture times to allow for dual-delivery.

### Execution

- Alternated lecture delivery between Aberdeen and Drexel, with opposite cohort joining via Zoom.
- Professor Dilworth provided more depth and detail on specific elements of American Politics.
- Included more comparative elements and an international perspective to my classes.

### Evaluation

- Students called for *more* interaction between cohorts, both in class and in assessments.
- PIR has bid for 2040 funding to equip a lecture theatre to allow for more interactive classes.
- Planned a more significant shared assessment and a shared VLE for 2022 course.

### Proposed Summative Assessment:

Cross-institution group work on a briefing document focusing on strengths and weaknesses of one of the US branches of government

### Aberdeen cohort feedback:

"A unique experience – I've never had a class like it!"

"It was great to hear an American professor talk about these issues."

### Drexel cohort feedback:

"Nice change to the dynamic in the classroom."

"Beneficial... gave me perspective on American politics from abroad."

