

# “AMERICA & FRANCE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY”

## SIMPSON COLLEGE 2009 MAY TERM OFF-CAMPUS TRAVEL COURSE PROPOSAL

**Date: January 30, 2008**

**Name of proposer(s): Brian Steffen and Sal Meyers**

**Department(s): Psychology and Communication Studies (credit to be awarded in Education and Social Science).**

### **I. Course Information**

- A. Course number, if course has been offered previously: ESS 197
- B. Course title: America and France in the 21st Century
- C. Transcript Course Title (max. 21 characters): America/France/21st
- D. The course will be a 197 course as it should be accessible to students across the four years of the Simpson Experience. Other than the Spring 2009 preparation course, there will be no prerequisites for the travel experience.
- E. Minimum enrollment: 20
- F. Maximum enrollment: 30

### **II. Course Description**

- A. **Course goals and objectives:** Students will compare and contrast the worldviews of French versus American peoples in terms of what constitutes a good quality of life. While there are many measures on which to make these comparisons, this course will focus on three key differences between French and American views:
  - Students will compare and contrast the French and American views of health care. For example, Americans view health care as a privilege, whereas the French view it as a human right. We will explore the implications this has for public policy as well as the implications it has for people seeking health care.
  - Students will compare and contrast French and American worldviews on work, family, and leisure. For example, Americans tend to think they can't work hard enough, whereas the French place greater emphasis on leisure and time to philosophize (and they have a shorter work week). Whereas Americans often talk about family values, the French have national policies that support parents stepping out of the workforce to provide childcare. Art and architecture are central to French life; they are not just for the elite.

- Students will compare and contrast French and American worldviews on the proper use of natural resources. For example, France burns far fewer fossil fuels. 60% of energy is from nuclear power plants. France also has an outstanding train system to reduce people's reliance on cars.

**B. Rationale for the course:** Please explain how the course fits in with your department and/or the college's curriculum:

The course goes to the heart of Cornerstone 7 by introducing students to another country and culture and addressing ethnocentric attitudes. The purpose of the course is not for students to reject American ideological viewpoints, but rather to ask that they, in the words of the mission of Cornerstone 7, "gain new perspectives on and appreciation for other cultural traditions." Our hope is that students will be challenged to reflect and look more deeply at their own culture and see how their culture fits within a larger global context.

**C. Pre-departure activities**

- Faculty will lead a pre-departure travel-preparation course that will meet weekly on Thursdays from 12:45 to 1:45 p.m. during Spring 2009.
- The pre-departure course will cover our assigned text for the travel experience, ongoing press coverage of issues of concern to the course in the France, and a research project in which students will cover in depth one of the learning goals listed above in the course.
- In order to be able to appreciate similarities and differences to the French worldview, students first need to be able to articulate the American worldview. Therefore, we will seek guests for the course who can explain the philosophies and goals of policies in Iowa and the United States that impact health care, natural resources, and the balance of professional and personal lives. Being able to articulate the American worldview will prepare students to talk to French academicians and policy makers about the French worldview.

**D. In-country activities:**

- The four primary cities will plan to visit in France are Paris, Strasbourg, Lyon, and Nice. In each city we will do something related to at least two of our three specific goals (i.e., meet with a speaker, visit a site). In Strasbourg we will tour the European Parliament and visit with officials about health care, transportation, or family policies in Europe. Although we do not yet know which people will speak to the class about which topic, ACIS (the travel company we have been working with) has assured us that they will be able to arrange visits and speakers related to our goals.
- Students will gain an understanding of the French view of healthcare by meeting with French academics, policy makers, and health care providers. In addition, we plan to tour a hospital or clinic in France and visit the French headquarters of Doctors without Borders in Paris.
- Students will gain an understanding of the French view of work, family, and leisure by meeting with French academics and policy makers. In addition, students will visit the Louvre both to discuss the role of art in national culture (i.e., to learn why the French take art so seriously) and, of course, to view the art on display in the Louvre.

Students will visit French cathedrals to learn about the importance of architecture in French religious culture.

- Students will gain an understanding of the French view of the use of natural resources by meeting with French academics and policy makers, traveling by train, and visiting relevant sites. For example, we are arranging a visit of French automobile company to help students understand why smaller cars are more popular in France. We are also arranging an opportunity for students to learn about the role of nuclear power in France.

#### D. Required course assignments and evaluation

**Participation:** Students are expected to attend and participate in a weekly on-campus spring semester prep course. Students are expected to participate in all group activities while we are off-campus, including a classroom session in each of the cities we visit. In addition, students are expected to attend a debriefing meeting following the return to campus (i.e., at the end of May Term).

**Readings:** During the on-campus spring semester prep course, students will read chapters from Reid, T. (2004). *The United States of Europe: The new superpower and the end of American supremacy*. New York: Penguin Press. The text uses French and American cultural differences as a major focus of its inquiry. Students will read chapters from Baudry, P. (2005). *French and Americans: The Other Shore*. Paris: Les Frenchies Ltd. Also, students will be required to read news (e.g., *New York Times*) on specific current events and issues and trends explicitly to the goals of our travel course.

**Journal reflections:** During the trip abroad, students will be required to keep a daily journal of their experiences while traveling in Europe. Journals will be similar to service-learning journals in use at Simpson: Entries will be divided into sections. In the first section, students will be asked to describe their experiences and what they saw during the course of our travels. The subsequent sections of the journals will require that students reflect on specific questions that connect to the learning goals established for the travel course.

**Exams:** During the spring semester on-campus prep course, students will complete brief assessments of the day's assigned readings at the beginning of each class session. Students may use notes they take while reading the text to help them complete the assessment, but they may not use the text itself.

**Papers/Presentations/Field reports, etc.** By the end of the spring semester prep course, students will write a paper in which they explore in depth one of the learning goals of the course. These papers will be based on the book, newspaper articles, and out-of-class research conducted during the spring semester. After returning to campus, students will write a personal-reflection paper in which they compare and contrast the views they expressed in their first papers with what they learned (and wrote about in their journals) while we were in France.

**Grading:** Grading for the spring prep course will be based on attendance (40%),

reading assignments (25%) and a research paper (35%). Grading for the tour and debriefing in May Term will be based on journals (33%), adherence to travel policies (33%) and completion of a debriefing paper on students' return to campus (33%).

- E. Catalog course description of about 100 words which includes a statement of expected course work (papers, exams, journal writing, presentations, etc.)

American and French cultural values, behaviors attitudes differ — sometimes considerably, and sometimes in ways that frustrates travelers from each side of the Atlantic. This travel course will bridge those differences by focusing on three key ways (among many) that French and American cultures differ: With regard to health care; uses of natural resources; and the balances that are struck between professional and private lives. Four of France's major cities — Paris, Strasbourg, Lyon and Nice — are included in the tour. During the spring travel-preparation course, students will read from book-length and journalistic accounts of French and American cultural differences, along with hearing from American academics, professionals and policy-makers. Students also will complete a research project to help prepare them for their travel to France. While in France, students will meet with French academics, professionals and policy makers to discuss the issues of the course.

- F. There are no prerequisites for the course.

### **III. Other Information**

- A. This course has not been offered in the past.
- B. Credit will be awarded in the division of Education and Social Science.
- C. If this course will meet requirements for a departmental major or minor, please explain briefly:
- D. Proposed dates of the travel course, including dates you anticipate being abroad: The trip would depart Des Moines on Monday, April 27, 2009, and return to Des Moines on Monday, May 11, 2009. After a one-day rest, students would reassemble for 1-2 days of post-tour debriefings on May 13-14, 2009.
- E. Proposed location(s) and how the site location(s) relate to the core objectives of the course: Paris is the political and cultural center of France, where power is more concentrated in the capital than is the case in the United States. Lyon is France's second-largest city and a major center of higher education. Strasbourg is located on the border and an industrial center of the nation. Nice is in the heart of the Cote d'Azur and is also a higher-education center.
- F. Indicate your level of familiarity with the site(s) visited during the course. Professor Steffen has visited Paris three times, Nice twice and Lyon once before. He has interacted with professionals and academics in each city. This will be Professor Meyers' first European trip as part of May Term.

G. Will the off-campus component of this course require a significant amount of physical exertion on the part of the course participants? The tour will consist of walking in the major cities of the tours. It will not be uncommon for students to be able to walk 1 mile or more per day. We would rate the tour a 2 on a 1-to-5 exertion scale.

## V. Proposed Budget for the Course

**Instructor expenses:** With a minimum enrollment of 20 students in the course, ACIS provides free travel, meals and passages for registered instructors. There is no additional cost to students beyond their fees described below. Should more than 21 students enroll, ACIS will provide stipends to instructors, which the instructors have agreed to place into the general travel fund. In the past, this has saved students travelers about \$50 each.

### Cost per student:

Base Trip Cost (Estimated)	\$4,000.00
ACIS Registration Fee	\$95.00
Destination and Security Taxes and Fuel Surcharge	\$325.00
Tips	\$100.00
International Student I.D. card	\$22.00
SC Study Abroad Program Fee	\$100.00
Any necessary entry visas	\$0.00
Contingency fund (\$100 recommended)	\$100.00
Other (explain): Class Text	\$13.00
Subtotal per student expenses (based upon minimum enrolled #)	\$4,728.00

Base trip cost covers round-trip airfare; breakfasts; dinners; double-, triple- or quad-occupancy rooms; services of the ACIS tour manager; and luggage transportation. *Base trip cost does not include* beverages with meals, lunches, optional side trips, tips for the tour manager and long-distance bus drivers, expenses incurred during free time, expenses incurred prior to arrival in and departure from Europe, and potential foreign airport charges.

The base trip cost is factored on a minimum enrollment of 20 students for the course. Should the tour enrollment reach 30, the base trip cost would fall by \$80. Should the course fail to enroll enough students to send two faculty members at no cost to the college, Professor Steffen will lead the tour on his own.

Why ACIS? A leader in educational travel, ACIS since 1978 has provided educational tours to Europe and the world and has been committed to helping students broaden their horizons by exploring new countries and experiencing different cultures. It has offices in Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Sacramento, London, Paris and Rome and has led more than 400,000 people abroad.

Our students and Professor Steffen have been very pleased with the level of service and learning

provided by ACIS during our past European excursions. Indeed, students on our 2001, 2004 and 2007 tours who also had traveled on Simpson trips with EF Tours remarked that the quality of service and accommodations provided by ACIS was clearly better than that of EF Tours. Even though our tours have been marginally more expensive than those developed with other travel partners, students and faculty have found the extra expense well worth it.

Based on our experiences with this company in the past, I believe that the following factors make the company worth working with again despite higher costs for travel:

- ACIS tour managers are excellent teaching assistants. Our 2001, 2004 and 2007 tour manager, Catherine Scott of London, England, has been a wonderful and attentive manager who worked tirelessly for our group's educational and personal needs. An engaging lecturer, Ms. Scott will turn our 2009 tour bus and destinations into classrooms that connect well with our students.
- Outstanding quality control: U.S.-based ACIS staff members check in on tours to make sure all needs are being met. With offices throughout the continent, it is easy to have problems quickly solved. This support network is available on a 24/7 basis in the event of missed flights, sick students and lost luggage. They also are willing to move entire parties to new hotels should the accommodations not meet our expectations. Finally, ACIS tour managers are equipped with cellular telephones to permit instant communication if and when problems arise.
- Superior hotels, meals and transportation: ACIS books its groups into three- and four-star hotels in city centers, near public transportation and major attractions. Students and faculty on our past tours have been impressed with the quality and service available at our hotels throughout the trip. They are not located in out-of-the-way areas of the cities, and I believe this fact merits the additional cost that students do not regret paying. Food choices are excellent, and all breakfasts and dinners are included in the overall tour cost. The only meals for which students must pay are lunches. Buses and trains are efficient and clean, while meeting local safety and transportation standards.
- Customization: Unlike EF Tours, ACIS is willing to customize our tour to meet our specific academic needs. In early discussions with ACIS staff regarding this May 2007 proposal, they are excited to help us again customize our travel plans to make room for intercultural communication learning experiences.
- Internet tracking: Prior to departure, the college can monitor information regarding the group's account, including names and payment statuses of travelers, approaching deadlines, itineraries, hotel and flight information, and information on the tour manager.
- Contract liability insurance: ACIS has a \$25 million specialized insurance policy with an A-rated insurance company (National Union Fire Insurance Company – AIG) which functions independently of any action taken by ACIS. This policy guarantees that refunds will be made to participants in the unlikely event ACIS cancels our trips without making the appropriate reimbursements. Because this policy is issued by a third party in the business of covering such risks, no reduction in coverage can be initiated by ACIS.
- General Liability Insurance: ACIS carries a general liability insurance policy of \$65 million as part of the AIFS group. This \$65 million policy (\$25 million each occurrence with Federal Insurance Co., plus \$25 million each occurrence with Cigna Insurance Co., plus \$15 million each occurrence with Reliance Insurance Co.) is an umbrella policy and is held by ACIS through Arthur A. Watson & Co., Inc., Wethersfield, Conn.

**Per student instructor cost:** \$0.

**Total per student cost:** \$4,728.

Additional expenses not covered by the program for which students need to budget:

Passport for first-time international travelers	\$97.00
Optional ACIS Comprehensive Protection Plan	\$255.00
<b>Total additional expenses</b>	<b>\$353.00</b>

We will also recommend that students liberally budget \$40 per day for food, beverages, souvenirs and other incidental expenses during the tour.

The Comprehensive Protection Plan offers up to \$10,000 in health coverage with no deductible, \$1,000 for an immediate family member to travel to Europe if a student is hospitalized more than 48 hours, full refunds (less the \$95 registration fee) for students canceling from the trip, up to \$1,000 toward the cost of a one-way ticket to the USA in the event the student must interrupt his or her trip, coverage for lost baggage, and expense reimbursement for students whose travel is delayed more than 12 hours. Few students choose this particular plan. Students who do not purchase the Comprehensive Protection Plan are provided a Basic Protection Plan that provides students up to \$2,500 in medical coverage (with a \$200 deductible), partial refunds for students who cancel for medical or other reasons, up to \$250 toward a one-way ticket home for students needing to return early to the United States, and reimbursed travel expenses for students whose travel is delayed more than 24 hours.

Total estimated additional expenses not covered by the course: \$0.