Enrollment per semester: 15-20 students

Semesters taught: Fall 2011, Spring 2012

International Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify various physical, cognitive, socioemotional, and cultural factors that influence human development from conception to death
2. Develop an understanding of the coherence and continuity across the lifespan
3. Evaluate the influence of cultural factors on human development
4. Develop a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity
I joined the Internationalization Collaborative Across Bloomington (ICAB) in the summer of 2010 and chose to internationalize my PSYC 201 Lifespan Development course by adding a variety of International Learning Outcomes. I had been teaching this course for several years and always lamented the lack of global perspectives and cultural themes. Although the course learning objectives require a discussion of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional influences on human development, cultural factors are not mentioned in the current Ivy Tech Course Outline of Record (COR). This being said, my participation in the ICAB initiative provided me with a much needed framework for expanding my course topics, assignments, and outcome assessments.

Internationalizing my course was not an easy task. Instead of completely redeveloping the course, I decided to infuse existing assignments and assessments with international themes and topics. I had already developed a semester project that required my students to create a fictional person and talk about developmental influences across the human lifespan. However, this project only focused on physical, cognitive, social, and emotional influences on human development. My main revisions focused on assigning an additional introduction paper and adding a section on cultural influences to each of the four subsequent papers.

The introduction paper required students to pick a nationality and cultural background for their fictional child. This first paper must be at least three double-spaced pages long and include the following information:

- **Nationality and Cultural Background:** In this section students are asked to describe the cultural background of their child’s birth country. They are required to use outside sources to give the reader a better idea of the predominant attitudes, beliefs, and customs found in their child’s culture. Examples of information that should be included involve the country’s system of government, geographical location, economy, demographics (e.g. language, ethnic groups, religion, educational system), and overall cultural background.

- **Family Background:** This section of the introduction paper describes the family background of each student’s fictional child. Students are required to provide information regarding the child’s parents (e.g. names, ages, occupations) as well as the extended family system. The section should also explain how the parents met and what (if any) factors led to the decision to have a child.

- **Pregnancy and Childbirth:** This section of the introduction paper must include a detailed description of prenatal development and childbirth as influenced by the child’s cultural background and the attitudes and predominant beliefs regarding pregnancy and delivery. Students are required to include a detailed description of their child at birth (e.g. gender, weight, height, health).

I encouraged my students to carefully consider a variety of factors before picking a cultural background for their child because their initial choice would be crucial for the cultural influences section of subsequent papers. I also pointed out to them that other developmental areas (e.g. physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development) would most likely also be affected by
the cultural background of your fictional child. In previous semesters, students always wrote about human development as it occurs in the United States and cultural issues were rarely addressed in their papers. Adding international concepts had the added benefit of making the papers more interesting to read and grade for me as the instructor.

As mentioned above, I added a Cultural Influences section to the four subsequent papers. This section required students to go significantly beyond the material we covered in class and discuss how cultural factors influenced the development of their fictional person at each stage of life. Below are some examples of cultural backgrounds picked by students in the spring of 2012:

- Philippines
- India
- Sweden
- Tibet
- Russia
- Brazil
- Ireland
- Australia (Aborigine culture)
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- United States (Native American culture)
- Venezuela

Students were required to use outside sources and to integrate their readings into the papers. I used a detailed grading rubric to evaluate student work and the quality of submissions varied significantly in terms of writing, research skills, and content. At the end of the semester, each student was required to give a short presentation on the fictional person he or she “developed” throughout the semester. Students were instructed to focus on the factors that made their fictional person unique and set him/her apart from others (e.g. cultural influences on development).

I believe that some students clearly mastered the International Learning Outcomes I added to the course. They expertly incorporated the findings of their outside research in their papers and provided an internally consistent, well-organized, and coherent account of cultural factors that influenced the development of their fictional person. However, some students clearly failed to achieve the desired outcomes. They lacked adequate research skills, were unable to organize their papers in a coherent manner, and the content of their papers were clearly superficial and reflected a lack of motivation and effort.

In the future, I hope to continue to internationalize my Lifespan Development course. I have asked selected students for permission to post their papers as work samples on Blackboard to clearly communicate my expectations to future students. I am also in the process of adding useful links to Blackboard to provide students with tools to assist them in writing their papers. Although I have not required students to write their papers in APA style, I may do so in the future to better prepare them for their future academic careers. Internationalizing my writing assignments had another unintended additional benefit – I have started to add international themes to my lectures and am constantly trying to expand on global issues and perspectives when teaching my course.
Appendices

A. Course Syllabus

B. Grading Rubric

C. Examples of Student Work