

# Chapter 74

## Thinking Globally About Social Justice

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### ABSTRACT

*Scholars have identified community colleges as ideal institutions to facilitate global justice through their involvement in internationalization activities such as study abroad. This chapter explores the meaning of humanism as it relates to study abroad at the community college. Using Andreotti, Stein, Pashby, and Nicolson's Paradigms of Discourse, the chapter describes the ways in which humanism can be defined in a variety of ways based on one's own goals. The chapter also grounds a rationale for study abroad at the community college within critical humanism by applying Young's Social Connections Model. Finally, the chapter applies the critical humanist rationale to begin to question the relationship between community college study abroad initiatives: Who is included in the community mission? Whose cultures come to be understood from involvement in study abroad? How are U. S. cultures represented by study abroad?*

### INTRODUCTION

Prior to this century, most understandings of justice were bound within the nation state: discussed in terms of citizens' rights within a nation, but not applied globally (Young, 2006). However, in the current millennium, noted philosopher Martha Nussbaum asserted that, "extending justice to all world citizens, showing theoretically how we might realize a world that is just as a whole, in which accidents of birth and national origin do not warp people's life chances pervasively and from the start" is one of the most urgent unsolved problems of social justice (2006, p. 1). To address this problem, Iris Marion Young (2006) moved away from the confines of the nation state to argue that "all agents who contribute by their actions to the structural processes that produce injustice have responsibilities to work to remedy these injustices" (pp. 102-103). Thus, any institution engaged in internationalization is socially responsible to work to mitigate global social injustice.

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Community colleges are a type of institution that transcend national borders, and therefore, through the lens of modern justice theory, community college actors have a responsibility to people outside of their local communities. Although data that tracks community college participation in internationalization activities is sparse (Copeland, McCrink, & Starratt, 2017), there is significant evidence that the community college has not operated solely within national boundaries for decades and continues to actively pursue an international agenda (American Council on Education [ACE], 2016; Levin, 2001; 2002; 2017). Community colleges transcend national borders through study abroad programs, branch campuses, and by providing services to non-domestic stakeholders (ACE, 2016). Raby (2012) points to changing student demographics in which many of the students are themselves international or have strong social and familial ties to international communities. In the 2014/15 academic year, over 7,000 community college students studied abroad, and U. S. community colleges hosted over 91,000 international students (IIE, 2016). Of the associates granting institutions that participated in the ACE (2016) survey, 41% indicated that increasing the number of students that study abroad was their primary internationalization goal and roughly 72% indicated that internationalization had accelerated at, at least a moderate rate between the years of 2011 to 2015. Importantly, the very presence of study abroad programs at the community college demonstrate that community colleges no longer operate solely within the perimeter of the nation state. Therefore, community colleges are in fact active international institutions. In alignment with Young's (2006) social connections model, community college stakeholders have an ethical responsibility to serve the interest of those outside of their immediate community and to think about the long term and global implications of their actions.

Scholars have identified community colleges as ideal institutions to facilitate global justice through their involvement in internationalization activities such as study abroad. Treat and Hagedorn (2013) find that characteristics associated with the community college such as open access, adaptability, and their student-centered mission make these institutions well placed to serve the expanding middle class of low and middle GDP countries. In addition, Copeland et al. (2017) suggest that community college rationales for internationalization may differ from the motivations of their four-year counterparts, suggesting that community college administrators may value internationalization because of their open-door mission rather than an explicit mission to internationalize for the purposes of revenue generation or prestige (Copeland et al., 2017). While narrow conceptions of community have caused practitioners and scholars to question the role of internationalization at the community college (Raby, 2012), Ayers and Palmadessa (2015) find evidence that community college actors may still support a global justice agenda.

While community college practitioners have a responsibility and inclination to pursue socially just study abroad initiatives, it can be difficult to articulate issues of global social justice and to justify the pursuit of such initiatives to those in power. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to build a sturdy foundation for rationalizing socially just study abroad at the community college—called for by Raby (2012)—by grounding a humanist rationale firmly in justice theory. From the discussion of humanism comes a new term, the critical humanist rationale: an argument that applies principles of global justice to the community college so as to highlight the global responsibility of community college study abroad programs have beyond the parameters of the community and the nation state. The theoretical frame will help scholars and practitioners begin to identify and question the ways in which their actions influence those outside of their community, and the responsibilities that accompany their international relationships. Practitioners can use this frame to articulate, justify, and shape their approach to globally just study abroad initiatives at the community college.

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