

Haifa Meets Frankfurt 2016-17

- Program's summary -

A. Goal, rational and project's description

“Frankfurt Meets Haifa” is an experiential academic project that was initiated eleven years ago (originally initiated as Haifa meets Berlin). It is conducted in parallel and cooperatively at the University of Haifa and in Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. The project deals with topics related to diversity and multiculturalism. The narrative approach and the intercultural context present the theoretical framework of the project. The experiential baseline lies in the Jewish-Arab-German encounter. The encounter with the “other” relates to different theoretical terms such as: narrative; dialogue; memory and identity on two levels: the individual, professional and personal identity of every participant and the collective, the public discourse and policy. Along this line, **the goal of the project is the development of multicultural awareness and cultural competence based on ongoing encounters with the "Others", be them, Jews, Palestinians, or Germans.**

The project consists of an academic course that is a part of the B.A. program in the two universities. The highlights of the course are two encounters of one week each, the first in Frankfurt and the second one in Haifa, consisting of formal and informal parts.

B. Participants and Educational staff:

The project is realization of Prof. Adital Ben-Ari's vision and initiation. Prof. Ben-Ari, accompanied by Mr. Daniel Darby (the group's facilitator), are the leaders of the Haifa group in Israel. Prof. Elka Quindeou and Mr. Elana Jacobs are our German colleagues. The 2 encounters in each country are led by the local students, supervised by the professional staff.

Both groups meet throughout the academic year at their town universities.

The Frankfurt group: 15 students from the School of Social work. Age ranges between 20-35 years old.

The Haifa group: 15 students from various departments, mainly Social work alongside Theater, Medical studies, Political science and Psychology.

Due to the nature of the project, there is a selective process for those who are applying – The main idea is to build a versatile group as possible, mirroring the Israeli society. In this the Israeli group consisted of Arab, Druses, Jews, and Palestinian Muslim students.

C. The encounters – Highlights and main Themes:

The rationale that stands behind the physical encounter in each country is experiencing activities that are designed to create stimulations and triggers for self-exploration through dialogues with the "other".

(Please check the programs attached to this paper for more in-depth details)

Encounter in Germany

In the 1st 2 days, the students from both groups, met and spend 2 days at a big house on the country side, cooking and enjoying some formal and informal time together. This dynamics paved the first and out most important part – The group building. Now, after the students formed relationships and some friendships, the group was ready to dive into the topics and tours in the program.

Among the activities, the student went to 'The Anna Frank Educational Center', Exhibition in Klapperfeld Prison, and intensive dialogue sessions.

The program ended with the local students hosting the visiting ones in their family's homes.

Encounter in Israel

The encounter had started in the same way the one in Germany ended: The local student hosted the visiting students at the weekend prior to the official program. The group went through an intense and meaningful week, diving into some of the most challenging issues in the make-up of the Israeli society: A tour and a talk in a Palestinian theater, lecture about Multiculturalism, Tour at Druze villages, Traveling to the Golan-Heights, a visit in a kibbutz and a tour at the Founders' Museum, discussion at a prostitute welfare agency along with a guided tour in a Jewish-Arab neighborhood, and ending the week with a sunset beach party.

Themes

The program as a whole, created a process that was deepened in stages. The students set to a journey of group and individual investigation, exploring and examining self-beliefs, knowledge and internal growth dynamics.

During the dialogues (Methods: big group, small mixed groups and Uni-national groups), the students dealt with collective and personal histories and narratives, national past (holocaust, 2nd world war and the Nakba), freedom of speech, narratives, gender, racism, discrimination and many more topics.

In the final dialogue session, one of the students said: "***I now understand that no book could ever teach me as much as an encounter could. Encounter with the land, the people of the land, the other and an encounter with myself***".

These words truly summarize the essences of the project.

Haifa Meets Frankfurt 2016-17 Group Picture

