“multiple perspectives on a given (global) issue”

For this course, the students were required to complete a final project. The final project concerned a global issue, chosen by the student. Students worked in research groups, grouped by regional area or topic. For example, several students researched “human trafficking,” so they were placed in a human trafficking group for the purposes of collaboration. There were also groups for the Asia-Pacific Region, Drugs, Europe, Religious Conflicts, and the Legacies of War. In addition to a 4-5 page written assignment, each student presented original research as part of one of the designated groups. Each individual presentation lasted approximately 15 minutes.

In terms of considering multiple perspectives on a given global issue, the students in INST 200, in both the final papers and the presentation, demonstrated an ability to view problems from many angles. One paper, concerning “Religious Freedom in Indonesia,” commented that Islam “is very diverse” in that Southeast Asian country, which is also the largest Muslim-majority nation in the world. The paper continued to evince a balance appreciation of both the history of Islam as a unique religion in Indonesia as well as the challenges faced by moderate Indonesian Muslims in an increasingly polarized world.

Another paper, “Dubai’s Labor Issues,” presented the under-reported phenomenon of exploitation among day-laborers in the Persian Gulf State of Dubai with a personal dimension. The student not only did an excellent job researching government policy as well as international labor standards for this paper, he also related details of his own life story. As a former international resident of Dubai, this student had experiences that truly enhanced his appreciation for the issue of labor. By sharing this with the class, his research sparked a discussion that would have otherwise been difficult to initiate.

From the “Human Trafficking” Group, two papers did an exceptional job of considering the issue from multiple perspectives. One, which focused on Ireland, emphasized that human trafficking is a problem for developed countries as well. The other, which dealt with India, rendered into emotional detail the challenges faced by women, children, and men struggling against poverty and lack of opportunities, the very factors that contribute to human trafficking.

Among the papers and presentations in INST200, one in particular stands out as representing a compelling combination of personal experience and analytical research. A US veteran of the Iraq War presented on the search for WMDs, using both documentary information and scenes from her time in that country. Few other presentations had such a strong effect on the class, and few others demonstrated the ability of students in INST200 to view an issue from more than one perspective.