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The Field Study Game: An Example

David Walzack uploaded a paper and a flier focusing on Field Study course work he presented back in the 1980s, and I'd like to build upon the Field Study theme by recounting the construction of my own course, *Berlin: Its History and Its Art*. This piece is a bit longish and larded with anecdotal recollections rather than academic concepts, so you are now forewarned.

Introduction

The Europe Division's Field Study program offered several courses that coupled university instruction with walking tours through some of Europe's most important cultural and historical centers. Students, for instance, could perform academic classwork and also stroll through James Joyce's Dublin, wander about the environs of Renaissance Florence, walk over the D-Day Battlefields at Normandy, or file through art galleries in Paris, Amsterdam, or London. Heidelberg enlisted numerous instructors willing to use their expertise and present unique courses that took advantage of our European location.

Assembling such a course is extremely daunting, and I initially avoided involvement with the program, although for a reason that had little to do with the burdensome work. I did not want to herd erratic American students through a foreign environment.

This reluctance resulted when Area Director Chris Mooney recounted a story about a Field Study class conducted in Prague during the 1980s, well before the collapse of the East Bloc. When the course ended and the students crossed out of Czechoslovakia on a train, one student pulled out a Czech national flag hidden beneath his shirt. He had swiped it off a flag pole in downtown Prague. In a passionless monotone, Chris reflected on the student's luck in avoiding repercussions. I reflected in a much more hysterical fashion, imagining myself as the instructor of that Prague trip and watching brawny border guards wrestle the student to the floor. In this visualization, I saw a mass arrest of all class participants and the instructor, followed by bodily cavity searches with rubber gloves and Vaseline.

I hate rubber gloves and Vaseline. I wanted no part of the Field Studies program.

Mooney initially scared me off, but a higher power finally brought me into the program: Money. In 2001 my not-very lavish European lifestyle required a boost in income. Heidelberg administrators frequently demonstrated a canny understanding of motivational management; they expertly timed their Berlin overture with my need for cash.

I agreed to author the class and then went to work. A breakdown of the tasks necessary for organizing and completing a Field Study course can, I believe, give readers a fuller understanding of the program.

I. Preparing & Mapping out the Course

The Berlin topic presented me with advantages. Local bookstores in Germany stocked resources I could draw on. The recently launched era of Amazon enabled me to find a course textbook and also vacuum up the latest academic works in English. I also had about eight months to prepare for the intensive set of classroom lectures to be delivered during a week of study in Berlin.

Coordinating class walking tours with themes from the class lectures presented an unexpected aggravation. How the hell is one supposed to travel to a capital city of a foreign country and organize such an undertaking? I hate departing from my local environs, and frankly people like me should not be allowed to travel far without the accompaniment of some kind of keeper.

There were no keepers available, which left me to undertake an unavoidable solo trip northward. With the course scheduled for August, I settled on a three day trip in April to work out a schedule for Berlin museum visits and walking tours through historical sections of town. Part of the agenda consisted of finding and booking rooms and classroom space for students.

Student lodgings were surprisingly quick to find. I discovered an operation that called itself a Hostel-Hotel, a cunning designation that students might likely translate into their minds as Inexpensive-Elegant. In reality, rooms were small but each had a mini-bathroom with a shower. Students could either double up or pay extra for a single. The best feature was location, less than a ten minute walk to Berlin's main train station. That station served as a hub for most of Berlin's subway and S-Bahn (city rail transport), which could get the class anywhere in the city for the inexpensive price of a one-week pass.

Our lodging had no classroom we could use, but 50 meters down the street stood a Youth Hostel that rented out a seminar room. Voila! Berlin appeared to be an easy set-up for a Field Study course.

And then maybe not. It is damned difficult to choreograph walking tours to mesh with classroom work. One has to find appropriate museums and walking areas located near one another rather than scattered about several diverse sections of town. Each museum had to be thoroughly explored and transportation schedules established. One preparatory visit to Berlin was not enough. I booked a return stopover.

II. Museums, Galleries, and Points of Interest

Selecting museums is burdensome, but the process led to a discovery. Within today's museum industry, there has been a move away from the older, traditional museum exhibits, where one stands before a wall and stares at, let us say, a uniform Bismarck wore in 1870. Such tedious items are normally accompanied by a brief bit of information stamped onto a 4" by 6" plaque. After an hour of such wall-gazing, a slow-evolving pain invariably develops in the small of my back and migrates down my left leg while simultaneously moving upward through the base of my skull into my brain. After about an hour I have to be carried out the exhibit hall on a stretcher. I am enthused to report that such museums are on their way out even though some still do operate; the Deutsche Museum of History presents a still-existing example of stare-at-a-wall staging.

The Jewish Museum Berlin serves as an example of museum design progress. A product of architect Daniel Libeskind, the museum opened in 2001. The zig-zag building layout divides the German-Jewish experience into two sections: a genuinely moving memorial to Holocaust victims, and a very impressive record of Jewish life throughout German history. The latter

exhibits are laid out in chronological fashion. A visitor sometimes sits with earphones to hear, for example, several of Moses Mendelsohn's Berlin memories (in English) from the 1700s. Many exhibits are interactive. In one such case eight shallow drawer shelves are pulled from a desk, each shelf containing a page from a private detective's statement written in the late 19th century. The file was not an account of a murder case but instead a report on a young man's fitness to marry a daughter from a prominent Jewish family. The detective, clearly a thorough gumshoe, concluded the young man came from a respectable family and had excellent professional prospects. The match was suitable.

Even many art museums have modernized by deemphasizing the 4 by 6 wall plaques. Portable listening guides provide recorded explanations about particular paintings and artists. I discovered that if I introduced students to numerous paintings on our seminar room computer projector, the students became enthusiastic fans of the museum's recording devices. Later, when the class was underway, I spotted several clusters of our group in the galleries, earphones pinched tightly onto their heads, gazing intently at paintings they had seen earlier in class.

After trudging through numerous art and history museums, I mapped out my travel routes for tackling the Berlin experience, from the earliest days of Slavic and Germanic tribal settlers, all the way through to the fall of the Wall in 1989. Occasional crises arose during this planning stage. At the end of my second preparatory visit, the weather turned hot. The vast majority of German buildings don't have air conditioners, and the Hostel-Hotel baked my body like a potato in an oven. I could not generate any energy to find other student digs in the six weeks remaining before the class launch date. With great luck during the three years I led the class, the weather never rose above the low 80s, and usually held within the high 70s. Possibly Wotan watched over me.

III. Reserving Museum Visits at Student Discount Prices

Scheduling museum visits consumes a great deal of time. I made initial queries at each selected museum, but most final arrangements took place via telephone from my home apartment. I hate telephone negotiations in Germany. My German is much stronger when I can talk to a person face to face. I lose negotiating composure when the phone is answered by a gruff male German voice, which invariably leads me to think I am speaking to a crewcut Prussian wearing a monocle and sporting at least two dueling scars. Such people are fond of making demands and listing arcane rules that must be followed. Getting liquored up helps me through such calls.

But alcohol was not necessary. All the museum bureaucrats and officials (men and women) followed cooperative strategies and quickly completed arrangements. I'm unsure if German museum personnel receive special training or whether they have an innate desire to accommodate university student groups. Whatever the reason, special training or national character, I gratefully accepted the positive results.

Despite this high quality of professional competence and concern, unexpected hurdles arose. For security reasons, student names and birthdates had to be forwarded to Reichstag security officials one month before we descended on the capital building. No final student list exists thirty days before arrival. Some students join the class late and others fall by the wayside before the opening bell. Two students never sent the mandatory information. How peculiar, then, that on the day we arrived the Reichstag guards ultimately let the entire student group pass into the Bundestag's

Plenary hall, the seat of Germany's representative government. I've since puzzled over German security strategy, and I hope terrorists are not logging onto the OMA site and reading this report.

I suppose all Field Study instructors encounter at least one major unexpected roadblock. A particularly irritating situation arose at the Museum of the Wall when our group arrived. The ticket clerk saw no reason to honor the student discount I had been promised. I lacked the cash needed to make up the difference, and no credit cards were accepted. Rather than hit the students up for money I pulled us out of the building, mumbling an ancient Abyssinian curse I had learned a day earlier at the Pergamon museum. I plugged the unexpected hole in our schedule with an improvised walking tour at nearby Checkpoint Charlie. This substitute "experience" continued a short distance away, where remnants of the Wall still exist. I never returned to the museum in subsequent years, so I don't know whether the Abyssinian curse really did result in the ticket clerk's ears falling off his head.

For any reader who is interested, the following provides the one week course schedule of class time, museum visits, and walking tours.

* * *

Day 1 (Saturday, August 13) Students arrive at Berlin and check in no earlier than 15:00 at A & O Hostel-Hotel. I will be in the hotel lobby to give assistance. If you want to know what I look like, take a look at:

<http://faculty.ed.umuc.edu/~bhull/backgrnd.html>

19:00 – 21:00 Orientation & Opening Classroom session
Held at conference room down the street from our hotel.

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Lehrter Strasse 68, 10557 Berlin
Tel. +49-(0)30-398350-302
Fax +49-(0)30-398350-222
tagen@berliner-stadtmission.de*

Day 2 (Sunday, August 14) Introduction to the City: Bus Tour & Charlottenburg

0900-10:00 Classroom: Early Berlin & Prussia

10:00-1200 Bus Tour around Berlin (Bus picks us up in front of A & O Hostel-Hotel)

1300-14:15 Lunch

14:15 – 15:00 Hauptbahnhof week pass purchase and trip to Charlottenburg

1500-1700 Charlottenburg

1700-1900 Return to Hauptbahnhof & Dinner

1900-2000 Classroom: Frederick the Great and Berlin

Day 3 (Monday, August 15) Berlin's Mitte: Nicholas Quarter & Unter den Linden

09:00-12:00 Nikolaiviertel and Unter den Linden

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:30-16:30 German Historical Museum & the Berlin of Schinkel
16:30-17:30 The Lustgarten and the Berliner Cathedral
17:30-19:00 Return to Hotel & Dinner
19:00-20:00 Classroom: Ideology in Germany, Romanticism, and Berlin to 1848

Day 4 (Tuesday, August 16) Berlin and the Second Reich

0900-1200 Art & Culture in Bismarck's Second Reich
1200-1315 The Reichstag
1315-1415 Lunch
1430-1700 Old National Gallery
1700-1930 Dinner; catch up on reading, etc.
2000-2100 World War I and Berlin

Day 5 (Wednesday, August 17) The Weimar Republic

9:00-12:00 Classroom: Weimar Republic in Berlin
12:00-13:00 Lunch
13:30-15:00 The New National Gallery & Potsdamerplatz
15:30 – 17:30 Kufurstendamm, Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Hanse Viertel architecture
17:30 - 19:00 Return to Hotel and Dinner
19:00-21:00 Classroom: The Rise of the Nazis

Day 6 (Thursday, August 18) National Socialism & The Cold War

0900-1200 The Jewish Museum
1230-1400 Lunch
14:00 16:00 Classroom: National Socialism and Collapse
1630-1800 Topography of Terror Museum
1730-1900 Dinner
1900-20:00 Checkpoint Charlie and the Museum of the Wall

Day 7 (Friday, August 19) Berlin in the Cold War

9:00-11:00 Lecture: Berlin and the Cold War
1130-1230 Berlin and contemporary architecture – Guest speaker, Georg Bremer.
Tour begins at Gendarmenmarkt
1230-13:30 Lunch
1400-1700 East Berlin tour – Guest speaker, Jason Kirkpatrick.
Tour in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg
1700-1900 Return to Hotel & Dinner
19:00-21:00 Collapse of Communism & Berlin Today

Day 8 (Saturday, August 20) Final exam;

9:00-11:00
checkout by noon

IV. Students and Instruction

The class-launch date hangs above an instructor's neck like a broadsword. To forestall potential mishaps, I spent the month of July blasting out a fusillade of introductory, explanatory, and threatening E-Mails to students. Topics for these messages included instructions on locating our

accommodations, pre-class reading assignments, expected expenses, computer connectivity issues, items to bring, lessons on deciphering railroad schedules, and so on. I relentlessly covered every imaginable potential glitch. I did not want a wayward student on the first day of class phoning from Bonn and requesting directions for finding a train connection to Germany's newer capital city.

I need not have worried. The Berlin students ranked high in caliber. They demonstrated keen motivation to learn about Berlin and German culture. Perhaps their commitment burned bright because of the extra money a student had to pay for the Field Study class. The hotels, transportation, museums, and food all added up, and the intensity of a one-week Blitz course further weeded out lack-luster individuals.

In both the classroom and on the sidewalks of Berlin, the Field Study students steadfastly marched onward. They wanted to know about Berlin, by damn, and they fought to overcome the grueling schedule. I had heard tales of Field Study student laggards from other instructors, but except for one case, the Berlin Marylanders presented no problems. I had interesting conversations with various students as we pushed our way through the streets. Some delivered monologues of commentary that were witty and sly. Others were Field Study groupies, and they could cross reference architectural styles in Berlin with what they had observed earlier in a London or Paris Field Study course. A few even had gossip about fellow Field Study profs, such as the fellow who told me about Dr. Frederick N- - -'s shameful fondness for sheep.

And the one student laggard mentioned above? His name was Al, and he arrived in Berlin with an elephantine cast strapped onto his left leg. He shambled into the hotel, and then crutched his way through the streets of Berlin, always hobbling in slow motion, falling far, far behind, which gave rise to our common anguished wail, "Where's Al?" I did not know what to do with this, but the students admirably self-organized an "Al Watch Committee," making sure one of our number always accompanied Al so that no errant bus would run down his slow, ambulating body.

The above comment is perhaps unfair to Al, who revealed himself to be an extremely bright individual. He arrived on leave from the Army's Criminal Investigation Division Command, an organization that seeks intelligent recruits. In our course, Al fashioned excellent field papers, and he produced the top score for his final exam. Oddly, he never submitted a final paper (due one month after the course), even though I sent several whiney follow-up notes to him. I subsequently concluded that the receipt of a final grade held no interest to him. Probably CID, not knowing what to do with the injured Al, gave him an easy assignment: reporting on our Berlin activities in general, and on my loyalty to the United States specifically. My critical thinking skills are too weak to fashion any other interpretation for his abandonment of a final grade.

A few months after completing the course I spoke to the Europe Division Director, Allan Berg, in Heidelberg. Allan asked about the class, and I told him that during my many years of Marylanding, no other course provided a better teaching experience than the Berlin class. He seemed surprised by the answer, and when I consider the work that went into pulling off such a course, I too am startled. The interest in learning new material on Germany pulled me over the top, but so too did the top-notch students, who offered their own electricity to the event. Also gratifying, not one of those students attempted to steal the German national flag off the Reichstag

flagpole. Maybe Americans who visit Prague are a different breed. The Berlin students manufactured a positive experience. They were fun to hang out with.

Appendix:

I've appended an abridged version of the course syllabus. The required academic work for the course is, I think, of some interest. The syllabus introduction, which I wrote, is still used by the UMGU Berlin Field Study class. I patiently await all current and back royalties.

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Berlin: Its History and Art Hist 217A/ Hist 317A

Course Description:

A study of the historical, cultural, and artistic legacies of Berlin, this course is designed to provide students with a well-rounded understanding of one of Europe's most important imperial and capital cities.

Introduction

A European center of cultural dynamism and political power, Berlin is much more than the commonly held image of Third Reich bombast and Cold War tensions. Established on the banks of the Spree River, Berlin has seen splendor in architecture, theater, and art, along with philosophical, literary, and scientific dynamism. These elements have evolved side-by-side with the erratic legacy of the ambitious Hohenzollern royal dynasty, the cataclysmic Nazi Third Reich, and the wintery years of East and West Cold War divisions. Berlin is a city that entralls the observer today with its cultural contributions while simultaneously producing a sense of bafflement at the raw ambitions and ideals of the city's driven political leaders during the last 300 years.

Course Textbook:

Berlin Rising: Biography of a City
by Anthony Read and David Fisher

Grading Information for Hist 217A

3 Quizzes: each worth 10% of the final grade
2 Field Reports: each worth 15% of the final grade
Class Participation: 10% of the final grade
Final Examination: 30% of the final grade

Grading Information for History 317A

3 Quizzes, each worth 5% of the final grade
2 Field Reports: each worth 15% of the final grade
Class participation: 10% of the final grade
Final Examination: 25% of the final grade
A 5-6 (or more) page research paper: 20% of the final grade

Project Descriptions

The quizzes will be very short and designed to ensure that students are reviewing their materials as we progress through the week.

Students will write two field trip reports in order to demonstrate their ability to relate lecture materials with their on-site experiences at two different museums

The final exam will focus on the materials from the lectures, while materials and knowledge gained during museum visits and walking tours will be used to supplement answers.

Upper level students will submit a research paper based on an artist, architect, or artistic movement that had an impact on Berlin culture.

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