

‘Global Classroom’:
Postdigital Connecting across Continents

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Introduction

- ‘Global Classroom’: An inter-continental interdisciplinary university module
- Aims of talk: Postdigitality, virtual exchange, and postdigital critical cosmopolitanism – how does ‘Global Classroom’ measure up?

The Module 'Global Classroom'

- Running since 2018
- Set up by the University of Akron, Ohio, USA
- 2022: - University of Pretoria, South Africa
 - Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado (FAAP), São Paulo, Brazil
 - Le Mans Université, France
- Students in political science, and cultural studies
- Weekly topics: environment, media and misinformation, democracy in action, public services, elections
- Student presentations, guest speakers, discussion via Zoom

Research methodology

- Participant observation (March-May 2022)
- Review of session recordings
- Report and materials from earlier years (2018-19)
- Anonymous questionnaire with Le Mans group 2022

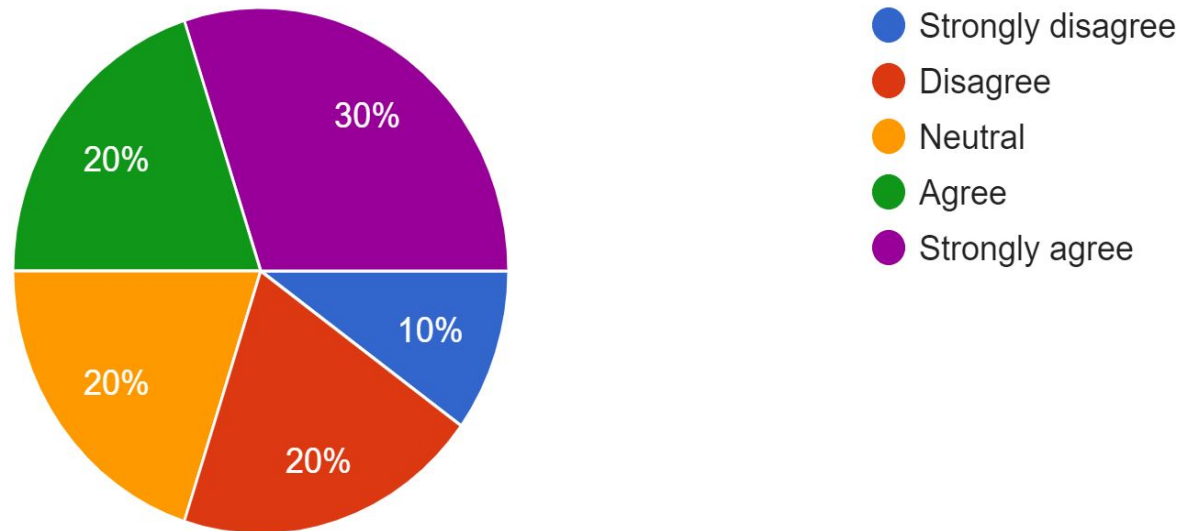
1. Postdigitality

- Postdigitality: - A pervasive entangled integrated space (eg. hybrid classroom);
 - a reflective stance (Knox 2019, Lenehan 2022)
- Online technology in terms of democratic potential
 - The internet is conducive to democracy (Hall 2019)
 - But the democratic value and practice of freedom of speech may be hampered

Freedom of speech?

4) I am careful about what I say in the digital classroom, since recordings of the class may potentially be seen by people outside the class participants.

10 responses



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Postdigitality cont.

- Digital divide

Internet penetration rate (early 2022, Datareportal.com):

- France 93%
- Brazil 77%
- South Africa 68.2%

Masking of inequality – lack of horizontal connections reaching out to other publics (Hall 2019)

2. A 'virtual exchange' module

Virtual exchange (Helm & Guth 2022, 265) – An experiential approach that harnesses technology to engage students in online international exchanges in order to foster the development of global and intercultural competences or citizenship.

International exchange

- Life-wide learning

“Learning about other countries and their cultures, especially from other continents.” (student survey)

- Interdisciplinary – disciplines as small cultures (Holliday 1989)

“Weekly discussions and student-led presentations display a different disciplinary bias, a political bias, and a socio-cultural bias [...] We embrace this as essential for the aim of self-development.” (Henwood & Thuynsma 2019, 11)

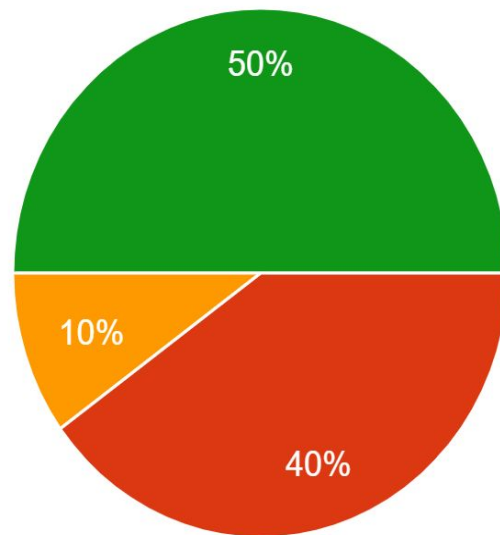
Global and intercultural competence

- GC objectives: “to promote cross-cultural understanding (students were surprised at the different perspectives that are possible in examining topical issues)” (Henwood & Thuynsma 2019, 9)
- Cross-culturality (Fries) – comparison-based
 - Focuses on conceptual knowledge (eg. national elections)
- Interculturality (Zhu Hua 2013) – interaction-based
 - Focuses on interpersonal/small group relationships
- Intercultural (communicative) competence (Hoff 2020)

Intercultural experience/skills?

3) As a result of doing this module, I gained experience/developed skills in interacting with people from different countries.

10 responses

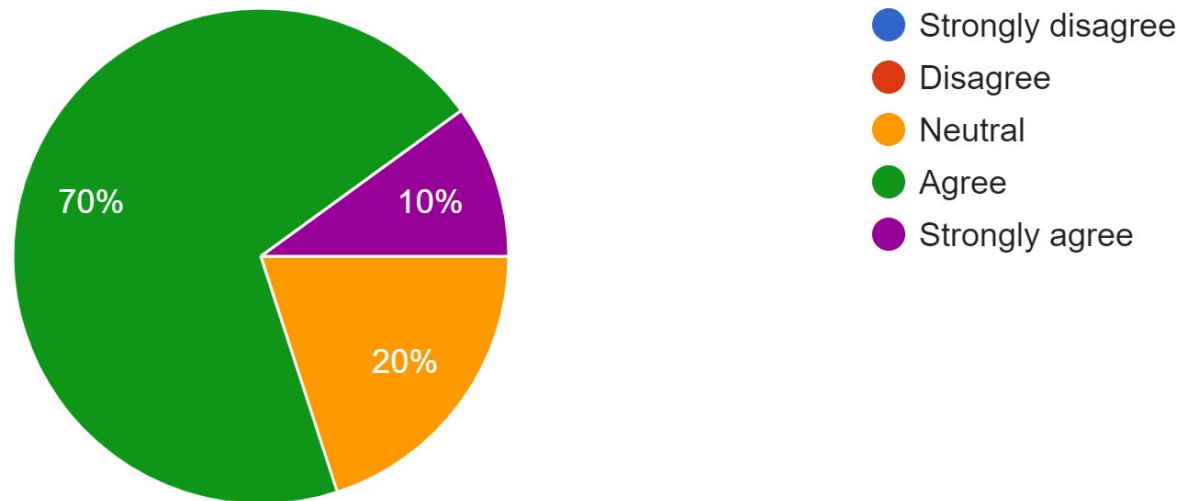


- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Gaining knowledge

1) As a result of doing the Global Classroom module, I learnt something about South Africa and Brazil.

10 responses



Task design

To develop skills in communicating and collaborating with people from different cultures, it is necessary to provide students with interculturally challenging tasks which require high levels of negotiation and collaboration (O'Dowd 2021, 218).

3. Postdigital critical cosmopolitanism

“Transnational movements, cultural diversity and hybrid cultures do not in themselves constitute cosmopolitanism. More important is the critical moment in which changes in self-understanding occur as a result of global challenges. A cosmopolitan perspective does not simply involve accepting the views of the Other but requires a problematization of one’s own assumptions, as well as those of the Other.” (Delanty 2009, 16)

The internet as a space for self-reflection resulting from intercultural communication leading to a transformational process. (Lenehan 2022, 25)

Individual and collective transformations.

Transformation

- Learning new information

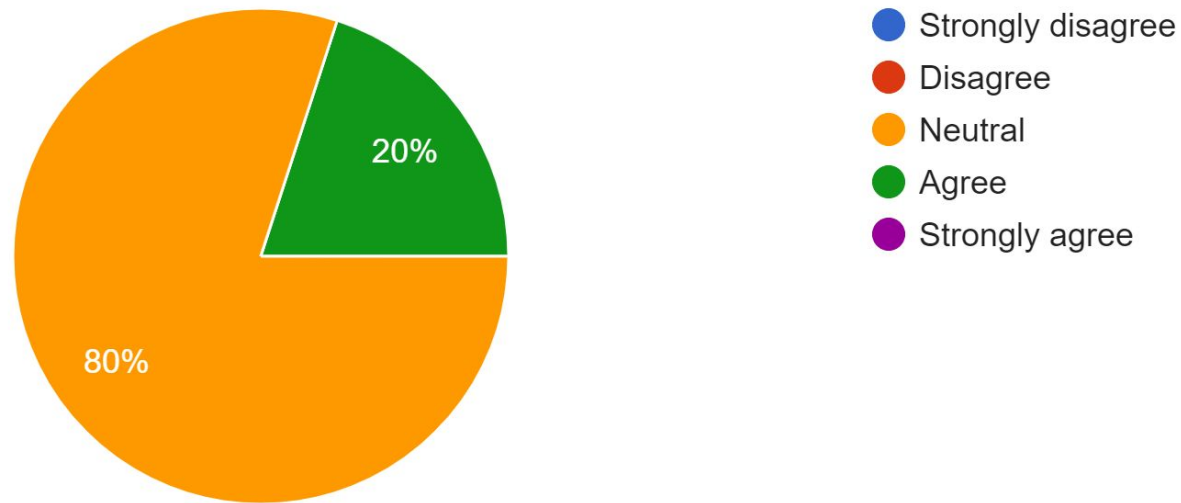
Transculturality: permeation, interconnectedness, fusions and mixes, ongoing transforming dialogues, plural affiliations, fluidity (Dagnino 2012)

- Creation of newness
- Changing one's thinking

Conceptual transformation?

2) As a result of doing this module, I changed/developed my thinking on some issues covered during the classes.

10 responses



The topic of identity

“In the discussion on identity, some students’ perspectives changed. French students moved from an assumed non-racial approach to embrace individual racial identities as a sign of respect for different cultural heritages rather than seeing a derogatory connotation associated with a race label.”

(Henwood & Thuynsma, 9)

Concluding thoughts and student desires

- ‘Global Classroom’ partially corresponds with our three concept/practices.
- The way forward ?
 - Intercultural pedagogical diversity
 - Student desires –
 - More disciplinary integration
 - More student interaction through students-to-students discussion; and possibly assessment.

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