

Capstone Project

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From the various facets of the CIL requirements, I have learned many different aspects of global engagement. From international political economics in POL S 364, to minority studies in SOC 369, to the implications of migration in SOC 402, and the proliferation of media in a global context in SOCIE 348; This program has exposed me to a wide range of global perspectives, enhancing my understanding of cultural and international dynamics. Such courses have given me profound insights into various dimensions of global governance, allowing me to critically analyze current international issues from an informed and educated stance. I can genuinely say that I have become more analytical, more aware, and more engaged in global discourse. I now recognize the importance of diverse perspectives in addressing complex global challenges and the need for collaborative solutions to create a more equitable and just world. This newfound knowledge has empowered me to professionally engage in international policies, economic development, and social justice. I owe much of this growth to each CIL requirement for its invaluable contribution, which I will discuss further in this essay.

I'd first like to give credit to POL S 364. This course taught me the basics of international organizations such as NAFTA, the EU, NATO, and the UN. I credit my initial understanding of International Relations to this course as it was here that my vision of working for the UNHCR was first ignited. I will never forget the visual representation of the "spaghetti bowl," which helped illustrate the complex networks binding nation-states together through institutions and alliances, tempering power dynamics and promoting cooperation. Now, my first reaction to international issues is often, "I wonder what other spaghetti noodle is attached to this country?" or in other words, "I wonder what other connections this country has?". This foundational knowledge has profoundly shaped my perspective on global affairs and solidified my aspiration to contribute meaningfully to international organizations which I hope to do in the near future. SOC 369 offered an insightful exploration of globalization's evolution through media, technology, and telecommunications, highlighting decentralized power. This course was particularly timely, given our era of tech-driven global interconnectivity that shapes international relations and diplomacy. It provided a refreshing perspective on globalization, one that I never heard before, really highlighting its relevance in today's world. My favorite course, SOC 402 Migration and Public Policy, provided a comprehensive understanding of migration policies and their impacts on marginalized groups. Throughout the semester, we analyzed various policies that helped understand systemic racial inequalities faced by POC immigrants and refugees. A highlight of this course was developing a policy brief in which I chose the integration of Black refugees into the Canadian labor market. My policy amendments included language services, culturally sensitive programs, credential recognition, inclusive hiring policies, and anti-discrimination strategies. This course was by far the most practical in my entire degree, and I still draw from the resources used today. It advanced my passion for refugee and immigrant rights and significantly broadened my knowledge of these issues. It is the reason I work at IslamicFamily on the refugee sponsorship team today! Special shout out to Prof. Nicole Denier!

Regarding intercultural experience, I have gained a rich background in working with multicultural clientele, primarily through my focus on refugee and newcomer support. In my role as Sponsorship Program Assistant at IslamicFamily, I've been deeply involved in the refugee sponsorship initiative to facilitate displaced individuals' resettlement in Canada. In this role, I

help relocate and resettle individuals whose friends and/or family members are facing persecution and humanitarian crises abroad. I oversee our private sponsorship program as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder and conduct reviews of applications to ensure that each submission is complete, practical, and accurately portrays the refugees' reality. I hear and read many heartbreaking narratives from refugees all around the world, including Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, and Sudan. Each story reinforces the urgency and importance of our work, driving me to ensure that these individuals receive the support and opportunities they need to rebuild their lives in Canada.

I absolutely love my job at IslamicFamily. As the only non-Muslim worker, I have the privilege of engaging in a new cultural context. I learn about diverse cultural practices, enhance my intercultural communication skills, and develop a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the Muslim community. Although they come with their own set of unique challenges such as navigating religious differences, overcoming language barriers, and ensuring cultural sensitivity in all interactions, these experiences have significantly enriched my personal and professional growth, fostering a greater appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion.

In addition to my professional experiences, my involvement at the University of Alberta's French campus, Campus St. Jean (CSJ), has honed my ability to communicate with people from various cultural backgrounds. To provide some context, I was born and raised in Canada, and my parents are from Ghana. As Ghana was colonized by the British empire and not the French, I am not naturally French-speaking. Nonetheless, I have been in French immersion since I was 4 years old. I am so grateful that my parents decided to enroll me in this program. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to continue my post secondary education in a francophone school. At CSJ, I have learned to communicate with French speakers from various regions. From Afro-Francophones and Quebecois to Parisian French speakers, I have engaged with many different individuals, each with their own unique accents and cultural expressions. Although this exposure has definitely enriched my understanding of the French language and its diverse cultural contexts, it has not been without challenges. Courses that are already difficult in English, such as economics, statistics, and political science, I have had to learn, understand and be assessed in French. I definitely felt like I was at a disadvantage as most students at CSJ were indeed accustomed to this environment. Even outside of the classroom, I would sometimes struggle to understand peers. Their slang and pronunciation was very different from the diluted French immersion I was used to in high school, junior high, and elementary school. I had to learn to adapt, not only to pick up the academic terminology but also to grasp the everyday colloquialisms and cultural nuances that my peers used. This process, though demanding, significantly improved my French proficiency and cultural understanding and I am proud to be a CSJ Alumni. This journey has taught me the value of cultural awareness, open-mindedness, and effective communication. It has shown me that communication goes way beyond just language; It involves understanding and respecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the people we interact with. A second language competency has allowed me to connect more deeply with people from various backgrounds, enhancing my ability to collaborate and understand different perspectives. This skill has been invaluable in both my education and work life, and will continue to be a significant asset in my future endeavors.

Overall, the CIL program has been an incredible journey for me, as it has been for many others. It has provided invaluable insights, preparing me for the culturally diverse environments I hope to navigate in my future career, possibly as a diplomat. The program has been essential in bridging cultural gaps and broadening my perspective and even fostering an international mindset crucial for today's globalized world. It has granted me new skills, reshaped my understanding, and promoted personal and professional growth. I am genuinely grateful for the opportunity to participate in such an enriching experience and I would encourage others to do the same!