

The Educational Potential of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) for Middle East Studies Pedagogy

A decade after the Arab Spring, the teaching of subjects related to the Middle East has gradually re-plunged into past discursive paradigms of geopolitics, authoritarian resilience, cultural exceptionalism and pro-status quo narratives. In an attempt to counter this tendency, an experimental pre- or partial Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) between Political Science students in New Zealand and the Sultanate of Oman was conducted to investigate whether COIL-based approaches could offer a meaningful tool for instructors and students in the field to recognise and address enduring western [un]conscious paradigms of “The Middle East”.

This study draws on in-progress work and the continuous intellectual journey of the authors, staff members and students involved in the Internationalisation Initiative between Sultan Qaboos University (Oman) and the University of Otago (New Zealand) between 2020-2022. Drawing on this COIL-based initiative, this conference paper contends that COIL impacts the teaching modules of MEP positively as it contributes to the reduction of Western students’ pre-existing bias and rebuttable presumptions about the region and its people. Ultimately, this conference proceeding invites instructors of political science at large to re-assess the teaching models of MEP by contributing to the extant literature on the educational benefits of the internationalisation of higher education curricula and transformative pedagogies to counter bias in the learning process of Middle East-related subjects in the West.

Keywords: Middle Eastern Politics; COIL; Transformative pedagogies; Internationalisation of higher education; Hidden biases;