



UVA in Argentina: Systems Case Studies

SYS 2054/3054
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Global Commerce Immersion: Project Practicum in Argentina

COMM 4293
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By taking this class you will learn and practice real-world problem solving in an international consulting context.

You will work with winemaking companies in Mendoza, Argentina. Winemaking is one of the main industries in the region and is a global industry which fuels worldwide exports. It is easy to find Mendoza products even in the local grocery stores in Charlottesville! You will work in an interdisciplinary team of UVA students. Presented with real-world business challenges, your team will identify objectives and requirements, identify and evaluate alternative solutions, and present recommendations to your clients. These solutions often involve developing a proof-of-concept prototypes that gather, process, and analyze data (excel spreadsheets, web sites, and/or databases). It will be an excellent opportunity to learn business and engineering concepts by applying them to specific situations.



Learning Objectives

The primary goal of the class is to develop your professional *intercultural competences*, which we define as (1) your appreciation of the cultural differences in business and engineering practices in different parts of the world, *plus* (2) your ability to successfully cope with these differences.

1. Appreciation of cultural differences. After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Explain broad cultural differences between Argentina and the US. You will be living in Mendoza and experience everyday argentine life: going the grocery store, tasting the Argentine cuisine, meeting locals, etc.
- Explain the differences in business and engineering practices between Argentina and US by interacting with clients and analyzing their needs; demonstrate this understanding of differences in client interactions, formal reports and presentations, class discussions, and blog entries.
- Demonstrate an ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations in both business and social situations.

2. Ability to successfully cope with cultural differences in a professional setting. After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the specific needs of your foreign clients through a variety of methods such as interviews, root cause analysis and direct observation.
- Identity and develop solutions to your clients challenges that fit their specific needs and that are sensitive to the specifics of the business culture and practices
- Present the solutions to your clients, in both writing and in an oral briefing, overcoming communication barriers

Teaching Method: The Practicum

The primary teaching tool for this course will be a *practicum* focusing on an actual problem experienced by a real-world company. *Practica* are learning experiences that involve the supervised application of previously studied concepts and theory. In other words, the focus of this class is on *learning by doing*.

This course gives you the opportunity to apply concepts from a variety of business and engineering disciplines: strategy, industry analysis, financial analysis, operation research, modeling, and systems engineering. You will apply these concepts to a real-world situation. The role of practicum faculty is also different. Their main role is to supervise progress, offer high-level guidance, and to help you and your team to overcome obstacles. They do not lecture, they coach.

Daily Plan

Argentine culture puts a premium on seizing opportunity and adaptation. We expect the same from us. Sometimes things will not go according to this plan. It is on us to make the most of whatever unexpected change presents.

Many days are “client days.” On those days, the schedule will be more or less as follows

8:25-1:30 Work at the client sites
 5:00-8:00 Project work at hotel
 Dinner on your own

Thu, Dec. 28

morning Arrival in Mendoza. Pick up at the airport or get a cab to hotel
 1:00-2:30 Pizza & Empanadas, Welcome to Mendoza Orientation, El Portal, 4th floor
 5:00-7:00 Work session: Getting ready for the first client meeting, El Portal, 4th floor
 7:00-8:15 Consulting in Argentina, David English
 8:30-11:00 Dinner at Anna Bistro – clients may be attending

Fri, Dec. 29

8:25-1:30 Work at the client sites. Breakfast starts at 7am.
 3:30-6:30 Project work at hotel
 6:30-8:30 Open air bus tour
 Dinner on your own

Sat, Dec. 30

10:00-4:30 Excursion: Cerro Arco + cooking class: Argentinian fare
 Dinner on your own

Sun, Dec. 31

Free day: opportunity to explore the city, rafting, ziplining
 9:00pm-10:00 Discussion on cultural differences, El Portal 4th floor
 10:00pm-2:00 Dinner and New Year's celebration at Club Regattas

Mon, Jan. 1

Free day: opportunity to explore the city, rafting, ziplining
 8:00pm-9:00 Project work at hotel
 Dinner on your own

Tue, Jan. 2

8:25-1:30 Work at the client sites
 5:00-7:30 Project work at hotel
 7:30-8:30 Argentina Wine Industry, Mauricio Boullaud
 Dinner on your own

Wed, Jan. 3

8:25-1:30 Work at the client sites
 5:00-7:00 Project work at hotel
 7:00-8:30 Discussion on Cultural Differences, El Portal 4th floor
 Dinner on your own

Thu, Jan. 4

8:25-1:30 Work at the client sites
 5:00-8:00 Project work at hotel
 8:30-11:30 Dinner at El Patio de Jesus y Maria
Draft report due

Fri, Jan. 5

8:25-1:30 Work at the client sites
 5:00-8:00 Project work at hotel
Faculty feedback on draft report
 Dinner on your own

Sat, Jan. 6	
10:30-5:30	½ class: Excursion: Cacheuta Spa day with buffet luncheon
10:45-4:45	½ class: Tour and Gourmet Picnic at Zuccardi Winery
	Dinner on your own
Sun, Jan. 7	
10:30-5:30	½ class: Excursion: Cacheuta Spa day with buffet luncheon
10:45-4:45	½ class: Tour and Gourmet Picnic at Zuccardi Winery
6:00-8:00	Project work at hotel
	Dinner on your own
Mon, Jan. 8	
8:25-1:30	Work at the client sites
5:00-8:00	Project work at hotel
	Dinner on your own
Tue, Jan. 9	
8:25-1:30	Work at the client sites
5:00-7:15	Project work at hotel
7:15-8:15	Presenting to foreign audiences, David English
8:30-11:00	Group dinner at Fuente y Fonda
	Final Draft of report to faculty by Tuesday 8 pm
Wed, Jan. 10	
8:25-1:30	Work at the client sites
5:00-8:00	Project work at hotel
	Feedback from faculty on reports in afternoon/evening
	Dinner on your own
Thu, Jan. 11	
Noon	Reports finished
All Day	Work on presentations
3:00-7:00	Presentation rehearsal and feedback
Evening	Dinner on your own. Work on presentations.
Fri, Jan. 12	
Morning	Final presentations at client sites or Hotel
6:00-7:00	Final discussion on cultural differences
7:10-11:30	Farewell dinner at Los Toneles
Sat, Jan. 13	
2:30	Bus to airport. Departure to U.S.

Pre-departure Activities

The class includes three **mandatory** pre-departure meetings. We will discuss logistics, current events in Argentina, an introduction to the wine industry, and how to prepare for the project. These meetings will also provide the opportunity for the students to get to know each other.

Recommended Readings

- [A collection of articles and online resources](#) will give you a background on Argentine history, culture, business, and current events.
- English, David. *Expat Entrepreneurs in Argentina: Ten Success Stories*, 2013. This book covers the experiences of several entrepreneur expats who are currently running business in Argentina.

- Gibson, J. E., Scherer, W. T., and Gibson, W. F. How to Do Systems Analysis. 2007, Wiley – Interscience.
- “Root Cause Analysis,” by Nelson, R. R., 2012.

Grading and Assignments

Faculty will assess the overall quality of the work of the team first. This will be based on both the impact on the client and the process used by the team. Faculty will then use their judgment to assign individual grades – where the team grade is used as a baseline.

A key difference between this and most classes students are accustomed to is that “doing the work” does not equate to an A.

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| A | Demonstrates work of a competent professional. Does all that a B student does, but demonstrates an ability to advance the project... to not just do work, but to know what work should be done. Has clear connections between his/her contributions and the business value delivered to the client. There are many ways to exercise leadership... and an A student finds meaningful ways to lead. Work represents someone who is driven by internal standards of quality, not driven by trying to meet faculty members' standards of quality. |
| B | Demonstrates work of a competent student. Does very solid work, but relies on others (e.g., other team members, a faculty advisor) to figure out what s/he should be doing and to set the bar for quality. A “B” can be earned by a student who is conscientious, diligent, and hard-working. |

Grades below a B are earned for work that is below that of a competent student.

Being a good “citizen of the program” and behavior on the program will be factored into grades. The degree of impact can vary widely, depending on the significance of achievements or the severity of problems. Showing up on time to group events, participating in discussions, being prepared and alert for client meetings, and generally doing things that create a positive program environment are on the plus side of this evaluation. The negative side not only includes the opposite of the prior list, but also could include engaging in any undesirable or illegal behavior.

Blog

We will keep an online blog for the course. Each day, a couple of students will be assigned to write and post the blog entry for that day. The entry consists of a summary of what happened during the day, covering both class work and social activities, plus a couple of pictures taken during key activities.

The blog will be public. It is intended to be a means for you to reflect and learn, and also a means for your family and friends to stay connected.

Client Presentation

Each team is required to offer a final presentation to their Argentine client. The suggested content of the presentation is outlined in a separate document that will be posted on Collab. Example projects and presentations are also posted on Collab.

Executive Summary

The executive summary describes succinctly your solution from a business point of view. As a guideline, it should be 1200-1500 words long, plus any exhibits/appendices that you feel are useful to fully understand your work or to implement your recommendation (this might include software developed, user manuals, tables with results, etc.). Examples and instructions will be posted on Collab.

Honor Statement

This class operates under the UVA Honor System. To be explicit, this includes the time spent abroad.

The University of Virginia relies upon and cherishes its community of trust. We endorse and uphold the University's Honor principle that students will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor shall they tolerate those who do. We recognize that even one honor infraction can destroy an exemplary reputation that took years to build. Acting in a manner consistent with the principles of honor benefits every member of the UVA community.