



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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Jan. Term 2019: Dec. 30, 2018 – Jan 13, 2019

By taking this class you will learn and practice real-world problem solving in an international consulting context. You will do consulting work with winemaking companies in Mendoza, Argentina. Winemaking is one of the main industries in the region and also a global industry which fuels worldwide exports, including US, Europe and China. You can even find Mendoza products 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 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, you 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. You will work with client at their workplaces, interact with clients and analyze their needs. You will demonstrate your understanding of differences through client interactions, 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, you 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 that fit your clients specific needs and that are sensitive to the specifics of their 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* that focuses on actual problems experienced by real-world companies. *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*. You will draw concepts from a variety of business and engineering disciplines: strategy, industry analysis, financial analysis, operation research, modeling, and systems engineering. You will then apply these concepts to real-world situations.

The role of the 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 the plan below. 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 as follows:

7:00-8:15	Breakfast at El Portal
8:15-1:30	Work at the client site
5:00-8:00	Project work at hotel
	Dinner on your own

We will send you a WhatsApp message every day, with an updated plan for the day. That message supersedes the draft plan below.

Sun, Dec. 30

Morning	Arrival in Mendoza. The group arriving with LATAM 430 will be picked up at the airport. Everybody else gets a cab to hotel ¹
1:00-2:30	Pizza & Empanadas, “Welcome to Mendoza” Orientation, El Portal, 4th floor. Casual.
5:00-6:15	Work session: “Getting ready for the first client meeting”, El Portal, 4th floor. Casual.
6:15-7:30	“Consulting in Argentina”, David English. Casual.
8:15-11:00	Sharp. Short walk to dinner at Anna Bistro – clients may be attending. Business casual.

Mon, Dec. 31

7:00-9:30	Breakfast at El Portal
9:30-4:30	Excursion: Cerro Arco or cooking class: “Argentinian fare”. Casual. Bring hats, sunglasses, sunscreen, and water. Either hike the foothills of the Andes or learn to cook empanadas and more.
10:00-2:00	Dinner and New Year’s celebration at Club Regattas. Clothes for dinner and dancing.

Tue, Jan. 1

7:00-9:00	Breakfast at El Portal
9:00-3:00	Optional activities: Rafting, Zipline, etc.
8:00-9:00	Project work at hotel. Plan for the next client meeting. Casual.

¹ Walk out of the airport. You will see a man that dispatches cabs. Just say “El Portal Suite Hotel, Neocochea”. The ride is about 15 minutes and USD 5-10. You can pay in pesos or USD.

Wed, Jan. 2

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site. Business casual.
- 5:00-8:00 Project work at hotel. Casual.
- Dinner on your own

Thu, Jan. 3

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site. Business casual.
- 5:00-7:00 Project work at hotel. Casual.
- 7:00-8:30 Conversation on cultural differences. Casual.
- Dinner on your own

Fri, Jan. 4

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site. Business casual.
- 4:00-6:00 Project work at hotel. Casual.
- 6:00-8:00 Open air bus tour. Casual. Bring hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
- 8:30-11:00 Group dinner at Fuente y Fonda. Casual.

Sat, Jan. 5

- 10:30-5:30 ½ class: Excursion at Cacheuta Spa, with buffet luncheon. Casual. Bring swimsuit, hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
- 10:45-4:45 ½ class: Tour and Gourmet Picnic at Zuccardi Winery. Casual.
- Dinner on your own

Sun, Jan. 6

- 10:30-5:30 ½ class: Excursion at Cacheuta Spa, with buffet luncheon. Casual. Bring swimsuit, hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
- 10:45-4:45 ½ class: Tour and Gourmet Picnic at Zuccardi Winery. Casual.
- 7:00-9:00 Project work at hotel. Casual
- Dinner on your own

Mon, Jan. 7

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site. Business casual.
- 5:00-9:00 **First presentation draft due at 7:30.** Feedback will be provided from 7:30 onwards. Casual.
- Dinner on your own

Tue, Jan. 8

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site. Business casual.
- 5:00-8:00 **First draft report due at 8:00.** Project work at hotel. Casual.
- Dinner on your own

Wed, Jan. 9

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site. Business casual.
- 5:00-7:30 Project work at hotel. Casual.
- 7:30-8:00 Presenting to foreign audiences”, David English.
- 8:15-11:00 Group dinner at Patio de Jesus Maria. Casual.

Thu, Jan. 10

- 7:00-8:15 Breakfast at El Portal
- 8:15-1:30 Work at the client site and work at presentations. Business casual.
- 2:00-7:00 **Presentation rehearsal at hotel.** Do not make reservations for dinner. This is an intense work night. Casual.
- Dinner on your own
- Working on presentations.

Fri, Jan. 11

- Morning Breakfast at El Portal
8:30-1:30 Presentations at the client site. Business.
3:00 Bus leaves for Hotel Potrerillos
8:00-11:00 "Farewell to Mendoza" dinner. Business casual.

Sat, Jan. 12

- Morning Breakfast at hotel
11:00-12:00 Conversation on cultural differences. Casual.
12:30-2:30 Lunch at hotel
3:00 Bus to the Airport and departure to US.

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.

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 using the team grade as a baseline. In other words, individuals on the same team may earn different grades.

A key difference between this class and other classes that you have taken is that "doing the work" does not equate to an A.

- A student earning a "B" performs in a competent manner. Is conscientious, diligent, and hard-working. Does 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 student earning an “A” does all that a “B” student does, but in addition demonstrates an ability to advance the project. Not only does solid work, but also knows what work should be done. Draws clear connections between his/her contributions and the business value delivered to the client. Makes sure that the delivered project is completed, has high quality, and is well documented. An “A student” is driven by internal standards of quality, not driven by trying to meet faculty members’ standards of quality. There are many ways to exercise leadership, and an “A” student finds meaningful ways to lead.

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

Being a good “citizen” of the program is also factored into grades. Being a good citizen means displaying professional and respectful behavior towards your clients, team members, faculty, staff, and the Argentinian people in general. For example: showing up on time to group events, participating in discussions, being prepared and alert for client meetings, monitoring WhatsApp and email communications, 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 includes engaging in undesirable or illegal behaviors. The degree of impact on your grade can vary widely, depending on the significance of your positive achievements, and the severity and frequency of negative behaviors.

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 at the three sites and any social activity, plus a couple of pictures.

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. Write it keeping that audience in mind.

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. For example, exhibits/appendices 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.