

Campus Quebec - The Montreal Experience: Culture, Innovation and Politics

Objectives :

The objective of this course is to give international exchange students studying at HEC Montréal a knowledge of management best practices through field experience in Montreal and the nation's capital, Ottawa, Ontario. To achieve these objectives, the course takes place in three stages. First, students participate in two classes (on campus) that provide them with a basic understanding of the socio-economic realities of Montreal (and Quebec and Canada) and perform (in teams) research of the companies to be visited. In the following 8 sessions, students participate in field visits with executives of local (domestic and international) firms, both medium and large, as well as representatives of government agencies. Half way through these sessions, students will participate on a 3 day field trip to Canada's capital, Ottawa, Ontario. After the field visits are complete, students will participate in a session where they are required to integrate their learnings.

Pedagogical approach :

The course combines two complementary teaching methods:

- Seminars and company visits
- Learning activities by experience.

Much of the course is based on seminars and visits organized in Montréal, with a 3 day trip to Ottawa. The quality of these activities is based on adequate preparation of students and open exchange between students and the teacher / lecturer. These are essential conditions to understand the reality of business in Montreal and to deepen knowledge of best management practices.

To promote experiential learning, students are will be required to account for their experience through a diary, where they will develop ideas through personal and group reflection. This diary will serve as a main source of information for the final individual project.

Evaluations :

Participation (20%)

The learning-by-experience formula is based on the quality of exchanges between participants, the instructor and those involved in the visits. Students are therefore expected to actively participate throughout all activities, both in class and in the field. Quality of participation is based on the relevance of interventions and the general attitude throughout the course. Grading is evaluated as follows:

0 - Absence

1 – Present but no active engagement

2 – Active and relevant participation

Note that participation is mandatory. A student who misses more than 2 sessions will receive an F grade for the course.

Teamwork: Site Visit Leadership & Short Presentation (30%)

Each team is responsible to organize and lead one company visit, to include a student activity, and to report on this experience in terms of their learning related to the activities and the firm itself. Each activity is worth 15 % each.

The presentation will be given in the last session (13) and will be approximately 15 minutes. The content of the presentation will be a reflection on the experience, including an analysis of the assigned firm in context of the overall course.

Individual final project (50%)

At the end of the course, each student will write an individual paper of about 15 pages (single spaced) on either the cultural, political or innovative aspects of Montreal, including a reflection on the experience and personal learning. The project will be due at the end of the exam period.

Course organization :

The campus will be structured into a combination of classroom and field activities. Two preparation sessions will take place at the start of the course, where students will be exposed to the business landscape of Montreal, in particular, and the general business landscape of Canada. The company* visits will be structured into three categories, as follows:

- Cultural: organizations that reflect the unique cultural nature of Montreal, such as the Montreal Canadiens Hockey Club (including a game); the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (including a concert); and, la Tohu (including a show).
- Innovation: Ubisoft (video games); Bombardier (aircraft); and PSBC (bike sharing)
- Political: Montreal City Hall (meet the Mayor); Montreal Board of Trade; Ottawa, Canada's national capital (extended 3 day trip)

*Note: companies are to be confirmed

Session 1: The Montreal (and Canadian) business environment – culture, politics and innovation

In the first class, students will be introduced to the course instructor, course coordinator (Campus Abroad team) and each other. Students will perform individual introductions and participate in ice-breakers. The instructor will then introduce the layout of the course, including the political, social and economic landscape of Montreal, within the context of Canada. During this class, the instructor will also assign students to teams, where they will be responsible to lead one of the

course visits. As part of this responsibility, they will be required to prepare a presentation on their respective companies for session 2.

Session 2: The firms

In this class, teams will take turns presenting each of the 8 organizations, in preparation for the visits. The instructor will then present the logistics of visits and a detailed schedule.

Sessions 3 through 11: Field visits

Each of the 8 visits will take place on the day that the course is scheduled and, in some cases, will include activities that extend into the evening. Prior to each visit, the team leading the visit will be responsible to meet with the instructor one week prior to review the requirements and prepare activities for the class.

For the field visit to Ottawa, students will participate in both field visits of companies and tour the houses of Parliament. They will also be provided with free time to visit the city of Ottawa.

Session 12: Integration

In the final class, students will present (in teams) a reflection of their experience on their assigned firm. An outline of the presentation must be approved by the instructor no later than session 11.

Bibliographic resources

Kolb, D., *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1984.

Moncrief, W., Shipp, S., Lamb C. (1995). Student Journal Writing in an International Setting. *Journal of Marketing Education* 17, pp. 71.

Phillips, M., Boyacigiller, N. (2004). Cultural Scanning: An Integrated Cultural Frameworks Approach. In N. Boyacigiller, R. Goodman, and M. Phillips (Eds), *Crossing Cultures: Insights from Master Teachers*. London: Routledge, pp. 76-88.

Tuleja, E. (2008). Aspects of Intercultural Awareness through an MBA Study Abroad Program: Going "Backstage". *Business Communication Quarterly* 71: 314-337.