

Engaging Students With Nursing History Through a Study Abroad

The American Association for the History of Nursing (AAHN, 2001) advocates for the inclusion of nursing history in nursing curricula. Nursing history broadens students' contextual perspective, expands thinking, and offers a sense of professional identity. A 1-credit elective with a study abroad experience was designed to immerse undergraduate, prelicensure, and RN-to-BSN nursing students in nursing history. An AAHN PowerPoint® presentation (2013), "Why History Matters: Historically Informed Nursing Practice and the Untapped Potential of Nursing History," outlines the three major purposes of studying nursing history:

- History as pedagogy.
- History as evidence.
- History as explanation.

The AAHN PowerPoint presentation served as the course framework to guide students' examination of the three purposes. Student readings and experiences were designed to show how historical study influences thinking (pedagogy), helps bear witness to experiences in the past (evidence), and helps make connections in the context (explanation). Through enlightenment, nursing history broadens an individual's personal experience and provides a new lens to view the present and future of the profession.

The elective was a 7-week online course with a 9-day study abroad to London, England and Edinburgh, Scotland. Prior to travelling abroad, students completed readings, explored websites, and viewed video resources. Students were introduced to the AAHN in addition to other history associations and also reviewed the AAHN PowerPoint presentation. Florence Nightingale, a historical nurse figure familiar to undergraduate students, was used to introduce students

to nursing previous to contemporary practice. Students read Nightingale's (1969) *Notes on Nursing* originally published in 1859, and they also read articles and viewed videos both honoring and challenging Nightingale's significance and legacy.

During the 5 days in London and 2 days in Edinburgh, students attended lectures and viewed artifacts related to nursing and medical history at the Florence Nightingale Museum, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Nursing, the Old Operating Theatre Museum and Herb Garrett, and the Surgeon's Hall Museum. Students participated in a walking tour of medical history in both London and Edinburgh. Cultural immersion included activities such as a question-and-answer session with a contemporary nurse and visits to Piccadilly Circus in London and the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. After the study abroad, students were provided additional reading assignments to underscore their understanding of the AAHN's three purposes of nursing history.

Students were required to participate in activities and also keep a journal while abroad. Prompts were provided to focus their reflections on the relevance of historical study for contemporary nursing and the study abroad experiences that enhanced their understanding of the relevance. Student evaluation included participation in abroad activities, depth of journal reflections, and a final project. For the final project, students had a choice of creating a digital story, a webpage, or an oral presentation of an electronic poster illustrating one or more of the AAHN's three purposes of nursing history in the study abroad experience. Students' comments regarding the experience included:

- This educational adventure left me with a greater appreciation of nursing.
- Teaching nurses about the history of nursing increases pride and hon-

or in the profession.

- Our understanding of the past successes and failures can serve as a catalyst for change.
- My personal perception regarding the relevance of nursing history has significantly changed. I feel compelled to participate in and initiate further research to promote nursing.

The readings and study abroad experiences framed by the AAHN's three purposes of nursing history helped students apply history to inform their contemporary practice. Immersion and freedom to choose the final project encouraged student interest and engagement with nursing history. Students' engagement with nursing history broadened their contextual perspective, expanded their thinking, and provided them a sense of professional identity. Potential exists to increase this course to a 3-credit course and include study of critical historical analyses on nursing to expand the depth and breadth of students' immersion in nursing history.

References

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