

Students Learn through the Looking Glass: Blended Experiential Pedagogy in the Drexel Abroad in Crete Program

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Abstract

Drexel's Study Abroad in Crete 4-course program operates with classroom "in mobility" of hybrid nature: "2-4-4" weeks in Philadelphia, Greece, and on-line. The goal is to showcase an 8-year educational experience that enhances learning via a living-reflecting perspective. LMS backbone glues all program phases tight in a pedagogical setting.

Students literally dive into the Mediterranean human-ecoscape of current rich multifaceted culture, economy, and society, through Herzfeld's looking glass approach. Peer-instruction and interaction flips the classroom in Mazur's terms with a living community of learning around. Student projects are research-oriented and include STAR scholars as well. Learning continues when students depart, as field research and travel is about changing perspective; after all, the most important means of transportation is life itself.

The program applies best practices in class pedagogy with synchronous contact and asynchronous rumination and retention; its intense experiential nature -via the Socratic Method- cultivates critical abilities, and forwards Gardner's multiple intelligences towards Drexel learning priorities and global competencies.

Introduction

In 2006, a unique experiential summer abroad program was created. Fully integrated with Drexel's "please go away" curriculum, it sustains Drexel's learning priorities, "core and practical skills, experiential and applied learning" through 12, actual Drexel credits. But why... Crete?

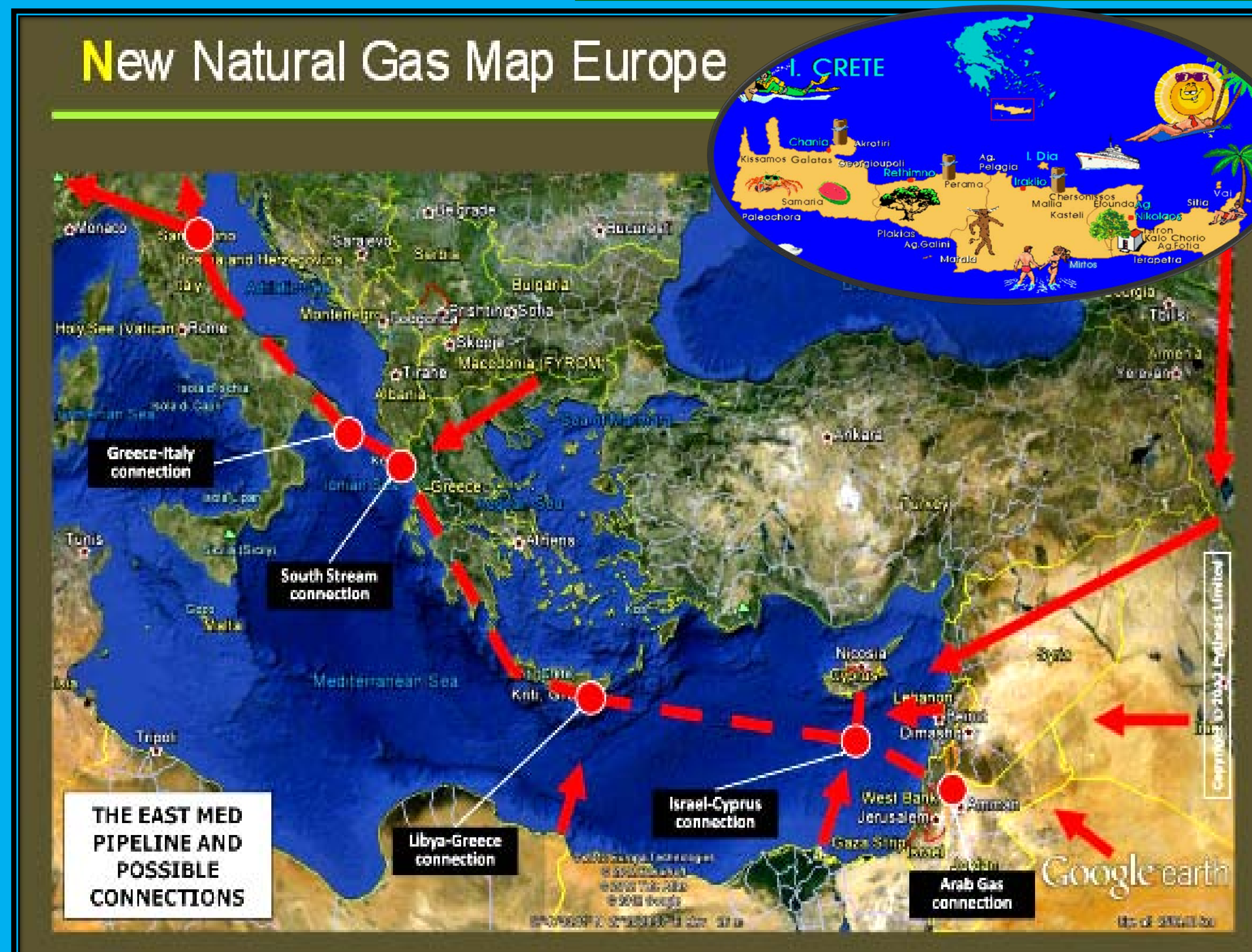
- The birthplace of the Minoan civilization and the Mediterranean Diet
- An eco-friendly, sustainable lifescape with UNESCO-NATURA sights
- One of the 21 World Smart Communities with ICT infrastructure
- The only EU location with locally-grown bananas and the top quality EVOO
- A region of 3 high ranking Universities, 4 Airports, 6 military bases and a USN base
- One of the most popular European destinations for ERASMUS students
- An economic region with the highest density of cooperatives per capita
- A hub of the oil and gas reserves in Greek EEZ, as well as a station of the EuroAsia interconnector cable connecting Israel with Cyprus⁵
- A focal point of the Blue growth EU policy Constitution of Sea as well as of energy challenges and security²
- A subtropical area in EU, a... paradise with more than 300 dpy of sunlight
- The home of "Thalassokosmos", the only research aquarium in the Mediterranean
- A popular international coop destination for Drexel; more than 40 placements in 4 years

Students travel along with two Drexel faculty members to that Greek island and dive in its rich, research oriented culture and real-life famous Cretan hospitality.



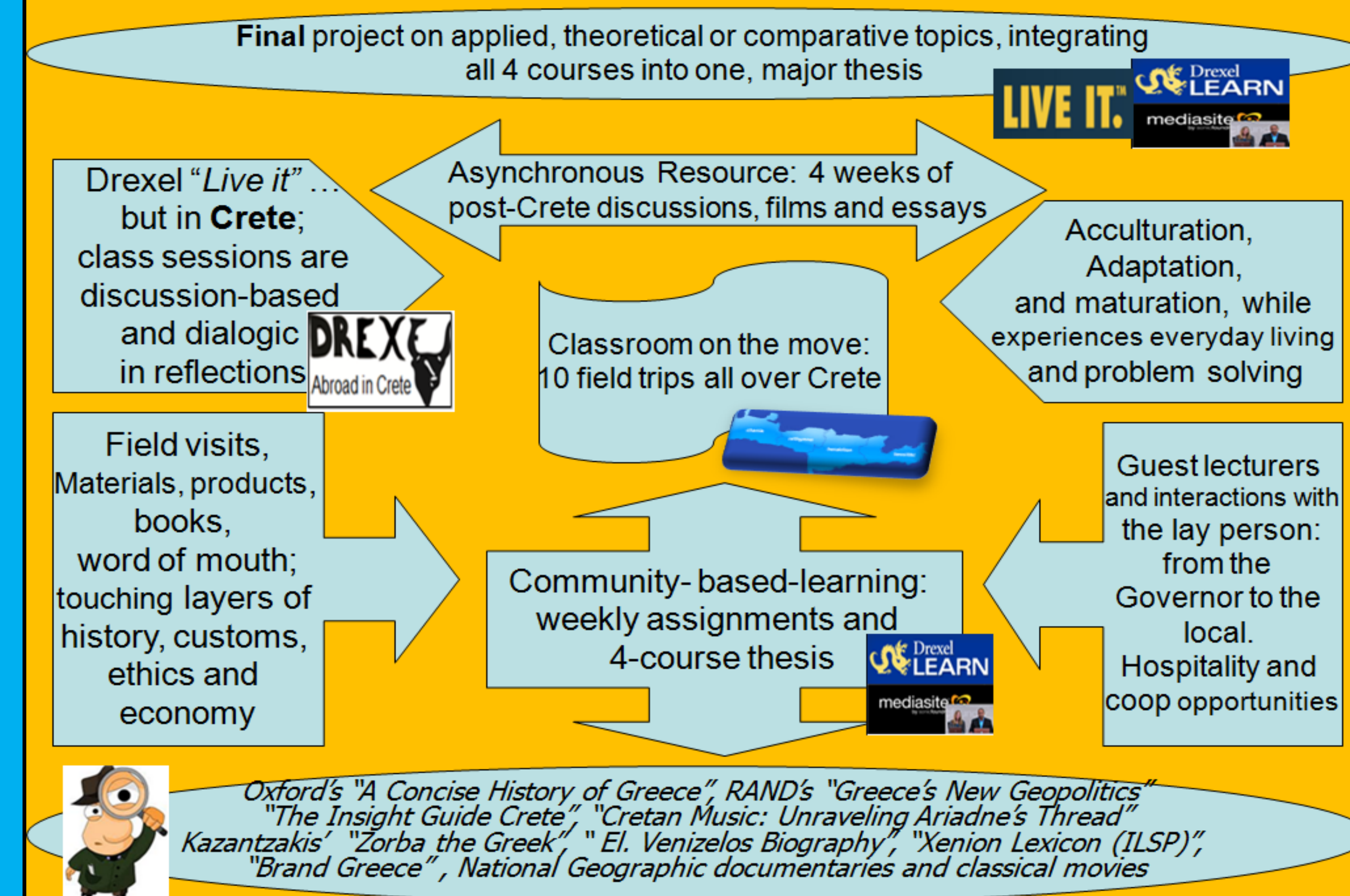
(a) STUDENTS MAKE THEIR OWN CERAMICS IN THE ORIGINAL MINOAN POTTERY PLOUMAKIS LAB
(b) STUDENTS BAKE THE "RUSK", THE BASE OF MEDITERRANEAN DIET, IN THE FAMOUS TO MANNA BAKERY, THE TOP RUSK PRODUCER

Results



Crete as an amphitheater: Crossroads of three continents and a geo-strategic hub for regional security and logistics.

A Live Classroom in the Field Collaborates with LMS:



Looking Glass Learning flows and interactions

- A resilient society in economic crisis as a learning opportunity (institutions, creativity, innovation, social cohesion)
- Participant observation while attending festivals, rituals, family, household, village and city practices, are valuable mechanisms for learning the social, economic, cultural, political and religious ways that make Greek culture distinctive, with global appeal⁴
- Media coverage and stereotypes challenged by reality-checks as students experience face-to-face... Crete
- Insularity promoting the future of EU as an international player connecting new developments and energy hotspots
- Locality is realized, combining self-sufficiency with the macro picture of inter-connection of need and utility
- Experiential study on-site opens doors for coop opportunity/employment (with diverse sectors)
- Drexel internationalism and visibility is cultivated through a virtual, Cretan campus (study, coops, research)

Materials and Methods

- ANTH 340, "Crete Through the Looking Glass": ethnographic fieldwork, attendance of several customs/traditions and reflection through a looking-glass process³
- GREC 313, "Greek and Cretan History, Economy and Society": economics of locality, SMEs, family business, ethics of transaction
- IAS 360, "Cretan Civilization: Unraveling Ariadne's Thread": performativity of and participation at live events and local cultural rituals
- GREC 280, "Communicate in Greek: Philoxenia": Greek language foundation with emphasis on communication; basic vocabulary - useful phrases to effectively communicate during routine situations
- Nissology study¹: identifying the role of islands for urban and globalized communities; islands being the rule, not the exception
- Critical review of scholarly journals on regional policy, think tank reports, security and international relations original material
- Reviews of EU policy, country branding and maritime economics

Conclusion

- Travel-oriented courses enrich the curriculum with "life- changing" dimensions, as students underline
- Living abroad promotes learning priorities like global competence and responsible citizenship
- Flippable processes allow better retention and desire to engage in class⁷
- "Insiders" cultivate students' lifeworld skills, crisis problem-solving, efficiency in social economy and professional ethics
- Journal writing is an efficient exercise of selectivity, creativity and critical thinking
- Drexel e-learning applications offer pedagogical tools for multiple intelligences⁶
- Drexel outreach benefits from Crete as an amphitheater

References

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