

Chapter 4

Off-Campus Colloquia as Immersive Study and Active Learning: Capitaf, Milton and Rose Friedman's Home



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Abstract In this paper, two facilitators of an off-campus colloquia series examine its effectiveness as an alternative to study-abroad programs. The paper evaluates a week-long seminar in political economy held in the Vermont mountains at Capitaf, the former summer home of Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman and his wife, Rose. The colloquium is structured to foster active learning by combining intensive reading and discussion of Friedman's critical writings, and immerse students in the place where the economist conducted most of his writing in the late 1960s and 1970s. More than 60 undergraduate students have experienced the program. The program has had a deep, lasting impact on students, as revealed through open-end comments and responses to post-colloquium assessments.

4.1 Introduction

Colleges and universities are under increasing pressure to demonstrate value. An important measure of value, and some might say the most important measure, is the ability to foster learning among students, particularly undergraduate students. Authentic learning is one of the principal pedagogies associated with both active and student-centered learning.

Active learning is a pedagogy that seeks to involve students directly in the learning process, as opposed to the more passive learning style of a traditional lecture. In order to be considered as 'active learning,' students must do more than just listen. For example, they must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. Furthermore, they need to be engaged in higher-order cognitive tasks,

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such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bonwell and Eison 1991; Chickering and Gamson 1987). Scholars have identified scores of tools, techniques, and strategies for promoting active learning, including tools for enabling student-centered discussion rather than lecture, using applied projects to foster deeper understanding of principles and concepts, and establishing a classroom climate supportive of experimentation and exploration (Ambrose et al. 2010; Doyle 2011).

Active learning methods tend to also foster authentic learning, if implemented with applications to the real-world in mind. Rule's (2006) editorial in *The Journal of Authentic Learning* addresses the key themes and elements of authentic learning. She found that in her analysis of forty-five articles that described authentic learning, each contained at least one of four major themes that she believes to be central to authentic learning. These major themes are: (1) real-world problems that allow the learner to practice doing the work of professionals in the discipline, with presentation of findings to audiences beyond the classroom; (2) open-ended inquiry that involves critical thinking and metacognition (analyzing one's own thinking); (3) discourse in a community of learners; and (4) student empowerment through choice to further direct their own learning (Rule 2006). The Capitaf colloquia are consistent with the second and third themes. Maina (2004) identified the following as elements inherent within authentic learning: activities mimic real world situations, learning takes place in meaningful situations that are extensions of the learner's world, and the teaching is learner-centered.

Expounding on that definition in his book *Learner-Centered Teaching: Putting the Research Learning Into Practice*, Doyle (2011) says that authentic learning embodies not only the use of real problems but also seeks to have students use methods that are used in the real world, including teamwork and collaboration, technology, and the professional presentation of processes and solutions.

Most of the active and authentic learning recommendations, however, focus on traditional courses as conventional academic offerings. Relatively little research has focused on immersive, small-group study outside the more conventional setting of a course. This chapter explores the application of active learning pedagogies to off-campus study in a domestic U.S. setting. For the past 3 years, groups of ten to twelve undergraduate students have studied the economic and political thought of Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman while residing at Capitaf, his former summer home in Vermont. The setting allows for a unique immersive experience that, based on assessments provided by students, promotes transformative learning.

The next section of this paper provides an overview of recent literature on study-away programs to provide overall context, and the sections thereafter provide an overview of Capitaf and the program. The paper concludes with a discussion of its impact on students and their learning.

4.2 Benefits of Off-Campus Study

Study abroad experiences have been an integral part of higher education for centuries. In recent years, some universities and colleges have moved toward calling these ventures ‘study away’ programs as they have recognized that meaningful educational experiences and growth opportunities can occur off campus without being international.

Soebania and Braskamp (2009, p. 23) explain why they prefer the term study away:

If a common goal of diversity and multicultural programs and internationalization programs is to assist students to live effectively with difference, why do we assume only an international program experience can do this? If there are critical skills we want students to acquire and engage in, does it matter whether these are acquired internationally or locally? Thus, we argue for retiring the terms ‘study abroad’ and ‘education abroad,’ and instead adopting ‘study away.’

A review of 13 studies by Kelleher (2013) found wide-ranging benefits across different study-away programs. Students considered it to be ‘enriching,’ ‘enlightening,’ and even their best life experience. A 2018 study showed that cultural competency may be enhanced through curriculum-integrated study-away opportunities. Moreover, domestic study-away and international study-away opportunities can accomplish similar student cultural competency outcomes (Abe-Hiraishi et al. 2018).

Short-term study-away experiences are becoming increasingly popular as well. These programs do not have as pressing of financial, employment, and time constraints as longer-term programs do. Short-term programs are usually less than 8 weeks, while long-term study-away tends to be for at least a semester, sometimes even a year (Zamastil-Vondrova 2005; Donnelly-Smith 2009; Mills et al. 2010; Carley et al. 2011; Slotkin et al. 2012).

In terms of pedagogy, these types of off-campus study opportunities provide enhanced environments for fostering active and authentic learning. Academic preparation can take place in more traditional settings, while the off-campus locations have the benefit of limiting distractions, fostering faculty-student and student-student interaction, and creating a classroom climate that is more inclusive, welcoming, and intellectually ‘safe.’ These characteristics are consistent with best practices for fostering authentic learning and effective learner-centered discussions.

Slotkin et al. (2012) also showcase blended-learning models for their short-term study-abroad programs for business students, highlighting the flexibility offered by making use of online learning prior to the trip to fulfill academic content requirements. Similarly, the Capitaf programs follow a blended model of preparation and participation. All participating students are provided with the core course materials 1 to 2 months in advance of the colloquia, and instructed to read the books prior to arriving at Capitaf.

Study-away experiences provide students with an opportunity to gain self-confidence and become more independent as they step out of their comfort zone.

An additional benefit of domestic study-away opportunities is that they are generally less expensive than study-away experiences abroad, and therefore it expands such learning and personal growth opportunities to more students.

4.3 The Capitaf Immersive Study Program

Few homes possess such significance as to have earned their own name and place in history. Just as Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and George Washington's Mount Vernon have importance to historians, Milton and Rose Friedman's Capitaf has special meaning to economists. 'Capitaf' is the name that Milton and Rose Friedman gave their home in Vermont. The house was named in honor of their book *Capitalism and Freedom* (Friedman 2002[1962]), the title of which they cleverly morphed together to create the name Capitaf. The main house is pictured in Fig. 4.1.

Milton and Rose purchased the property in Fairlee, Vermont in 1965, completed Capitaf in 1967, and sold it to the University of Chicago in 1982. The university sold the property to Robert Aliber, a faculty member at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. In 2012, Aliber sold the property to Mark Mitchell, a former colleague of Aliber at the University of Chicago Business School. Free to Choose Network, led by Bob Chitester, recruited six individuals in founding Capitaf Partners, LLC and purchased the property in July 2016 for the purpose of scholarly economic programs. Robert Aliber had added a tennis court and built a second



Fig. 4.1 The main house where discussions take place. Source: Author's collection



Fig. 4.2 Student housing. Source: Author's collection

guest house on the property, which the Free to Choose Network adapted to serve as a dormitory for up to twelve students participating in the residential colloquia (Fig. 4.2).

Free To Choose Network has been instrumental in keeping the ideas and teachings of the Friedmans alive through various media projects and launching the colloquia series on the Capitaf property. Chitester worked directly with the Friedmans as executive producer of the award-winning *Free To Choose* television series. The book by the same name was based on transcripts of the TV series and was written by the Friedmans while at Capitaf in the summer and autumn of 1979.

Chitester adds a personal touch for those attending a Capitaf colloquium, as students hear a first-hand account of many stories of the Friedmans and of the filming of the television series. Chitester has recorded nearly two dozen videos sharing some aspects of his work with the Friedmans so students can still benefit from his first-hand accounts even when he is not able to attend a colloquium in person.

Capitaf's unique and secluded setting allows for colloquium participants to fully immerse themselves in discussion. The home, designed by the Friedmans and custom built by local contractors, contains unique artifacts and architectural elements reflecting the Friedmans' living sensibilities as well as conceptual designs inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. The property sits along the top of a ridge and includes a beautiful view featuring the Vermont mountains, Lake Fairlee, and a pond at the bottom of the hillside. The serene and secluded location was a perfect respite from the hectic pace of teaching at the University of Chicago. It allowed the

Friedmans to focus on their writings, visit Baker Library at Dartmouth College for research, and to interact with other summer residents which included both Arthur F. Burns and John Galbraith. Envisioning a Nobel prize winning scholar writing important work becomes tangible for colloquia participants.

Each colloquium's contemporary discussions take place in the living room of the hexagonal main building that was the original home of the Friedmans. A short walk down the hill is student housing, which contains the personal library of Aaron Director, translations of Friedman's books into foreign languages, and books autographed and inscribed to Bob Chitester for his efforts creating the *Free To Choose* television series. Director, who is Rose Friedman's brother, is considered by many as the founder of the Law and Economics movement. Historic elements of Friedman's original home include the clapperboard from the filming of the *Free To Choose* t.v. series and Rose Friedman's elephant souvenir collection.

At many universities, academic credit is not offered for participating in the CapitaF colloquium itself. Nevertheless, quite a few students who attend the colloquium have already completed a semester-long course focused on the content, such as the 'Free to Choose' course offered at FSU. Hence, many of the FSU participants have read the book *Free to Choose* (Friedman and Friedman 1980), watched the public television series of the same name, and have some experience discussing policy issues prior to the colloquium. Regardless of whether students have taken such a course, all participants are provided reading materials in advance of the seminar and are expected to be familiar with the content prior to arriving at CapitaF.

4.3.1 Participation

As of May 2020, 63 students have participated in six CapitaF colloquia, with enrollments evenly split between those organized by University of Arkansas (32) and Florida State University (31). Table 4.1 provides an overview of the colloquia enrollments.

While the facilities impose a hard cap of thirteen students—based on bed space—universities can include a mix of institutions. Partnerships with other universities are encouraged even if one institution is the primary organizer. Thus, while the University of Arkansas (UA) and Florida State University (FSU) limited enrollment in their first colloquia to their respective institutions, subsequent colloquia included student representatives from Lindenwood University (LU), Ashland University (AU), Ball State University (BSU), and the University of Central Arkansas (UCA).

The mixed university enrollment structure has also been successful. In summer 2019, the University of Arkansas's colloquium included nine of their students, two from the University of Central Arkansas, and one from Ball State University in Indiana. Two of FSU's summer 2019 colloquia included mixes of university participants. FSU's May 2019 colloquium included two students from Lindenwood University in Missouri. (LU also organized a subsequent colloquium for university

Table 4.1 Colloquia enrollments, 2017–2019

Sponsoring University	Date	Participation	Participating Universities
University of Arkansas	August 2017	10	UA
University of Arkansas	August 2018	10	UA
Florida State University	August 2018	10	FSU
Florida State University	May 2019	11	FSU, LU
University of Arkansas	August 2019	12	UA, UCA, BSU
Florida State University	August 2019	10	FSU, AU

faculty later that August.) Two students from Ashland University in Ohio attended FSU’s August 2019 session. Feedback has shown that students greatly valued having the perspective of students from other universities participate in the discussions.

4.3.2 *Funding and Contacts*

Capitaf is owned and maintained by Capitaf Partners, LLC. Free To Choose Network is a member of the LLC and has the responsibility to develop educational use of the estate. Free To Choose Network (FTCN) is a nonprofit foundation established in part to curate and promote Milton and Rose Friedman’s intellectual and public policy work. As of 2019, the average cost per student to participate in a Capitaf colloquium was \$2100. This fee is inclusive of lodging, meals, and site visits. Individual programs (and students) are responsible for funding their transit to Capitaf. FTCN maintains the property, conducts scheduling, and participates in each of the colloquia. FTCN representatives provide intellectual context, biographical background on the Friedmans, and details on the history and importance of the property. Colloquia are scheduled through FTCN by contacting the Founder and Executive Chairman (Bob Chitester) or the President and CEO (Robert Chatfield).

Funding models also vary depending on availability of resources and program design. University of Arkansas fully funds their students, covering the colloquium fee (which includes lodging, food, and excursions), transportation from Boston to Capitaf, plus transportation to/from their home location to Boston. Similarly, LU fully funded their students, but used a competitive process for selecting students to attend, similar to a fellowship competition.

FSU, on the other hand, pays for the colloquium fee and transportation from Boston to Capitaf, but requires students to pay for their own transportation to Boston. FSU uses a more inclusive recruiting strategy, relying on interest from classes and general notices. The transportation cost requirement puts ‘skin in the game’ for students who want to attend, while also providing flexibility in transportation arrangements. (One student chose to drive from Florida to Vermont, using the opportunity to sight-see along the way, extend their stay in Boston, and visit Bretton Woods.)

4.4 Colloquia Learning Objectives and Structures

The colloquium's target audience is college students, although it has also served as a unique and highly effective location for faculty, too. In terms of learning objectives, by the end of the seminar, students are expected to be able to: (a) recognize the value of economic principles and theories in evaluating and shaping public policy, (b) identify and recognize core values that underlie world views that shape approaches to political economy, (c) critically evaluate different perspectives on political economy as well as the principles on which policy recommendations are made, (d) more fully understand the intellectual foundations that may underlie or inform approaches to public policy, (e) verbally articulate personal positions and ideas on political economy, and (f) synthesize ideas, values, and principles to form a coherent understanding of political economy.

The colloquia are structured to create an inclusive, accepting, and tolerant seminar climate, a critical component of promoting deep structure learning and effective discussion (Ambrose et al. 2010, pp. 153–179; Howard 2015). Facilitators use the environment, separation from conventional campus activity, and norm setting guidelines to create this climate. The program begins with the phased arrival of students on Sunday. Faculty sometimes travel with the students by bus from Boston to Hanover, Vermont, but all students are transported by faculty from Hanover to Capitaf. This time is used to introduce faculty to students and begin establishing personal relationships. Prior to the first formal meeting (on Sunday evening), students are encouraged to socialize with each other and establish collaborative protocols for assigning beds and tasks in the guest house. Sunday night is a collective dinner where everyone, including faculty and facilitators, introduces themselves and discusses their motivations for attending the seminar. Each lunch and dinner is structured to encourage this personal interaction.

During the discussion sessions, facilitators establish clear guidelines, emphasizing that all ideas and perspectives are welcome as part of a civil and authentic discussion. While the readings are focused on Milton and Rose Friedmans' contributions to political economy which are from a free-market, classical liberal perspective, discussants should be willing, and will be encouraged, to challenge these ideas. Students are expected to refer to each other by name. A discussion queue is kept during each session to ensure all students are able to participate, although none are forced to contribute.

The pedagogy of the colloquia is centered around a modified Socratic dialogue. The students participate in guided discussion, facilitated by faculty (usually faculty from their own university, and also sometimes assisted by a member of the Free to Choose Network). Prior to coming to a Capitaf colloquium, each student reads *Capitalism and Freedom* and *Free to Choose*, and occasionally excerpts from other readings such as *Road to Serfdom* by Hayek (1944), essays from *Morality of Capitalism: What Your Professors Won't Tell You* (Palmer 2011) by authors including Mario Llosa, Vernon Smith, and John Mackey, or *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for A Free Market* by Robert Sirico (2012) (a Catholic

priest). The Socratic discussions throughout the week provide an opportunity for students to answer open-ended questions, listen and reflect on the ideas presented by others, and then formulate and articulate their own response to the intellectual points raised. As one student wrote during his assessment: At Capitaf,

we spend our mornings discussing Friedman's economic theories while mixing in our own experiences and opinions. These friendly debates have actually changed my opinions in countless ways as other students helped 'Bring me to the light' on many issues. We spend our afternoons relaxing on the mountaintop and our nights on the lake, and I've never experienced such a mixed group of people get along so well.

The discussions permit a type of active learning that many students are not able to experience in large lecture classes back at their university. The Socratic method combined with a Liberty Fund-style facilitation of queuing discussants enables 100% participation. A 3 min position exercise at the end of each day allows students to consider the major lessons of the day, identify open questions, and reinforce their ability to verbally articulate their thoughts while probing the perspectives and insights of other participants. The student-centered approach allowed the students to explore different perspectives and approaches to economic theory, economic reasoning, and public policy—even in chapters where the content was dated such as restraint of trade and monopoly.

Respectful and inclusive culture is essential to ensuring active participation and the ability to vet a wide range of viewpoints. The inclusive environment provided a safe space for students to challenge their own ideas and that of others, reflect, present contrarian viewpoints, and explore the deeper understanding of values, principles, and experiences. As one student wrote in an evaluation: "The atmosphere and people and ideas all came together to make an experience that I don't think could be replicated anywhere else."

4.5 Program and Discussion Structure

The structure of the week-long residential program consists of fourteen discussion sessions, each focused on specific chapters of the selected readings, daily 3-min student positions, and site visits selected to deepen the students' understanding of Milton Friedman's intellectual journey and the functioning of entrepreneurial capitalism.

Prior to each colloquium, faculty assign specific chapters to each student to present to the group to start the discussion. The student leading the discussion for a given chapter provides a brief summary of what they believe the key points are in the chapter, and poses a question to the group. This enables a student-driven discussion which encourages deep structure learning (Howard 2015) and authentic learning (Doyle 2011). Faculty are present and assist with facilitating (or when necessary, moderating) dialogue, pose supplemental questions to provoke deeper thought or to question assumptions, occasionally correct factual inaccuracies, and ensure inclusive participation.

4.5.1 *Days One and Two*

The first day at Capitaf is focused on settling in, meeting participants, and establishing protocols and ground rules. The students arrive on Sunday, and the first discussions of content occur promptly on Monday morning (Day 2). The faculty start off with an introduction to Friedman, Capitaf, and the readings. Next comes Session 1, where the students discuss the first chapter of *Capitalism and Freedom* (“The Relation Between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom”) along with the first chapter of *Free to Choose* (“The Power of the Market”). A few questions a moderator might pose during Session 1 include:

- What does Friedman have to say about ‘democratic socialism’?
- What does Friedman mean when he says that history suggests only that capitalism is a necessary condition for political freedom, but not a sufficient condition?

Session 2 is centered around the second chapter of *Capitalism and Freedom* (“The Role of Government in a Free Society”) and the second chapter of *Free to Choose* (“The Tyranny of Controls”). A few discussion questions related to Session 2:

- Should the government’s power to spend be limited by an amendment to the Constitution?
- Name an example of a paternalistic justification for a current policy. Why does Friedman generally oppose paternalism in policymaking?

Each session is separated by 15-min breaks. An hour is reserved for a catered lunch. After lunch, students dive into Session 3, with a focus on chapter 4 of *Capitalism and Freedom*: “International Financial and Trade Arrangements.” A few questions for thought pertaining to the topic of this chapter include:

- Why were the Smoot-Hawley tariffs enacted and what was the effect of these policies?
- Would the United States benefit from getting rid of tariffs even if other countries did not remove the tariffs that they have placed on the U.S.?
- When he wrote *Capitalism and Freedom* in 1962, what did Friedman believe to be the greatest threat to economic freedom in the short run? If alive today, do you think he would consider something else to be the greatest threat?

Session 4 consists of discussion around chapter 6 from each book: “The Role of Government in Education” from *Capitalism and Freedom*, and “What’s Wrong With Our Schools?” in *Free to Choose*. To stimulate discussion, the colloquium moderators might prompt the students with the following:

- Discuss the pros and cons of a school voucher program.
- How is Friedman’s argument for school vouchers influenced by his belief that the lowest levels of schooling do the most to promote a stable and democratic society?

- Some believe inner-city public schools protect equality for minorities, and that open competition from a voucher system might dismantle such schools and bring harm to the goal of equality. Construct an argument for or against this assertion.

The last session of each day includes a ‘3 Minute Position’ discussion. All students are expected to participate, but volunteers are solicited for the opening position statements. The group provides facilitated feedback. By the end of the week, each student will have had at least one turn giving a 3 Minute Position. These 3 Minute Position sessions enable the students the opportunity to formulate a cohesive argument, and gives them practice articulating their thoughts and responding to push-back from their peers. While all discussion sessions are designed to encourage critical thinking, these final sessions are explicitly designed to facilitate critical elements of deeper levels of thinking and authentic learning: synthesis, analysis, integration, and application of principles beyond the seminar.

Students are then given about 90 min for free time prior to dinner. The faculty facilitators schedule special dinner guests to visit with the students on various evenings. These dinner guests often provide practical insight into contemporary issues of political economy and, in the case of Capitaf, do not necessarily have a direct connection to the day’s content. For example, speakers have included experts on zoning, health care reform, and second amendment issues. The speakers are invited for their insight, perspective, and conversation. After dinner, students have the rest of each evening to read in the library, which includes many early editions of major texts on economics and political economy, spend quiet time in reflection, discuss the day’s activities, or play games. Figure 4.3 shows the authors re-reading the works of the Friedmans (and enjoying the view!) during downtime in the day.



Fig. 4.3 Authors preparing for discussion during downtime. Source: Author’s collection

4.5.2 Day Three

This day consists of three discussion sessions and then the rest of the afternoon is dedicated to an excursion. Session 6 kicks off Tuesday's first scholarly session, with discussion on chapter 8 of *Capitalism and Freedom*: "Monopoly and the Social Responsibility of Business and Labor." Questions for thought related to the material covered in Session 6 include:

- What is an example of a government-supported monopoly Friedman supports and one that he opposes? Why does he support the former but not the latter?
- What is Friedman's view on corporate social responsibility? What is your view?

Session 7 consists of *Capitalism and Freedom's* chapter 9 ("Occupational Licensure") and *Free to Choose's* chapter 8 ("Who Protects the Worker?"). Discussion questions include:

- What is the typical rationale given when government officials restrict who can legally practice an occupation? What tends to actually be the source of the demand for such restrictions: concerned consumers, or individuals/businesses already practicing in the occupation?
- What is the key difference between certification versus licensing requirements? Which did Friedman believe to be the better system, and why? Which do you support, and why?
- What are secondary effects of licensing requirements? Discuss potential pros and cons in various industries.

Session 8, as in the previous day, wraps up the morning discussions with more 3 Minute Positions. After lunch, students participate in a scholarship/research oriented site visit to Dartmouth College, where Dartmouth faculty give a lecture about the times that Milton Friedman spent using the Baker Library. Faculty provide background on Friedman's relationship with Vermont and Dartmouth. The Friedmans used their home in Vermont as quiet and study times during the summers, but Milton Friedman used the Baker Library as his primary center for research. Later, as teaching responsibilities became less onerous, the Friedmans would split their time evenly between Chicago and Capitaf. Nearly all of Milton's writing was done from Vermont or New Hampshire.

4.6 Day Four

Like the day prior, Wednesday consists of three discussion sessions and another site visit during the afternoon. Session 9's focus is chapter 10 ("The Distribution of Income") of *Capitalism and Freedom*, and chapter 5 ("Created Equal") of *Free to Choose*. Questions for thought that colloquium moderators may want to ask the students to discuss include:

- In Chapter 10 of *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman (2002[1962], p. 51) states “A society that puts equality—in the sense of equality of outcome—ahead of freedom will end up with neither equality nor freedom. The use of force to achieve equality will destroy freedom, and the force, introduced for good purposes, will end up in the hands of people who use it to promote their own interests. On the other hand, a society that puts freedom first will, as a happy by-product, end up with both greater freedom and greater equality.” Do you agree with Friedman? Why or why not? To support your stance, bring in historical examples of countries that predominantly use free markets versus those that use(d) socialism.
- What does Friedman believe to be the great achievement of capitalism? Do you agree with his assessment?

Session 10 emphasizes chapter 11 (“Social Welfare Measures”) of *Capitalism and Freedom* and Chapter 4 (“Cradle to Grave”) of *Free to Choose*. Questions that students may want to consider include:

- Why would Friedman prefer that the government provide an impoverished family with cash rather than publicly-funded housing?
- In the *Free to Choose* video that corresponds to Chapter 4: “Cradle to Grave” of *Free to Choose*, Friedman said that he believes one of the worst things about expansive government welfare programs is that it discourages private charities from giving or trying to help those in need. Why does Friedman believe private charities can better help individuals in their communities than the federal government can? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Session 11 concludes the morning discussion with the 3 Minute Position exercise immediately prior to lunch. The afternoon is spent on another site visit. At Capitaf, these visits have typically included Goodrich’s Maple Farm. This family-owned maple farm is presented as an example of an innovative, entrepreneurial small business. This is also where ‘Milton’s Own’ maple products are made. The business has pioneered many technologies that improve sugar processing. Many of the techniques and skills have been passed down by generations. The family has strategically taken advantage of shifting preferences toward healthier foods and lifestyles, building their enterprise into what is now the largest producer of pure maple sugar in the United States.

4.6.1 Day Five

Thursday consists of the last three discussion sessions. After breakfast, the students begin Session 12 where they discuss chapter 12 (“Alleviation of Poverty”) from *Capitalism and Freedom*. Questions to consider include:

- Why does Friedman think fiscal stimulus by the government does not produce the desired results?

- What type of government program does Friedman propose to assist in alleviating poverty?
- What type of tax structure did Friedman favor, and why? What type of tax structure do you consider to be best? Defend your opinion.

Session 13 affords the students a final opportunity to give a 3 Minute Position. In Session 14, students discuss why socialism seems to be so appealing for some, bringing in chapter 13 (“Conclusion”) of *Capitalism and Freedom*, chapter 10 (“The Tide is Turning”) of *Free to Choose*, as well as a few chapters from Hayek’s (1944) *Road to Serfdom*: chapter 3 (“Individualism and Collectivism”) and chapter 7 (“Economic Control and Totalitarianism”). Potential discussion questions include:

- Economic planning tends to become much more difficult than theorists expect. What could cause this disconnect between theory and reality?
- Was Nazism, as Hayek insists, a type of socialism, or was it basically capitalistic in nature? Support your viewpoint.
- Can a socialist society protect individual freedoms? Suggest some safeguards you would want to implement and how they might work. Can you think of a scenario where even the safeguard measure you put in place doesn’t go as planned or ends up eroded?

The students have free time the rest of the day to relax and explore the property. After dinner, the students are awarded Capitaf Certificates of Achievement and are officially recognized as ‘Capitaf scholars.’

4.7 Impact on Learning

The 63 students participating in Capitaf colloquia since 2017 represent a wide range of ethnicities, genders, cultural backgrounds, and majors. While many have been economics majors, students focused on philosophy, political science, international affairs, chemical engineering, and English have also participated. One student is now pursuing a graduate degree in film!

Students have universally praised the colloquium and its structure. One female graduate student from the University of Arkansas wrote: “Of the many opportunities I have been afforded, I can easily say that Capitaf has been the best one yet. I am a better person and scholar because of the learnings you shared. I will be forever grateful to the people and learnings at Capitaf.”

The location itself is transformational for many participants. For example, one female student from the University of Arkansas (UA) wrote, “It was surreal to stay in Milton Friedman’s home. The view of the landscape, with the endless flowers and mountains was astounding.” Another female student from Florida State University (FSU) wrote, “There is something about this house and this land that inspires passionate and robust [conversation], and not always in favor of Milton Friedman’s

ideas.” A male student from FSU said, “The colloquium did not just meet my expectations, it blew them out of the water. It’s a once in a lifetime experience. It’s a horrible understatement to say that I’m glad I attended the colloquium; I’m honored beyond belief to have participated.”

Capitaf is a 30-min drive to Dartmouth College and Baker Library, the site where the Friedmans did the lionshare of their research for *Capitalism and Freedom* and wrote *Free to Choose*. Students tour the library and attend a lecture on Friedman’s time at Dartmouth. Thus, the setting of Milton and Rose Friedman’s home allows students to connect scholarship to practice in a geographically and intellectually unique way.

For almost all, students cited that the ability to get away from their college campus enabled them to minimize distractions and immerse themselves in ideas, theory, and application—creating an unprecedented environment for learning. The site visit to the Goodrich Maple Farm also receives high marks from students as it showcases how the principles and concepts described in Friedman’s writings apply in practice. The visit to Dartmouth College reinforces the value of rigorous discourse and the role research plays in formulating ideas and worldviews, as students envision Milton Friedman conducting his research. The bucolic setting of Capitaf reinforces the benefits of a deliberative practice focused on independent reflection and inquiry. The innately strong connection to the Friedmans and their works is not replicable in other settings.

Florida State University asks its students to complete a seminar assessment at the end of each colloquium. Using a standard response range of ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree,’ 95% or more of students ($N = 18$) strongly agreed that:

- “The quality of the facility and setting was excellent.”
- “My interacting with the other students at the colloquium was a pleasant and rewarding experience.”
- “I’m glad I attended the colloquium.”
- “I believe the colloquium at Capitaf was a unique experience compared to other colloquia/conferences.”
- “Overall, the colloquium was well worth my time.”

Written comments about why the colloquium was worth their time focused on the key ideas brought out during discussion, the opportunity for networking, the economic history of the location, and gaining a better understanding of political economy and how it relates to current political issues.

Students universally agreed that the setting of the Friedmans’ Capitaf home provided a unique environment for learning and critically evaluating the Friedmans’ ideas. A few student testimonials about the importance of the seminar learning climate include:

- The atmosphere and people and ideas all came together to make an experience that I don’t think could be replicated anywhere else. I feel very lucky that I was able to come and experience this completely amazing event with a group of such excellent people.

- It has been an absolute pleasure to be here. ...All of the students who are fortunate enough to be here have had their minds expanded and their views strengthened on the subjects of the benefits of the free market. Students can freely meet to discuss ideas in depth, but to travel to the mountains where Milton Friedman lived and gained inspiration adds a special quality to the overall discussion.
- Incredible setting for discussion.
- The fact that I had access to such an amazing library made for much less sleep but in a good way.
- This was a great program. I was a bit resistant about the idea of coming to Vermont in order to study the works of Dr. Friedman but after coming here, I'm happy that I did. I met a lot of great people with whom I could discuss ideas with in a relaxing setting.

4.8 Conclusion

While some might be hesitant to structure a program around the writings of one person, particularly one with a focused ideological perspective, the Capitaf experience demonstrates how such a program can result in an engaging active-learning opportunity for students. The colloquia represent practical ways the writings of a well-rounded intellectual can foster robust discussions over wide-ranging ideas and interests. Students learned to appreciate and respect alternative points of view and perspectives among their peers while also more clearly defining their own positions and worldviews. The focus on promoting student-driven discussion and critical thinking, creating a respectful space for disagreement, and enforcing rules of civility encouraged students to challenge the Friedmans' ideas while developing a deeper appreciation of his informed perspective.

Numerous students commented on the transformative impact of the colloquium on their own thinking:

The discussions and passion led to self-reflection and some changes in my own mindset, and I hope my ideas struck others.

The Capitaf colloquium was really the first time I was able to challenge and refine my pre-existing beliefs about the free market with such a well-informed, fun group of individuals. Leaving here, I feel much more confident in my beliefs and my ability to communicate the values of the free market.

These reflections are consistent with a seminar designed and executed to encourage authentic learning. Doyle (2011, pp. 35–36) summarizes eleven features of authentic learning as it applies to teaching at the college and university level. Although the Capitaf program captures and incorporates almost all of these features, a week-long seminar with a primarily intellectual focus is unlikely to capture all eleven features of this process. For example, having students produce a 'product' to demonstrate the successful application of the principles would be challenging when the primary focus is to deepen understanding of core principles and perspectives

(although numerous students recognized the practical application of their learning beyond the classroom). Similarly, the focus on intellectual inquiry does not lend itself to real-time data assessment. Doyle himself points out that an authentic learning experience does not need to have all of the eleven features he outlined, and he instead encourages the reader to utilize the list as a guide in the development of authentic learning opportunities.

The Capitaf program, fusing structure with its unique setting, scores well on most of the critical criteria for designing authentic learning programs. Relegating faculty to roles as facilitators rather than lecturers, putting students at the center of discussions, and the organic nature of the seminars provide opportunities for critical inquiry, reflection, analysis, and synthesis. Below are additional criteria identified by Doyle (2011), juxtaposed with comments voluntarily provided from student assessments of the program.

- Deals with real-world [problems]
 - I have been to over a dozen conferences. This one works because it is open, fun, and allows for real-world applications.
 - Capitaf created a welcoming dialogue between conflicting ideas by identifying economic challenges, narrowing down conflicts to singular issues, and applied lessons from *Capitalism and Freedom* to address the problems.
 - The students at Capitaf had many ideological differences and at the same time, one important similarity: a devotion to making the world a better place.
- Has value beyond the school setting
 - It is one thing to read Milton Friedman for oneself and learn from the text and it is another thing completely to be able to immerse oneself in his work and life with other curious individuals. Because of the Capitaf colloquium I was able to come to a better understanding of Friedman and consider for myself how his and Rose's ideas can and should be utilized in the real world.
 - The group entered the program completely in the dark and without any connection. By the end we appreciated each other's opinions and still meet up back in Tallahassee.
 - Not only did I learn more about policy, I also networked and gained more perspective on my professional goals.
- Is interdisciplinary
 - Never before have I taken an economics course; what I've learned here is worth more than an economics course in my opinion. The immersion is like no other, the group discussions were intriguing, and the educational experience is beyond value. This is a truly once in a lifetime experience and has been the greatest honor and privilege to have been a part of this experience.
 - Continue to mix students from other universities; it's a unique networking dynamic.
- Allows a variety of learning styles

- (The students did not write a testimonial specifically mentioning learning styles so we have no direct quotes, but the colloquia indeed incorporate multiple learning styles. Reading the assigned books prior to the colloquium allows for intrapersonal/solitary learning and visual learning. Verbal, auditory, and interpersonal/social learning is put to use during the discussions once at Capitaf. A form of physical/kinaesthetic learning takes place when engaging in activities on the Capitaf property and during the excursions.)
- Allows students to take ownership of their learning
 - Capitaf allowed me to challenge my beliefs and thoughts in a professional and academic setting. With Capitaf alone, it has tremendously [molded] me into the person and economist I am meant to become.
- Uses scaffolding to assist learning
 - The short stories and memories about Milton and his family were the best! I loved that all of the moderators/ speakers let us talk and didn't let their own opinions / emotions into the conversations unless backed by scientific evidence.
 - The moderators pressed us for more, in a good way, and brought enormous energy to the colloquium.
- Encourages students to work together and discuss how to solve problems
 - The discussions took routes I would not have expected therefore challenging [me] to think critically.
 - I strongly believe that I am leaving this experience with more insight and understanding resulting from our discussions as well as more respect and appreciation for my newfound friends' opinions.

Importantly, student responses were clear that the off-campus setting was a critical element of their learning. "After our daily intense yet engaging discussions, we could not help but feel relaxed thanks to the beautiful Green Mountain Range. This awe-inspiring property provides many activities to bond with your class and the sweet mountain air ensures you will wake refreshed and ready to fully engage."

In summary, the Capitaf colloquia provide tangible evidence that off-campus study, when properly designed and executed, can promote active and authentic learning. Facilitated dialogue and discussion promote critical thinking by challenging values and assumptions. Students learned that agreement is not necessary to more fully appreciate abstract ideas, create a more sophisticated understanding of fundamental concepts, or extend their learning to real world applications. In addition, they learned, and appreciated, the value of working with peers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to come to a more holistic understanding of political economy. As testimony to the bonding between his peers during the week, an anonymous student whose birthday coincided with the colloquium wrote it was "one of the best birthdays of my life!"

Moreover, students found that Friedman's 'old' ideas were relevant to contemporary discussions and contexts. Capitaf and the Vermont mountains were more than enough to challenge them in satisfying and productive ways that could not be accomplished to the same extent on their home campus. As one student said: Capitaf was the "[b]est week of my life!"

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