

**Business on the Front Lines**  
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“Be not afraid.”  
--Pope John Paul II

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens  
can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”  
--Margaret Mead

“Make it matter”  
--General Martin Dempsey (retired)

“Walk in the footsteps of the *campesinos*. Not to understand their hardships,  
but rather their dreams.”  
--Monsignor Rossilino  
Bishop of Zacapa, Guatemala  
BOTFL IV

“Never underestimate the human dignity associated with a good day’s work.”  
--Viva Bartkus

## **CLASS OVERVIEW**

Business on the Front Lines (BOTFL) examines the impact of business on rebuilding post-conflict societies through service to local partners. In past years, the teams have served local partners in countries such as Rwanda, the Philippines, Egypt, Guatemala, Bosnia, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Cambodia on problems ranging from mining to agriculture to micro-finance.

### **Learning Goals:**

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Define a problem in highly uncertain environments from a set of ambiguous information
- Work effectively and professionally in different cultural environments
- Drive impact on business and peace related problems working with local partners
- Develop increased sensitivity toward the impact of business in society

## Serving Partners

In the past, students have had the opportunity to add value to our partners' initiatives by engaging in the following activities:

- Investigative Research—Teams conduct research on specific industries, problems or issues both in-country and at Notre Dame to provide varying viewpoints on the issues.
- Interviews—Teams are equipped and trained to meet and interview individuals in various industries. Past teams have given our partners the opportunity to meet with individuals and organizations that they might not normally interact with.
- Analysis—Teams prepare financial analysis on various business opportunities. The output of these has provided our partners with initial decision metrics, as well as possible partnerships opportunities.
- Business Model Development—Teams develop business and partnership models for our partners within specific opportunity areas.
- Teams provide a new and different perspective that our partners might not develop internally.
- Teams provide an opportunity for training for our partners' local staff.

## Class Assignments

Assignments will be a combination of readings for classroom discussion that are also designed to help students prepare for the partner project in the field.

Class Readings	Every class
Reflection 1 (individual)	Mod 3 - Week 1
Project hypothesis/issue tree/emerging storyline	Week 4
Pre-departure Memo to partner on Emerging Findings	Week 6
Day 1 Presentation to partner on Emerging Findings	early in Week 7
Reflection 2 (individual)	Pre-departure
Reflection 3 (individual)	Mod 4 – Week 1
In-Country Project Presentations	Week 1
Thank You Notes	Week 3
Project Impact summaries	Week 3
Final Memo to Partner on recommendations/Presentation	Week 4
Case studies/Contributions to Future BOTFL	Week 5
Reflection 4 (individual)	Week 6

## **Individual Reflections**

Each student will be responsible for writing four reflection papers over the course of the semester. The broad topics for these reflections are listed below, but they are meant to provide an opportunity for you to integrate your country readings, your project work and the class readings in a reflective way, while giving you the opportunity to be creative.

**Reflection 1:** What is business? What is good? What is conflict? (1 page)

**Reflection 2:** Pre-departure reflection—what are you excited about? What are your fears? (maximum 5 pages)

**Reflection 3:** Post-country visit reflection—what surprised, challenged, or excited you? (maximum 5 pages)

**Reflection 4:** Personal reflection on the BOTFL experience (maximum 5 pages)

## **Team Work**

Outside of class, you will spend a great deal of time working with your project teams. This will involve communicating with your faculty advisor, partner contacts, and professors to develop hypotheses, work plans, issue trees, and conduct pre-departure research, interviews, analysis in order to make the most of your time in-country. Teams should plan for the following:

- Two team working sessions per week. One of these working sessions should be with your BOTFL team advisor. Its best to schedule them during the BOTFL Retreat for the entire semester to May
- Weekly calls with the partner. The timing of these calls depends on partner staff availability. However, these calls may frequently be early in the morning or late at night, given time differences in Asia and Africa.
- Team get-to-know-you dinner within the first two weeks of classes beginning in January

## **Team Structure**

Given the sheer amount of work required to coordinate such a visit, there are clear roles for each team member. Before the Christmas break, each team member should elect to take on one of the following roles.

### **Administration Logistics**

- General Duties: Coordination of all transportation, including transportation to the airport, flight coordination, accommodation and logistics of travel documentation, visas and immunizations. Collects in-country expenses from partner and for faculty advisor. Works with Professor Bartkus on all travel and itemizing expenses.
- Deliverables: Smooth travel to and within country.

- Characteristics: Organized, thrives on logistics, detail-oriented on travel and expenses, enjoys planning.
  - Copies of passports/emergency contacts to Professor Bartkus by December
  - All flights should be booked by December
  - All visas should be obtained by January
  - All accommodations should be booked by end of January
  - All immunizations/anti-malaria medication by end of January
  - All expenses should be collected and presented to Professor Bartkus within one week of return from visit.
  - Medical insurance by early February

### **Knowledge Management**

- General Duties: Capture all materials developed, including pre-departure research, field interviews, and presentations for project. Save these materials in BOTFL folders for future classes.
- Deliverables: Impact summary for website; Team's contribution to future BOTFL.

### **Gifts**

- General Duties: Acquire and coordinate gifts for interviews and visits. Make thank you cards. Ensures handwritten thank you notes from BOTFL team after each substantive external interaction; assistance with other BOTFL trouble shooting as needed.
- Upon return from in-country visit, coordinates BOTFL activities including ND Day in April, Welcome back dinner, and preparation for the last class in Log Chapel (see memo on gifts)
- Characteristics: Likes to say thank you, genuinely grateful, enjoys planning.

### **Chief of Social Media**

- General Duties: Manage social media aspects of the class, including uploading pictures to the Facebook page and tweeting. Coordinate a blog entry from each team member.
- Deliverables: Work with Mendoza staff to incorporate BOTFL stories into website and further marketing materials. Communicate with BOTFL Alumni, donors, and supporters
- Qualities: Good feeling for blogging, social media, creative writing, photography, making videos (see website for Mindanao, Colombia, and Uganda videos as examples).

## **THREE PHASES OF BOTFL**

In many classes, learning occurs throughout the semester and the exams and projects occur at the end of the term. In contrast, BOTFL is a substantially front-end loaded class. A great deal of this

work will take place outside of class time. It is vital that students develop early routines and build sufficient time outside of class to meet regularly with their teams, their faculty advisors, and their discussion leading groups.

### **Phase 1: Deep Dive**

**Philosophy:** Phase 1 is based on the philosophy that complex problems must be approached from multiple angles, and that these must be considered in the unique context of each country. In this phase, we tackle the complex challenges driving each project by considering how different theories and perspectives might inform the particulars of each context. In-class sessions will cover economics, philosophy, political science, law, peace studies, and business perspectives. Students will bring their independent research about the in-country contexts and the projects to bear upon these theories. Even before class, you will be expected to build a knowledge base regarding your country and the project that you will be undertaking. You may consider reading the history of the country and biographies of individuals who lived or worked in those areas. You may also want to build expertise in areas of health, agriculture, mining or any other topic that relates directly to the project assigned. You should certainly leverage the lessons learned from previous BOTFL experiences.

In class, and through the preparation of readings, we will consider how perspectives on peace, business, law, and political science can build a picture of the challenges and opportunities of doing business in post-conflict societies.

**BOTFL Retreat** Every year, BOTFL begins with a weekend retreat. The Retreat's purpose is threefold: first, team building; second, learning different problem solving approaches; and third, applying teamwork and problem solving to an actual BOTFL case. In order to help students prepare for BOTFL, previous classes have created case studies. BOTFL alumni return to coach students through the case. Here is how the case will work:

- Each team is expected to get together in person or over the phone for 2-3 hours to work through the initial packet of information prior to the Retreat. This is meant to simulate the team's research prior to going in country.
- While at the Retreat, each team will get two more packets of information. This approach is meant to simulate the data gathering during the first week and then the second week in country.
- At the end, each team is expected to present their partner recommendations to the BOTFL instructor, faculty advisors, and alumni present at the Retreat.
- Afterward, at the Retreat each team will apply its lessons learned on their own project and partner to begin planning their problem solving process.

### **Phase 2: In-Country**

“Walk in the footsteps of the *campesinos*. Not to understand their hardships, but rather their dreams.” –Monsignor Rossilino, Bishop of Zacapa, Guatemala, BOTFL IV.

Philosophy: The projects we tackle in this course are complex and multifaceted, they concern real lives and their full nature cannot be understood by reading a book. The second phase is based on the philosophy that in order to truly understand the challenges facing a particular context, we must first walk with and learn from those we hope to serve.

The second phase takes place during inter-term. Although much research can be accumulated early, the time in country provides the most opportunities for fact-finding and research. The concept is for a total immersion into a complex situation, at the end of which the BOTFL team will present a tentative recommendation.

Prior to departure, the teams will summarize their research in a memo on emerging findings and a presentation to partners on the project problem/opportunity (see website for 5 examples of such pre-country memos to Partners of Emerging Findings).

Past BOTFL classes wish to emphasize the following:

- Take notes on meetings, interviews, visits, observations every day in country.
- Dive up the responsibility and type them up each evening – these notes become the data that reinforces your ultimate recommendations to the partner. You will need to add them as an Appendix to your final recommendations. Multiple partners have asked for these field notes to help them with their internal decision-making
- Expect to have problem solving meetings every night, while on the bus, while waiting for meetings – while you are in country. New information changes your ideas of the potential solutions for partners. You will need time to debate them within the team

Each project and partner are different – some are formal, others rather less so. Teams should work with partners to develop itineraries, meetings, interviews regarding the project. This can include meeting with business, religious, political and academic leaders, and in a typical day, students may be able to interview up to five different people. In the past, it has been helpful to have the team travel further in-field in its data-gathering during the first week. The second week will be scheduled with some flexibility for the joint partner-BOTFL team to make adjustments as needed. It is possible that the team will be split to cover more interviews.

During the final few days, the team will come together to present initial findings to our partners. This will be scheduled with time for group questions and discussion and followed by a private meeting with the country representative or project leader to gain their feedback and discuss post-trip expectations and deliverables.

It should be noted that, although the problems are defined and researched by the team in phase 1, these problem statements frequently change as the problem is further examined and understood. These changes could be a shift in focus from one area of the organization to another, a narrowing of the scope of the project, or even finding that the problem statement needs to change entirely. In addition to maintaining flexibility on the ground with respect to projects, it is also important to note that the pace of life in many of the countries that we visit may be different than a typical American business environment.

As a result, students and faculty should expect to be flexible with respect to the timing of responses to requests from our partners. For example, in a number of countries, interview schedules were not fully solidified in advance, but rather are planned at the beginning of each day, because the context would not have supported such advance planning. In other cases, travel to distant places may require students to spend a significant portion of each day in traffic being transported to sites. Adjusting gracefully to these unknown unknowns is a natural part of the BOTFL in-country experience.

### **Phase 3: Delivery and Reflection**

**Philosophy:** The third phase is based on the philosophy that there are no quick solutions to the challenges our partners face, and that we must take time to both individually and collectively reflect on the lessons learned, on how we can drive value for our partners, and on how we might give back to those who enabled us to have this opportunity. A series of readings are designed to assist in these reflections.

Phase 3 has three parts. The first is the completion of the project. This typically consists of both in-class and outside of class activities. In-class activities include two presentations to solicit feedback from classmates and the delivery of the final project. Outside of class, continued contact with our partners will include periodic conference calls to communicate progress and gain additional feedback before formulating final recommendations. The recommendations should be in a final memo detailing the problem statement, in-country findings, analysis. It should be delivered within 4-6 weeks of returning from in-country, with a final conference call with our partners to answer any questions about the memo. (See website for 5 examples of Final Memos to Partners on Recommendations.)

The second part of this phase of the course is giving back to all those who supported the BOTFL course, but also making contributions to all future BOTFLs. This involves presenting the projects to Mendoza and at partner headquarters, improving the course for the next BOTFL, writing impact summaries, case studies and properly thanking all of our supporters. This will include both participation in ND Day and a presentation to Mendoza well wishers. (See website for examples of impact summaries and final Presentations to Mendoza Supporters.) Please discuss with Professor Bartkus your team's ideas for your unique contributions to future BOTFLs.

The third part of this phase involves reflection. What do we think now, given our in country experiences, about the topics we discussed in class prior to departure? The experience in-country is one that is likely to leave a lasting impression. This is a unique experience that often takes a great deal of time for its full impact to be realized. It is during this third stage that students and faculty have the opportunity to individually and communally digest the experience. The third and fourth reflection papers, as well as class discussions that revisit earlier questions will aid in this reflection.

Along these lines, sometimes it helps to have less formal time with your classmates to celebrate your BOTFL experiences, share stories and photos and talk through struggles and impressions. We will schedule a "Welcome Home" dinner after our time in country. The last class in the Old Log Chapel is also designed for such sharing, celebration and reflection.

## CLASS DISCUSSIONS

**Format:** BOTFL represents a collective journey of discovery. For many of you, such a journey might be unfamiliar. In this course, the content is entirely based on the discussion of assigned readings and projects. These discussions will depart from both lecture classroom format and case based classroom format. As a result, the burden is on the students to consider thoughtfully before class and drive the direction of discussions.

**Readings:** For each class, students will be expected to prepare by reading a number of documents. The range of these documents is vast and organized around a set of key questions. Successful preparation for each class will include individuals a) reading each article critically, b) reflecting on the ways that the articles relate to the key questions, and c) considering the implications for country projects.

**Discussion Leaders:** In order to facilitate this discussion, two students will be formally assigned to lead each day's assignments. Discussion leaders will be responsible for moderating the discussion and keeping the topic moving. They will prepare a one-page handout to distribute to guide the discussion. The purpose of discussion leading is not to summarize, but to ask probing questions. Discussion leaders are welcome to discuss their approach with faculty beforehand.

*\*If for any reason you are unable to lead discussion on the assigned day, it is your responsibility to find a replacement or trade with another student.*

## Grading

A note about grading: The assignments in this course are meant to be developmental, rather than evaluative. This class is not about grades, but rather, doing what is required to serve our partners, our BOTFL program, and each other. Along this journey there will be a number of deliverables that aid in this process of discovery. ***All students who complete all assignments with full effort and quality should reasonably expect full marks.*** However, to ensure that each person is held accountable for team deliverables, each student's final grade will be adjusted according to peer evaluations and evaluations from the faculty advisor.

## COURSE POLICIES

### Special Accommodations

I believe everyone deserves to be able to take the course without undue hardship deriving from conditions, such as physical or learning disabilities. If you have any such condition, please notify me in the first week of class and I will strive to make appropriate accommodations.

### Honor Code

If you are enrolled in this course, you are agreeing that you have read, understand, and accept the University's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the honor code. All course interactions are governed by the Notre Dame Honor Code. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Although you may discuss assignments outside of class, turning in identical assignments (when such assignments are not group assignments), plagiarizing previously written

materials (whether such materials are from a current or previous term of this class, from Wikipedia, or elsewhere) will be considered cheating and will be penalized as dictated by University policy.

**Other course norms:**

- Turn off and do not use cell phones or wireless devices (i.e. PDAs) in class. These are distractions to fellow classmates and can disrupt the class.
- Be funny. Take controversial positions. Be a devil's advocate. Use examples from your own experience. Ask difficult questions. Try to connect the ideas in class to things you have heard/read about in the media. Having fun in this class makes the learning environment more positive for everyone.
- Look after each other. No one is left behind.
- Take our projects and our interactions with our partners seriously. Please respect our relationship by respecting the integrity of the course and its partners.
- Text, cell or email is almost always the best way to get in touch with me outside of class.

***Welcome to Business on the Frontlines***