Because a (narrower or wider) community widely prevails among the Earth’s peoples, a transgression of rights in one place in the world is felt everywhere; consequently, the idea of cosmopolitan right is not fantastic and exaggerated, but rather an amendment to the unwritten code of national and international rights, necessary to the public rights of men in general. Only such an amendment allows us to flatter ourselves with the thought that we are making continual progress towards perpetual peace. (Kant, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, 1795)

A liberal arts education, while a good in itself, is designed to serve some greater end, but how that is understood has changed over time, from its origins in the ancient world through medieval Europe through its particular incarnation in the 19th and early 20th century U.S., to today. It could be argued that there is a thread of continuity in what is meant by the “liberal arts” themselves, but that each sociohistorical era has had to adapt the skills and content of such an education to the needs of a particular class and a particular time. Until recently, and arguably still today, a liberal arts education served the
elite of society. However in the U.S., even outside the world of liberal arts colleges, the majority of degree programs, professional or not, include a liberal arts component meant to give students broad exposure to multiple ways of knowing and to the skills associated with being a broadly-educated person in today’s society. The word “liberal” in liberal arts\(^1\) derives from the Latin word *liber* or free and has been used first in opposition to servile or illiberal and later in opposition to vocational education. Thus liberal education meant originally education for free men, an education to prepare men for the exercise of freedom within their polity.

Liberal arts education in the U.S. is deeply tied to educating free citizens, as well as to educating the whole person. Thus we are practicing here an education based in freedom and for freedom. I use the term freedom in both its negative and its positive meanings.\(^2\) Liberal arts education makes people free in liberating them from the prejudices and automatic beliefs that condition their world as members of a particular time, nation, class, race, religion, family, or gender. It ideally also gives them a sense of responsibility as moral agents and as citizens operating at the local, national, and global scales.\(^3\) They require both knowledge and probably more importantly skills of inquiry and critical thinking in order to achieve these freedoms. But what does that entail in the context of today’s world? What I intend to do here is to give a sketch of globalization as a context for discussing the ends of liberal arts education today, which I will characterize as education for freedom and for citizenship, citizenship understood as overlapping participation in local, national, and global spheres. I will then consider how one would go about globalizing the liberal arts as they have been practiced in the 20th century. When
Immanuel Kant reoriented the debates in epistemology from the question of how humans can have reliable knowledge of the external world to how the mind synthesizes data to produce knowledge of the external world, he called his shift in approach metaphorically a Copernican revolution. His tactic was to deconstruct the binary opposition of sensation/empiricism and reason/rationalism and replace it with a synthesis that made both terms in the opposition necessary for knowledge. What this conference is calling “globalizing the liberal arts” can be similarly understood, not as an opposition between studying western civilization versus studying the non-west, not as replacing the tradition of Euro-American liberal arts with something foreign, but rather as a shift in perspective from West vs. non-West to a heterogeneous, mobile, transnational whole. In order to ground my rationale for globalizing the liberal arts, I shall first define briefly the phenomena of globalization, then reflect on the largest goals of a liberal arts education in light of contemporary conditions of globalization, and finally sketch out how some of the more specific understandings of the liberal arts can be reframed to suit the rapidly changing conditions of today’s world.

**Global Realities**

The question of what globalization is hinges on the historical framework within which it is placed. Some scholars argue that it has always characterized human trade and cultural development. Some see the beginning of globalization in the late 15th-century European voyages of exploration leading to the triangular Atlantic world system. Others define globalization as a phenomenon of the late 20th century, characterized by rapid electronic communication and travel. A more inclusive perspective argues that the networks of
communication and trade used by ancient and modern empires laid the groundwork for today’s technologically driven movements of capital, production, and consumption of commodities and cultures. In the domain of economics, globalization refers to the transnationality of capital accumulation, corporate ownership, factories, production, labor, and sales. Some examples would be the way many commodities, such as automobiles and clothes, are produced from natural resources and components scattered around the globe, with corporate owners of the company located in the U.S. or Europe or Japan or the way telephone customer service agents for a local U.S. company might be located in Bangalore, India. What especially differentiates this global form of service and production from earlier incarnations of international trade is the dispersal and multiplicity of components and the mobility of factories. There is no necessary connection between the nation where the raw materials come from, the nation where they are assembled into commodities, or the nation where they are sold. Any of these can change abruptly as the trade relations between Denmark and the Middle East have just done. Hence a juice label lists a host of possible countries as the origin of its fruit, allowing the manufacturer to substitute whatever apples or grapes are cheap and readily available without reprinting the label. Yet this homogenization remains contested as different nations and regional blocs try to maintain their own standards of environmental protection against the World Trade Organization’s commitment to freeing trade from any form of national protectionism. When a factory is established in a new site, all kinds of social disruption occur, especially to gender roles as women are the usual laborers in maquiladoras. And often those who leave agricultural villages to work in such factories end up emigrating later to find new jobs.
Some theorists equate globalization with the export of Western, or even American, economic and political institutions, science and technology, and the cultural norms, practices, and values that come with them (Barber, 1995). There is a growing literature debating whether globalization of culture produces homogenization, whether the hybridities that result from encounters between different cultures is something to be lamented or celebrated. Advocates of globalization, achieved through the spread of western media, global capitalism, or war, believe the global spread of liberal market economies will bring with them the other benefits of developed Western societies, especially liberal democratic governments, along with improvements in material well-being, ranging from improved infrastructure, medicine, technology, and education, to access to the global marketplace of commodities, plus human rights, feminism, and religious tolerance. On the other hand there is a growing alliance of groups who interpret economic globalization, especially as embodied by the WTO, as a movement destructive to the environment, to workers in the U.S. and globally, to local cultures and identities, and to democracy itself.

Simply to grasp the kinds of interconnectedness, invisible linkages, rapid flows, and dispersal of effects referred to in these various discourses of globalization requires new, complex, boundary-crossing approaches to knowledge. And that knowledge is required before one can make value judgments about any particular practice associated with globalization, whether that be about the role of free trade in European agriculture or the impact of the internet on democracy movements in China or the effects of liberalizing
trade on the Indian economy or the ways Hollywood movies affect gender roles around the world. And then there is the interpersonal dimension of globalization, brought home to me when I visited my daughter over Christmas in a small resort community in North Carolina where she and her husband were recently hired as doctors.

There was a not an unembarrassing moment when I was struck by the confluence of many of the issues I teach about, issues of race, class, and gender, particularly of White privilege, and of multiple waves of immigration that are changing the ethnic dynamics of almost every nation. The situation might seem typical for Californians or residents of large global cities like New York, but this was a small rural town, one with a blatant and lingering history of racial segregation between White and Black Americans. Among our largely Euro-American family were my niece, adopted from Guatemala, and her African-American boyfriend and their baby. There was a Korean woman babysitting for my grandson, and there were two women cleaning the house, both from El Salvador, but one in North Carolina via California and the other a recent arrival from her home country. The older woman from El Salvador was extremely critical of the babysitter’s lack of warmth toward the baby and was telling her co-worker all about this in Spanish, which my younger daughter understands well, but the women assumed no one knew Spanish among us except my niece Maria who in fact spoke an indigenous language and not Spanish during her childhood in Guatemala. The Korean babysitter, who came to North Carolina through a connection with Fort Bragg, was hostile and suspicious toward my niece and her boyfriend and in our absence interrogated them aggressively about what they were doing in the house. Maria, my niece, initially responded by saying, “we’re
family, you know, we’re not going to steal anything.” In response, the babysitter was incredulous and wanted to know how they could be related to my daughter, in particular how the African-American boyfriend could be related. Meanwhile my economically and racially privileged daughter was dealing with other doctors who still resist referring patients to her because she is a woman and who absolutely would not refer patients to her Polish female colleague because of her accent. The layering of recent migrations from Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe over the fundamentally American Black-White opposition and our own extremely privileged position as White, upper-middle-class Americans employing the new arrivals were striking and yet increasingly ordinary. If I were teaching about this scenario, I would note that the countries these people immigrated from, especially El Salvador and Korea, are not coincidental. As Saskia Sassen argues, immigration tends to arise not because sender countries are poor and have unemployment but because the U.S. has created ties with them through colonialism, war, or free trade zones. My own department in rural upstate New York reflects a parallel global reality at another point of the class scale. Out of five tenure-track faculty, two are White Americans, one is from Mexico, one from India, and one the child of Filipino immigrants. These intercultural sites reflect how different this world is from the much more homogeneous and bounded one in which I grew up.

**The Imperative for Globalizing the Liberal Arts**

In our monograph, *Globalizing Knowledge*, published in 1999, Grant Cornwell and I argued that the nature of the world today is such that U.S. and global realities, whether
economic, cultural, political, environmental, or social, interpenetrate and mutually define each other to the degree that isolating U.S. studies from international studies is increasingly impracticable. As David Held writes, “If the agent at the heart of modern political discourse (be it a person, a group, or a collectivity) is locked into a variety of overlapping communities, ‘domestic’ and ‘international,’ then the proper ‘home’ of politics and democracy becomes a puzzling matter” (Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann, 241).

We advocated a paradigm in which U.S. cultural diversity would be understood and taught as the historical result of multiple overlapping diasporas created by the evolving processes of globalization. And, conversely, understanding deeply different cultural and political perspectives from outside the U.S. would help develop the intercultural skills students will need as citizens within an increasingly diverse and globally connected nation.

I am struck by the relative optimism of that piece, written a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War. Although we were well aware of the propensity of globalization to exacerbate disparities in wealth across all nations of the world, there was also a sense of hope that such global realities as mass transportation and the internet could provide opportunities for empowerment and increased transcultural understanding. There was also a space in what was being called “the new world order” in which the threat of global nuclear war had dissipated and the newer phenomena of ethnic and nationalist conflicts, bloodcurdling as they were, gave the illusion of being finite in contrast with the specters of the Cold War. Today, however, the continuum from the nuclear standoff between NATO and the Soviet bloc to the genocides of Kosovo and
Rwanda to the U.S. war on Iraq and the tactics of Al Qaeda, along with the U.S.’s withdrawal from a range of international treaties, demands our attention as educators.

I would locate an imperative for globalizing the liberal arts in the fact that we are now, not in any idealistic sense, but in a network of practical relationships, citizens of the globe. And the globe is being ravaged by diseases like HIV, multiple forms of violent conflict, poverty and hunger in the presence of abundant food, and environmental destruction. Most importantly, hardly any of these phenomena occur in contained isolated spaces. As David Held writes about the nation state:

> Political communities have rarely, if ever, existed in isolation as bounded geographical totalities, and they are better thought of as multiple overlapping networks of interaction. These networks of interaction crystallize around different sites and forms of power (economic, political, military, and cultural, among others), producing patterns of activity that do not correspond in any straightforward way to territorial boundaries.(Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann, 241)

The global phenomena of disease, such as bird flu and HIV, or the terrorist resistance signified by Al Qaeda are interconnected responses to economic and political and technological events being caused in one place and sparking effects along the complex networks of communication, travel, and power that Manuel Castells describes as paradigmatic of globalization. Today’s students will be rubbing shoulders with people from many parts of the globe throughout their lives, and they will be making decisions as voters, consumers, and workers whose effects will ripple out beyond their perception and then surge back again with often unanticipated consequences.
Since the mid 1990s, initiated by Martha Nussbaum and Orlando Patterson, a set of discourses has evolved around the concept of cosmopolitanism, as a way of describing global citizenship. The discourse of cosmopolitanism is deeply contested and ambiguous, partly because of its class connotations, and partly because it does run counter to the discourse of patriotism revitalized by the September 11 attacks on U.S. targets.\(^5\)

Nussbaum draws on the Stoics to ground her approach, arguing logically that “If we really do believe that all human beings are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, we are morally required to think about what that conception requires us to do with and for the rest of the world” (*For Love of Country*, 13). Much of the debate has to do with the balance between local and global allegiance and the plausibility of people’s actually being able to place distant individuals on the same ethical plane as their own neighbors and families. But some of the critiques come from those who assume cosmopolitanism belongs to the elite travelers of the world, business executives, scholars, artists, politicians, and jetsetters. In “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,” Homi Bhaba argues that the conditions of globalization have created a different kind of world citizens: refugees, exiles, illegal aliens, and impoverished immigrants doing low wage service work. The fact is that transnationalism affects more and more people in the world, and this is creating multiple forms of cosmopolitan consciousness. Often in the case of migration from a poor to a wealthy country, immigrants have at least the richness of a dual perspective, that of a developing nation with its relative power position in the world and that of a wealthy, often Western nation. Furthermore they may have been in the majority or the minority in their country of origin, but they are almost certainly in a
marginalized position within the host country. These are the elements of a transnational, if not a cosmopolitan consciousness. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that “a sense of positive if complex and multiple belonging . . . is already shot through with unavoidable distances and indifferences, with comparison and critique; yet it does not thereby cease to be a mode of belonging” (Cheah and Robbins, 3). Everyone experiences daily life in a particular location, but a person may well change locations dramatically through one life, and/or the same location may be transformed by the influx of people from elsewhere. And each particular location will inevitably be marked by linkages from multiple other parts of the globe, whether in climate change or demographics or factories closing and opening.

As can be seen from my epigraph, both despite and because of his Enlightenment commitments, Immanuel Kant’s ethical and political thought has influenced my approach to this topic. Kant was an ardent advocate for the republican form of government and for the importance of rational critique toward beliefs and practices. He defined a republican government as dependent on the freedom and equality of all members of society and on the rule of law. Kant sketched out a practical version of what became the League of Nations in his proposal for Perpetual Peace based on cosmopolitanism. A number of commentators, while criticizing specific aspects of Kant’s proposals for peace, acknowledge that globalization has created realistic conditions for cosmopolitan governance.
In his moral theory, Kant defines an imperative as the formulation of a command derived from reason that tells us how we ought to act (Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, 81). Simply by virtue of this formulation, Kant’s approach is at loggerheads with the prevailing school of “realist” political theory and policy in the U.S. today. That is, the international policies pursued by the U.S. in the past decade have been openly amoral, openly devoid of a concern for the equal value of all the earth’s inhabitants or all the earth’s nations. Thus I look back to the Enlightenment, with all its shortcomings, for a set of discursive formations that, however imperfectly and partially, informed the constitution of the U.S. as well as the formation of what became the United Nations.

Kant’s formulation of the Categorical Imperative, or the moral law, is as follows:

\[ \text{Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it would become a universal law.} \]  
(Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, 88)

On the level of individual moral judgment and action, this is a command that one act justly, that one not put selfish interests ahead of the equal claims of others. Kant also says that one should always treat other persons as ends in themselves and that humanity in persons is beyond price. For him these formulations of moral law are grounded in reason. Similarly, Nussbaum argues that we ought to take a cosmopolitan stance in according equal value to all human lives, regardless of their political and geographic location. In Kant’s To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch (1795), he lays out a set of principles to avoid war and promote cooperation and peace among the nations and the citizens of the world. He sought to envision a cosmopolitan rule of law that would transcend the domestic policies of nations and protect the citizens of all nations in their ability to travel
transnationally. David Held argues for an adaptation of Kant's proposal that would protect:

all those whose fates are interlocked in networks of economic, political, and environmental interaction. Universal hospitality is not achieved if, for economic, cultural, or other reasons, the quality of the lives of others is shaped and determined in near or far-off lands without their participation, agreement, or consent. (Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann, 244)

What Does It Mean to “Globalize the Liberal Arts”? 

If we agree that the liberal arts should be “globalized,” we have to think about what that means. I see two possible senses of the phrase. The first means something equivalent to “internationalizing” the curriculum. In *Globalizing Knowledge*, Grant Cornwell and I laid out the following learning goals for today’s students:

• Understanding Global Processes

• Understanding Diverse Cultures: Understanding Cultures as Diverse

• Developing Intercultural Skills

• Preparing for Citizenship, Local and Global

We included in these goals making sure students learn about diverse civilizations and cultural perspectives across the curriculum, studying a second language, and ideally experiencing study abroad. Several years later, having struggled more deeply with what it
means to study global or transnational processes and what it means to work across
cultural borders with people on a daily basis, we wrote “Peripheral Visions: Toward an
Ethics of Geo-citizenship” (2003). In between these two essays, I think I underwent a
transition between the two meanings of “globalizing liberal arts.” United States liberal
arts curricula right now have different missions and differing levels of
internationalization; therefore each will move forward in its own trajectory. There is no
one design that suits all institutions. But what I mean by the first sense of globalizing or
internationalizing can occur without radically rethinking the configuration of the
curriculum. It is an “add and stir” version of curriculum reform, but it is essential. It
simply asks that general education requirements include courses or modules on cultures
both inside diverse nations and outside the West, that history majors take courses not just
about the U.S. or even Europe but also about African Americans and Native Americans
and China and South Asia and Africa and Latin America, and that everyone study a
language. Questions should be posed about what languages students study and how.
Many liberal arts colleges up until recently offered mainly French, Spanish, and German
languages. Yet two thirds of the world lives in China and India. And Arabic is now
recognized as an important global language.

The second meaning of “globalizing the liberal arts” means something more complex,
which is to take seriously what globalization in all its dimensions means and will mean
and to rethink liberal arts education to be commensurate with global realities. In
“Peripheral Visions” we tried to propose a methodology for grappling pedagogically with
the simultaneous interconnectedness, mobility, and dispersal that characterize
globalization, arguing that ethical and political judgments about most issues require an epistemological basis made elusive by these characteristics. Students need to be able to read back and forth between the local and the global, between multiple forms of identity and difference. In particular, they need to be aware of the invisible links behind and around the local lives they live, foods they consume, clothes they wear, furniture they buy, and medicines they use.

Truly coping with globalization calls for rethinking disciplinarity and other borders and boundaries. The fluidity of production and services under the conditions of globalization means that course content and study abroad experiences need to be responsive to changing conditions here and abroad. Students can study abroad in France today and have essentially the same experience as one did 25 years ago, or they can study in France and learn about the European Union and immigration issues and controversies over dress for Muslim students, and these issues should be experienced and presented from multiple points of view. Furthermore, critical understanding of global processes requires being able to discern the interrelations between natural, cultural, political, and economic systems. Traditional disciplines are inadequate to grasping the complex linkages between these phenomena. Nonetheless new subfields that are actually transdisciplinary are appearing, such as ethnobotany, that not only combine laboratory science with cultural studies and politics, but examine the interrelations among these kinds of phenomena.

The borders of both disciplines and their objects of study are becoming permeable. Thus over the past decade courses have arisen focused on global commodities such as sugar,
coffee, salt, and oil. These courses draw on a range of disciplines from economics to literature to geography and anthropology to botany. These courses situate the U.S. and other countries differently in the curriculum, not as self-evident actors on the world stage but as one layer of units that are crisscrossed by multiple vectors of flows, whether those be raw materials, capital, workers, popular culture, or religious beliefs. That is the content side of globalizing the curriculum. But if one looks back to the medieval Trivium and Quadrivium or forward to the liberal arts curriculum of the 1990s, much attention belongs to the development of skills, or arts, such as reading, writing, and speaking; critical thinking, mathematics, creative arts, foreign language proficiency, and so forth. Globalizing the liberal arts also calls for deeper and more complex attention to the articulation of these competencies with the phenomena signified by “globalization.” Such phenomena include the overwhelming access to electronically-based information and media, the certainty that work and social environments will be populated with people of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and the growing difficulty of having access to political information that allows for the free exercise of vigilance against abuses by government domestically and abroad.

**Conclusion**

What is needed educationally is not to learn that we are citizens of the world, but that we occupy particular niches in an unequal world, and that being disinterested and global on one hand and defending one’s narrow interests on the other are not opposites but positions combined in complicated ways. Some combinations are
desirable, others are not. Some are desirable here but not there, now but not then. Once we have learned this, we can begin to cope intellectually with our social reality. (Immanuel Wallerstein, quoted in *For Love of Country*, 124)

Insofar as the practice of citizenship on multiple levels is a major goal of the liberal arts, globalization calls for renewed attention to critical thinking, exercised in the service of that freedom all members of a republican or democratic society are obliged to use as a protection against the abuses of government. The challenge of globalization is that making judgments becomes so much more complex not only because of the dispersal and mobility of transnational flows and linkages but also because of the increasing salience of cultural and political and economic differences, differences of religious belief, of gender constructions, of all kinds of power, and of geographical location and perspective. Compounding these difficulties of knowledge and values is the complexity and questionable reliability of the massive information available to people. Thus a liberal arts education today needs a renewed and transformed attention to the critical reception of information, especially from the mass media and the internet. But equally it needs revitalized or perhaps new attention to what AAC&U’s *Contemporary Understandings of Liberal Education* calls “Gaining self-knowledge and grounded values” (Schneider and Shoenberg, 8). While many religiously-based liberal arts colleges include variously a commitment to service or social justice or ethics in their mission statements, most secular institutions do not. It would be inappropriate for a liberal arts college to indoctrinate students with a particular set of values, but it is crucial that reflection on ethics and justice be a part of a liberal arts education. Critical thinking cannot be a purely logical
enterprise. It has to be practiced from a certain position in the world, from a set of assumptions about what is right, epistemologically and ethically. But those assumptions must be open to understandings gained from new experiences and perspectives. The recent emphasis on collaborative knowledge production in college courses can be good practice for developing the kind of “overlapping consensus” model of truth that is so useful in transcultural efforts to cooperate in setting agreements that honor humanity in its differences while avoiding the aporias of cultural relativism.

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<Footnotes>

1 A number of the ideas in this essay derive from work done by Grant Cornwell and me in both published articles and lectures. Most prominently these include *Globalizing Knowledge: Interconnecting International and Intercultural Studies* (AAC&U, 1999); “Peripheral Visions: Toward a Geo-ethics of Citizenship” (*Liberal Education* 2003); Inaugural Lecture at Roanoke College, “Contestation and Respect: Intercultural Inquiry and Global Citizenship” (October 2004); and a forthcoming article in *Liberal Education* which includes some of the ideas in the Roanoke lecture, “Practicing Freedom, Respecting Diversity: The Ethics of Global Citizenship” (Spring 2006).

2 Negative freedom is freedom *from* whereas positive freedom is freedom *to* and implies a set of moral obligations.

3 A liberal arts education should also more broadly empower people to create and experience multiple forms of meaning in their lives, including the aesthetic dimension, but I am focusing here on capacities related to citizenship.

4 See for example, Wallerstein, Arrighi, and Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, and Perraton.

5 Martha Nussbaum initiated a series of debates over the goal of educating students to be cosmopolitan citizens. *For Love of Country*, published in 1996 and reissued after September 11, generated opposition from those who believe students should be invested primarily in patriotism, or U.S. citizenship. Illustrated by case studies of various colleges and universities, *Cultivating Humanity* is an extended argument for the responsibility of liberal education to create citizens of the world who can entertain different perspectives while reflecting on them rationally.

6 I say “despite” because I recognize the problems inherent in the European Enlightenment’s projection of its own values onto the rest of the world as “universal” principles. I say “because” because the aspiration to see all humans qua humans as deserving of equal rights and value to be a noble aspiration, albeit one that needs qualification by the recognition of difference.