



MFJMCE FACULTY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT GRANT Interview with grantee Dr. Lukas Danner



Dr. Lukas Danner in front of Hallgrímskirkja (Lutheran church), Reykjavik's main landmark, and the statue of Leif Erikson



Fulbright Commission Iceland group tour of Reykjavik : Dr. Lukas Danner in front of Harpa, Concert Hall and Conference Centre in Reykjavik, Iceland

Dr. Lukas K. Danner is an instructor in the Department of Politics & International Relations at Florida International University, and Research Associate at the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence. He received the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence Faculty Curriculum Development grant for developing a new course COIL-related inclusion of EU content in the course INR 4210 -International Relations of Scandinavia and the Arctic with a Nordic Institution . Danner was hosted as Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Scholar at the [Centre for Arctic Studies](#) of [the Institute of International Affairs](#) at the University of Iceland from January until June of this year.

He was kind enough to answer a few questions about his proposal and his experience as Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Scholar at the [Centre for Arctic Studies](#) of [the Institute of International Affairs](#) at the University of Iceland .

MFJMCE: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and the experience you had as a Fulbright-NSF Arctic Research Scholar during six months at the University of Iceland?

Absolutely! I was hosted by the Center for Arctic Studies at the Institute of International Affairs (IIA) at University of Iceland during which I researched the 2019-2021 Icelandic chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the main intergovernmental forum in the Arctic

region. In addition, I was privileged to teach a graduate course for the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Iceland. My host also made it possible for me to enroll in Icelandic language classes designed for international faculty which assisted tremendously in immersing myself in Icelandic culture and society during my stay there. The Fulbright Commission in Iceland which supports grantees before, during, and after their grant, offered grantees monthly enrichment activities such as a walking tour of downtown Reykjavik. During my time in Iceland, a swarm of over 50,000 earthquakes (of varying strength) occurred—some of which could be felt in Reykjavik, too—and resulted in a volcanic eruption in Iceland's southwest at Fagradalsfjall. Having made the hike to the volcano was certainly one of the highlights in those six months. I was also honored to collaborate with IIA researchers Pia Hansson and Guðbjörg Ríkey Th. Hauksdóttir in publishing “Iceland in the High North” with the North American Arctic Defense and Security Network (NAADSN) in June 2021. To anyone interested in Iceland or the Fulbright experience, I could only wholeheartedly recommend both!

MFJMCE: Can you tell us in a few words what the main focus of your EU research project is?

The focus of my project is, on the one hand, integrating European Union educational components into my course INR 4210 International Relations of Scandinavia and the Arctic, and, on the other hand, designing and operationalizing a COIL, which is short



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**Fulbright Iceland US Scholar Cohort 2020-2021
in downtown Reykjavik**



Dr. Lukas Danner with Dr. Baldur Thorhallsson

for "Collaborative Online International Learning" and sometimes called virtual exchange, component with a Nordic partner institution as part of the student experience in the same course.

MFJMCE: Your grant proposal says that you would use this research for online classroom teaching. What do you hope students will gain by attending the course you are developing?

That is correct, as INR 4210 is a fully-online course. First, regarding EU materials, students will gain a broader perspective of how certain topics in International Relations of Scandinavia and the Arctic relate to the EU, e.g., learning about the EU's Arctic policy, or the Green New Deal of the EU. Second, the COIL will have FIU students complete an assignment with students from a course taught at a Nordic partner institution. In this way, they get first-hand insight from a partnered student living and studying in Scandinavia and the Arctic—an intercultural experience that FIU students in my other COIL course (a cooperation with a Belgian university) have found unique and enriching, and that I hope the students of INR 4210 will, too, going forward. Not all of our students at FIU have the possibility to be able to take part in international student exchange or a study abroad trip—statistically it is less than two percent of our student population per year. But being exposed to international exchange virtually via COIL can provide a similar experience to FIU students, either instead of physically going abroad, or perhaps as an impetus to start exploring an

exchange year abroad, an international internship, or a faculty-led educational summer trip.

MFJMCE: Why do you think the focus of your course has specific interest for students in the U.S.?

We can observe that interest in Scandinavian foreign affairs and Arctic affairs has sky-rocketed in recent years: Not only annually published state rankings on various topics from innovation and healthcare to population happiness regularly show Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Finland and Sweden on the very top, but these Nordic nations also increasingly take on leadership roles in international affairs, including in the European migration crisis, the fight against climate change and global warming—especially as it relates to the Arctic—and other important global issues. The importance of the Nordics and the Arctic, while often considered “model nations” and “remote (for the most part) maritime territory,” respectively, to current global politics is outsizing their otherwise relatively small populations or remote location. Increasingly, foreign non-Arctic great powers such as China are also getting more and more interested in this part of the world—not only because of the opportunities that an ice-free Arctic seems to promise in terms of oil, gas, minerals, shipping sea lanes, or fisheries.

▶ For more information on the MFJMCE Faculty Curriculum



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Lunch with Fulbright Iceland Colleagues



Dr. Lukas Danner in front of Fagradalsfjall volcano

MFJMCE: Where will your research take you in the future? Do you plan to continue developing this project, or do you have others in mind?

Regarding my Fulbright experience in Iceland, I definitely hope to return to attend the Arctic Circle Assembly which is held every October in Reykjavík, as well as continue to do research on the Arctic Council and expanding the project to future chairmanships of Nordic small states, e.g., Norway's upcoming chairmanship from 2023 to 2025. In regards to the EU and COIL components in INR 4210, continuing development comes almost natural with the fast-evolving Arctic affairs and with the evolution of a COIL partnership for which you especially learn from student feedback the first year that it is offered to (if necessary) implement changes the second year, and, basically, from thereon each year onward. I also have other projects in mind, either earmarked for the future, or for very soon: One that is coming up very soon is a paper presentation on recent extra-regional power interest in the West Nordic (Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland) at the 19th Nordic Political Science Association Congress in August 2021. Three examples for projects planned within the next year would be a co-authored piece with my Icelandic colleague Guðbjörg Ríkey Th. Hauksdóttir on the U.S.-American position on China in the Arctic through various presidential administrations; a paper with my Australian colleague Prof. Anna Hayes on the role of small and middle powers (such as Singapore, Fiji, Australia, or New

Zealand) in the contemporary Indo-Pacific great power play; and a paper on the COVID-19 pandemic in the Scandinavian Arctic with which I am honored to stay affiliated with the IIA and University of Iceland via the research project "The Nordic States and COVID-19" led by Prof. Ásthildur Elva Bernhardsdóttir and Prof. Baldur Þórhallson.

By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez

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Dr. Lukas Danner in Iceland