

Soliya Connect Program

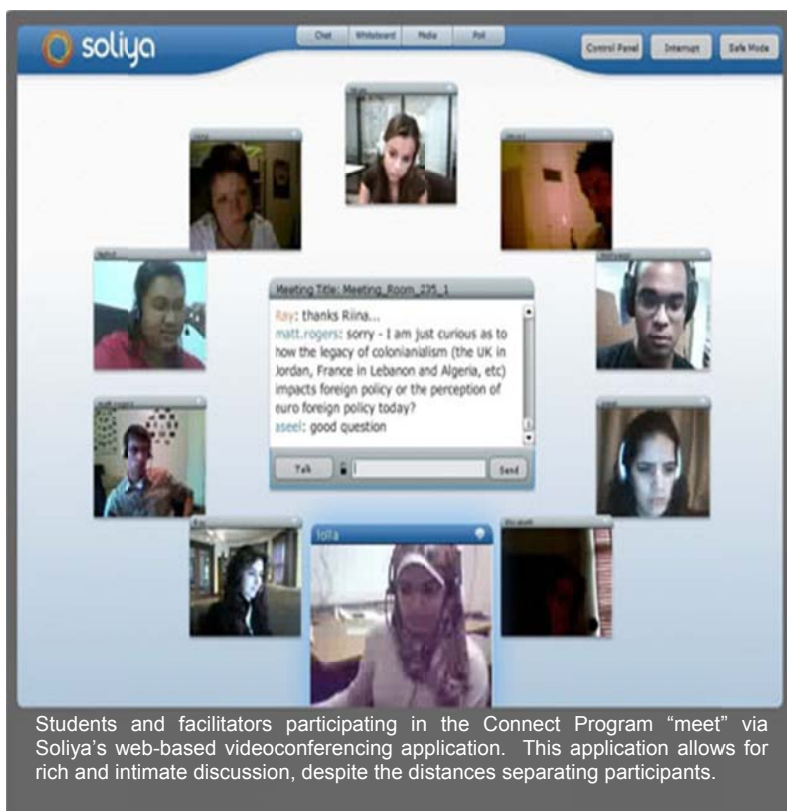
Il *Connect Program*, organizzato e gestito dalla ONG Soliya <http://www.soliya.net/?q=home> è un progetto di scambio virtuale che si rivolge a studenti da più di 100 istituzioni universitarie sparse in tutto il mondo (vedi allegato): il suo scopo è quello di promuovere il dialogo al di là delle differenze culturali e religiose, in particolare quelle che esistono tra il mondo occidentale e il mondo arabo-musulmano. La lingua franca scelta per lo scambio è l'inglese: questo fa del *Connect Program* un'opportunità ideale anche per gli studenti dei corsi di laurea in lingue, in quanto l'uso della lingua straniera in un contesto autentico permette ai partecipanti di affinare le loro abilità linguistiche, pragmatiche e socioculturali. Per futuri mediatori culturali, le sessioni del *Connect Program* rappresentano un'importante opportunità di riflessione e approfondimento di tematiche socio-culturali, che includono temi importanti quali la cultura, la religione, e il conflitto tra civiltà. I partecipanti dovevano inoltre prepararsi agli incontri telematici e compilare un diario settimanale; la verifica finale consiste nella creazione (collaborativa) di due elaborati scritti. Il primo si tratta di una ricerca svolta in collaborazione con colleghi da altri paesi. Il secondo è un 'reflective paper' basata sull'esperienza di Soliya e la collaborazione a distanza.

Negli anni accademici 2012-2013 e 2013-2014, gruppi di studenti del corso di laurea in Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale hanno partecipato allo scambio, della durata di un semestre, per acquisire i 3 crediti di altre attività (con l'approvazione del CACL). Per ripetere l'esperienza nell'A.A. viene richiesto un contributo di 2000 dollari + IVA per 10 partecipanti.

This document is intended to provide an overview of the Connect Program and to answer some frequently asked questions. We at Soliya are very excited to work with you this semester. If you have any questions or need any further information, please feel free to e-mail students@soliya.net

Description of the Program:

Soliya's Connect Program is a unique cross-cultural education program that enables college students from around the world to collaboratively explore and engage one another on what they find to be the most pressing global and social challenges, with the aim of improving intercultural awareness and understanding.



Student participants in this semester’s Connect Program will congregate into groups consisting of eight to ten students each. Students will be drawn from more than 20 universities, including students from American Language Centers in Marrakesh & Tangiers in Morocco, the National Engineering School of Bizerta and Tunis Business School in Tunisia, the University of Jordan, the Lebanese International University in Lebanon, Forman Christian College in Pakistan, the University of Padova in Italy, Bowie State University in Maryland, Endicott College in Massachusetts, the University of Maryland, Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Western Kentucky University, Queens University of Charlotte in North Carolina, and the University of Northern Colorado.

Each student group will “meet” for real-time discussion once a week for two hours via Soliya’s customized online, video-conferencing application. To join their group meetings, participants need simply turn on their webcam and headset and log on to a designated website at their weekly meeting time. The medium is remarkably intimate: participants can see one another’s facial expressions, hear tone of voice, and even share a joke. Participants are also able to communicate with their fellow students when they are offline.

Each student has access to the Soliya weblog where he/ she can continue discussions or post messages to other users. Students can also send each other personal messages on the Soliya website, and have access to our online “Social Rooms” where they can meet with other users outside of session times.

Students participating in the Connect Program will engage in one main project with the assistance of one or two expert facilitators:

Soliya Final Project - Throughout the Connect Program, you will be given the opportunity to work more closely with 2-3 members of your group, and explore an issue that exists in your communities. You will be asked to research the challenges around the issue, engage with different perspectives, examine how the issue is presented in the media, and think collaboratively on ways the problem can be alleviated in your communities. You will then be asked to write a joint recommendations paper outlining ways to address the issue. You will also write an individual reflection paper on the issue you explored, and the process of working with your group.

Details on the Final Project can be found in the Student Assignments document.

Connect Program Schedule:

The Connect Program will run from March 14th to May 5th.

Student Commitments for the Fall Semester:

- Prior to the commencement of the Connect Program students will participate in a brief online orientation.
- Throughout the duration of the program students will spend 2 hours per week “meeting” online with their small group. Periodically there will be short articles to read, in preparation for these discussions.
- Students will write a joint paper and a reflection paper for their final project.
- Students will complete a brief post-program evaluation about their experience.

Students need not have a computer science or media background, but basic proficiency with computers and good English communication skills are required.

Weekly Discussion Topics:

Topics that may be addressed by your group will include:

- Identity, culture and stereotypes
- Global and social challenges
- Values and social norms
- Intercultural communication
- Life experiences and worldview
- Youth empowerment

In addition, group facilitators will work with students to identify additional topics that they feel are important to discuss.

Students will Gain:

- A great introduction to the critical current issues impacting their societies and the larger global community, and exposure to a multiplicity of perspectives.
- A chance to meet your peers around the world, share your opinions and hear their ideas about critical issues, and the build strong contacts with future leaders.
- The opportunity to gain and / or improve upon key 21st century skills such as leadership, analytical thinking, engaging across differences constructively, and collaborative problem-solving.
- After successfully completing the program, students will receive their certificate from Soliya, verifying their participation in the Connect Program.



Important Deadlines:

The week of March 14th	Connect Program Begins. Introductions and first week of online dialogue sessions.
The week of March 21st	Discussion will be based upon the required readings on “Global and Social Challenges”. Please make sure you’ve read these articles before your online session.
The week of April 4th	Discussion will be based upon the required readings for this week on “Intercultural Communication”. Please make sure you’ve read these articles before your online session.
The week of April 25th	The final project is due on Sunday, May 1 st . In order to submit it, please attach the articles in an email, send it to submit@soliya.net and CC your professor.
The week of May 2nd	Last week of Connect Program dialogue sessions. Complete online evaluation of the Connect Program by Monday, May 16 th . Upon completion of the online evaluation, students will receive their certificate from Soliya verifying their successful participation in the Connect Program.

Who is Soliya?

Soliya staff is composed of a diverse team of talented individuals coming from Egypt, France, Finland, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, India, Bangladesh, and the United States of America. In addition to Soliya’s staff members, Soliya’s operations are based on an extraordinary network of highly trained facilitators from around the world, volunteering their time to catalyze constructive communication. To date, Soliya has worked with over 500 volunteer facilitators, the majority of whom are Masters’ students in International Relations or Conflict Resolution at prestigious universities in the Middle East, Europe and the US, including the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, American University of Beirut and Bradford University in the UK. In 2014, Soliya joined forces with international peace-building organization Search for Common Ground (SFCG), and Soliya’s executive team now consists of Waidehi Gokhale, Chief Executive Officer, and Salma Elbeblawi, Director of Programs. To date, Soliya has worked with over 6,000 students from a diverse cross-section of over 100 institutions and in the coming years Soliya will be expanding the network to include more universities from regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, South and South-east Asia, Europe and the US.

To learn more about Soliya, please go to www.soliya.net where you can read about Soliya’s staff, volunteer facilitators, and past Soliya participants.

Need Help? Contact us:

- Technical difficulties: student-tech@soliya.net
- Attendance concerns: attendance@soliya.net
- All other questions and concerns: students@soliya.net

