

Sophia and Ateneo de Manila Join Forces in COIL Sessions:

Exploring Philosophical and Religious Worldviews for a Sustainable Future

Karen Natera (Ateneo de Manila) & Maria Manzon (Sophia)

Through a meaningful partnership that crosses geographical boundaries, students from the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines and Sophia University in Japan participated in the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) program. This innovative initiative from the AJCU (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities) - Asia Pacific brought together students from both institutions to explore the rich and varied philosophical and religious traditions that influence education and sustainability. At Sophia, the COIL sessions were part of the SPSF course “Comparative Education in Asia: Cultures, Histories and Futures”, which explores and compares education systems in Asia grouped into six major civilizations: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Japanese and Sinic.



First COIL Session with Students from Sophia University and Ateneo de Manila University, June 28, 2024

Two COIL sessions were held on ZOOM towards the end of the Spring 2024 semester. This was to ensure that students had sufficient intellectual preparation through their respective courses for the themes of the COIL discussions. For each COIL session, three experts were invited to each give a 10-minute sharing on a specific philosophical or religious worldview and its influence on education for sustainable futures. An open forum followed where students could ask questions to any of the speakers, using Google docs as a shared platform. After the forum, students were divided into breakout rooms ensuring a mixed group of both Ateneans and Sophians in each team. They discussed their insights on the ways in which the three philosophical or religious worldviews converge in advancing education for sustainable futures. Finally, in the plenary session, each group's representative shared their overall reflections.

COIL Session 1: Sinic, Japanese, and Buddhist Perspectives

The first session, held on June 28, 2024, offered students an opportunity to engage with the Sinic, Japanese, and Buddhist worldviews. The three invited experts were Ms. Jennifer Ngo Say of Xavier School, Philippines, Mr. Nopparat Ruankool, M.A., from the University College London and Professor Mikiko Sugiura from Sophia's Center for Global Education and Discovery and International Cooperation Studies at the Graduate School of Global Studies. Their valuable insights greatly enhanced the discussions.

Under the guidance of Ms. Karen Natera of the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) and Dr. Maria Manzon of Sophia University (SU), participants engaged in meaningful dialogue on how these cultural philosophies shape educational practices and contribute to sustainable futures.

Brayden Jansen Ang, another student from ADMU, also shared a similar sentiment,

The COIL sessions allowed me to get a glimpse of education outside our Ateneo bubble. By engaging with students from Sophia University, I got to see that, while some of our practices differ and others do not, in the end we are trying to accomplish the same goal in terms of sustainable education. I personally think that Ateneans need more opportunities like COIL to experience and collaborate with students of different cultures.

COIL Session 2: Christian, Islamic, and Hindu Insights

The second session, held on July 12, 2024, focused on Christian, Islamic, and Hindu worldviews and education. Experts such as Dr. Francis Alvarez from Ateneo de Manila, Professor Cyril Veliath from Sophia University and Professor Zainal Abidin Bin Sanusi of the International Islamic University Malaysia provided insights to enrich the discussions. Students examined how these religious philosophies can come together to promote educational practices that advance sustainability.

Reflecting on the session, Chetna Kashyap, a SPSF student from Sophia University remarked:

The convergence of Christian, Islamic and Hindu perspectives in advancing education for sustainable futures is evident. Christianity's emphasis on serving God through reason and promoting justice fosters environmental stewardship and compassion for creation. Islam's teachings on stewardship (Khalifa) and balanced living (Wasatiyyah) emphasize accountability to God and harmony with nature, encouraging mindful consumption. Hinduism's principles of interconnectedness (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) and non-violence (Ahimsa) promote respect for all life forms and sustainable practices. These teachings can develop a mindset that values sustainability and fosters spiritual and emotional well-being.



Second COIL Session with Students from Sophia University and Ateneo de Manila University, July 12, 2024

Building Global Connections through COIL

The COIL program has created a collaborative international learning environment, enabling students to connect with peers of different cultural backgrounds. By engaging with these diverse worldviews, participants are expanding their academic knowledge and contributing to a global community focused on building a sustainable and interconnected futures. As these sessions illustrate, COIL is paving the way for a more inclusive and globally conscious approach to education.