

# Art and Peacebuilding in Somaliland

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Over his 2019 **Field Work Term**, Ahmad Yassir '20 designed and taught the first courses in arts and peacebuilding at **Abaarso School for Sciences and Technology** in Somaliland.



**UWC Mostar**, Yassir's high school alma mater, featured his Field Work Term account in their alumni magazine.

## Teaching at Abaarso

Have you ever heard of Somaliland? No, not Somalia, but Somaliland! It's the 27-year-old country that gained independence, but isn't declared internationally yet, hence they are still suffering the challenges of the region, and their establishment within international standards.

Ahmad Yassir was a volunteer teacher at Abaarso School for Sciences and Technology, the best school in the country that is working within very high standards of education and discipline.

Over his **Field Work Term**, Ahmad designed two courses: Exploring Uncertainty through Art, and Building Global Bridges.

# *Teaching, for me, is like hosting a talk show.*

**Ahmad Yassir '20**

His art course is the first in the school, his students explored “what is art?” and the work of Marcel Duchamp as an introduction to art, before following the syllabus that covers: Dada, Surrealism, Islamic Art, and Feminist art. Covering those art movements got his students out of the perception of classical art and made them look at art in a more subjective way, which results in making them more confident about producing art and becoming more creative and liberal in their means of self-expression, which are things students don’t usually practice in traditional education.

The school’s mission statement is to graduate the future leaders of their country, and this is what his second course focuses on. He started his course by talking about philosophy and skepticism, so his students would take a neutral standpoint while writing their reports, and whilst engaging in discussion. Not using common-sense and becoming more curious in their personal investigations. His course joins global politics, peacebuilding, epistemology, and peace and conflict studies. Where the focus is tailored to making students differentiate between creative essays, and writing reports on the conflict and development of their country, Somaliland.

## Writes Ahmad Yassir:

“Teaching, for me, is like hosting a talk show. Not inserting hierarchy and making students decide on the order of my lesson plan for each class, so they would directly take a part in sailing their own educational experience by taking decisions that completely has to do with them. I tailor my approach to every student individually rather than treating them all as one. My teaching style includes a mix of interactive activities and open discussion format. I use the board a lot to highlight on the important notes, my drawings and projections are as important because displaying the content visually matters. In addition to that, I write the student opinions and the important class notes on big flip chart paper, to make them feel validity in their ideas, as it is also a resource to revisit information discussed in previous classes. I also don’t hand in everything to my students, I make them curious and personally engaged with the topic, for them to research on it and understand it subjectively.”

“I’ve been living here for about three weeks now, and the role that I have on campus has been very rewarding and it’s making me very happy, although the living conditions are slightly tough, and with limited resources, it’s great to be around other teachers that are coming from all around the world: different parts of the USA, New Zealand, Poland, Australia, and local teachers of course, which makes it feel so much like an extension of UWC to me! However, we need to be accompanied by two soldiers every time we want to go off campus, water is so limited we are expected not to flush the toilet every time

we use it, one food option every meal which is very nicely cooked and spiced, and it reminds me so much of my mother's food!. All the teachers work on average of 13 hours per day for 6 days a week. But I am genuinely happy to be around very smart students, who are hard working and always hoping for their personal success, and ambition towards leading their country in the future."

## About Ahmad Yassir

Ahmad Yassir was born in Tripoli 1997, he got the opportunity of going abroad to UWC in Mostar, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, before enrolling in the undergraduate program at Bennington College. Ahmad's education and work focus on the creative development of education through public action and visual arts, he designs multi-disciplinary courses focusing on solving issues that students have towards their educational experiences.

Although he is an undergraduate student beginning his fourth year, he has brought change to three educational institutions already, starting with Ahliyah School in 2017 where he assisted the teachers in alternative teaching models and gave group presentations on educational awareness and motivations to pursue their passions and interests while having a big workload. While working with Syrian Smile Makers Team in Kilis, Southern Turkey in 2018, Ahmad designed a course tailored to Syrian children refugees, mixed with a lot of interactive activities, peacebuilding projects, and visual arts classes to make them think beyond the influences brought to them by their families. He formulated it to suit every student individually and work on embracing their personal talents, under the notation of pursuing their education and getting into higher education. In the Summer of 2018, Ahmad received a proposal to work for Abaarso School.

Ahmad is hoping to gain experience in international teaching before he returns to Lebanon and bring change to the educational system that exists there, through the experience that he will gain internationally to expand his educational, before implementing it in his home country.

Ahmad Yassir is an artist, educator, and social practitioner. He draws inspiration from the social and political conflicts that have been associated with his growth, living environments, and educational experiences. Ahmad grew up in the conservative city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon, followed by finding independence in Beirut, living in a diverse environment while attending the United World College in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and he's currently enrolled as an undergraduate in Bennington College, Vermont, studying the creative development of education through Public Action and Visual Arts.-- <https://ahmadyassir.com/>