

COMM 463: Intercultural Communication Theory and Research

Fall Semester 2002

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OFFICE HOURS: See course web site

Course web site: <https://my.asu.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a survey of major theories and research dealing with communication between people of different cultural backgrounds, particularly in international settings. The course examines theoretical issues and methodological concerns in studying intercultural communication, and it helps students discover and examine research questions about intercultural phenomena. Class activities emphasize working together in teams and include presentation of materials, guided discussion and analysis, and work on group projects.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help participants:

- Gain exposure to a variety of theoretical approaches to intercultural communication;
- Become familiar with diverse methodologies for studying intercultural issues;
- Gain knowledge about theory and research on selected intercultural topics;
- Reflect on their own intercultural experiences;
- Apply intercultural theory and research to contemporary issues.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. *Communicating Across Cultures*, by Stella Ting-Toomey, Gulliford Press, 1999.
2. *Exploring the Greek Mosaic*, by Benjamin J. Broome, Intercultural Press, 1996.
3. Readings on reserve and/or made available throughout the semester by handout or posted on the course web site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Intercultural Reflection Paper**- Each class participant is required to write a 6-8 page paper focused on their own experiences and observations with intercultural communication. The paper should include three sections: (A) Provide a brief introduction to your own cultural background, writing about the major cultural influences on your value system and the ways in which these were first challenged or reinforced by exposure to other cultures (3-4 pages); (B) Describe a specific “cultural learning experience” in which you encountered difficulties (misunderstandings, miscommunication, conflict) and/or gained new insight because of differences in culture. Identify the cultural factors that contributed to the learning experience, and describe what you learned (3-4 pages). Give two printed copies to the instructor.
2. **Group Presentation on Course Topic** - Six groups will be formed and each group will take responsibility for leading class discussion on one of the scheduled course topics (see attached description).
3. **Intercultural Research and Analysis Project** - Working in teams of 4-5 individuals, groups will investigate a particular intercultural situation, present their project to the class, and produce a report that summarizes the project. (see attached description).
4. **Course Examination & Quizzes** – A comprehensive examination will be administered to test individual understanding of course material. Short quizzes will be administered periodically during the semester. These quizzes will count as part of the final exam grade.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

1. Intercultural Reflection Paper.....	10%
2. Group Presentation on Course Topic	20%
3. Intercultural Research and Analysis Project.....	30%
4. Examination & Quizzes.....	40%
TOTAL	100%

Note: For group assignments, it is expected that every member will contribute responsibly to the final product. However, if problems occur with one or more individuals failing to uphold their responsibility to the group, I will consider requests in writing from the group to distribute grades differently among the group members. I will consider such cases only if the group can demonstrate that it has made a serious effort to work out the difficulties with the individual(s) failing to carry their load.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS ON COURSE TOPICS

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This assignment allows students to take an active role in designing learning activities and leading class discussions about selected topics in intercultural communication. We'll form six groups in the class, and each group will take responsibility for leading class discussion on one of the scheduled course topics.

The six topics are:

1. Verbal communication
2. Nonverbal communication
3. Inter-group encounters
4. Intercultural relationships
5. Intercultural conflict
6. Intercultural adaptation

Working in teams of 4-5 persons, each group will develop a set of learning activities for the class that includes the following components:

1. Theoretical concept. Select a specific theoretical concept, covered by the authors in the readings assigned for the topic of your presentation, and present a detailed explanation of this concept to the class. In addition to the information in your textbook, you should find at least one primary source article that discusses the concept. [Note: You will usually find primary source articles referenced in the textbook.] One of your tasks is to translate the “jargon” used by the textbook and the article(s) into terms that your classmates can understand clearly. (10-15 minutes)

2. Experiential activity to illustrate selected concept. Design a short activity that helps “bring to life” one or more aspects of the theoretical concept you presented. It might consist of conducting an exercise with the class, telling a story, acting out a skit, engaging the class in a short role play, showing and discussing video excerpts, or other experiential learning activities. (10-15 minutes)

3. Applications and further research. Discuss the practical contributions of the information you presented (e.g., how might it help people understand intercultural situations or become better intercultural communicators), and provide your assessment of the limitations of the concept you selected. Suggest unanswered questions and/or further research. (10-15 minutes)

While your presentation should include all of the required components, they may be implemented in the sequence that is most appropriate to the design of your presentation. Prepare either a set of overhead transparencies or a set of computer-generated (Powerpoint) slides that allows others in the class to follow your presentation. Structure the presentation so that class members and the instructor may ask clarification questions at appropriate points during the presentation, as well as discuss implications of the material at the end of the presentation.

Each group should turn in a packet with the following sections: (1) Cover page listing name of course, topic of presentation, date of presentation, names of group members; (2) paper copy of material that is included on handouts, transparencies, slides, etc; (3) description of experiential activity; (4) copy of primary source article(s). At the end of each class presentation, the other class members will be asked to provide feedback to the group about their presentation.

INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS PROJECT

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Instructions: Working in teams of 4-5 individuals, groups will select a specific intercultural situation that is relevant to contemporary local, national, or global society. Situations might represent intercultural arenas such as the following: inter-group conflict, race relations, intercultural marriage, immigration, organizational work teams, community development programs, classroom instruction, and training/consulting. Each group will analyze the situation (using the steps described below), present their project to the class, and produce a report that includes the information described below.

Step 1: Select a specific intercultural situation. Choose a specific situation or incident that illustrates the dynamics of intercultural communication. The situation should revolve around an actual event or set of events in which individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds experience a difficulty, misunderstanding, problem, or clash of ideas or positions in which cultural differences play an important role. The situations can come from personal experience, news articles, media documentaries, or published case studies. Describe the situation, including the parties involved, the difficulties they face, how they have responded, and the larger cultural context in which the incident is embedded.

Step 2: Literature Review. Locate at least 10 scholarly articles that present research results or theoretical ideas that are relevant to the situation you are investigating. Discuss the contribution of these articles and summarize the major findings.

Step 3: Analyze the situation based on intercultural communication theory and research. Discuss the intercultural dynamics you believe are most important for understanding the situation, and make recommendations about how the situation can be managed and/or resolved productively. Explain the steps that can be taken by various parties involved, and show how these steps are based in theory, research, and experience.

Step 4: Present results to class. Design a 20-30 minute presentation to the class in which you describe the situation and the context in which it is embedded, summarize your findings from the research literature, and discuss your analysis. Use handouts, transparencies, and other media aids as appropriate.

Step 5: Written Report. The written report (10-12 pages plus appendices) should consist of an introduction, in which the general context is explained and a rationale is provided for the importance of the topic, and the following sections: (a) 3-4 page description of the situation and the context in which it is embedded; (b) 3-4 page literature review; and (c) 4-5 page analysis of the situation. Include a bibliography (of both popular press and scholarly articles) prepared in APA format, and attach an appendix with copies of materials (e.g., specific news articles) that help explain the context.

COURSE SCHEDULE

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Week	Date	Topic/Class Activity	Reading Assignment
1	Aug. 27 & 29	TOPIC: Overview of syllabus Introductions of course members	Text, Chapter 1 Reader, Preface & Chapter 1
2	Sept. 3 & 5	TOPIC: Theoretical and methodological issues in studying intercultural communication (formation of presentation groups)	Text, Chapter 2 Reader, Chapter 2
3	Sept. 10 & 12	TOPIC: Value orientations and intercultural encounters	Text, Chapter 3 Reader, Chapter 3
4	Sept. 17 & 19	TOPIC: Culture & Identity	Text: Chapter 2 (review)
5	Sept. 24 & 26	TOPIC: Verbal Communication <i>** Presentation by Group 1 **</i>	Text, Chapter 4 Reader, Chapter 4
6	Oct. 1 & 3	TOPIC: Nonverbal Communication <i>** Presentation by Group 2 **</i>	Text, Chapter 5
7	Oct. 8 & 10	TOPIC: Inter-group Encounters <i>** Presentation by Group 3 **</i> ++ Intercultural reflection papers due Oct. 10 ++	Text, Chapter 6 Reader, Chapter 6
8	Oct. 15 & 17	TOPIC: Intercultural Relationships <i>** Presentation by Group 4 **</i>	Text, Chapter 7 Reader, Chapter 7
9	Oct. 22 & 24	TOPIC: Intercultural Conflict <i>** Presentation by Group 5 **</i>	Text, Chapter 8 Reader, Chapter 4 (review)
10	Oct. 29 & 31	TOPIC: Intercultural adaptation <i>** Presentation by Group 6 **</i>	Text, Chapter 9 Reader, Chapter 5
11	Nov. 5 & 7	TOPIC: Intercultural Competence Intercultural Ethics	Text, Chapter 10 Reader, Postscript
12	Nov. 12 & 14	Review and Catch-up	TBD
13-14	Nov. 19 & 26 (both Tues)	Group Work on Project Presentations	
15	Dec. 3, 5, 10	<i>** Project Presentations **</i> ++ Written Project Reports due Dec. 3 ++	
16	Dec. 12	Final Exam	

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

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1. Class preparation and participation are important. The nature of the subject of communication demands that learning take place through discussion, illustration, and experiences. Learning in this course revolves around class discussion and group work. Students have responsibility to prepare, attend, and contribute to class and group work sessions. High quality and consistent class participation can often lead to a higher grade, especially in cases where a student is on the border between letter grades. Failure to take an active role (including listener) in class activities can result in a lower final grade.
2. Exams must be taken on time and assignments must be handed in when due. Only in special circumstances and with prior arrangements can late work be accepted.
3. Original work is expected, and any outside source used in assignments must be properly credited. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be dealt with according to ASU's Academic Integrity Policy (see <http://com.pp.asu.edu/everythingyouneed.html>)
4. Students' feedback on classroom assignment and procedures is desired. Informal feedback is welcomed anytime during the course, and a formal course evaluation will be conducted near the end of the course. All students are expected to take part in the formal evaluation.
5. An grade of "incomplete" can only be given if at least 75% of course assignments have been completed satisfactorily and documentation is provided for one's inability to complete remaining assignment(s) because of an unanticipated situation.
6. Upper- level credit assumes that the student is able to function at a higher academic level than when taking lower-level courses. This means that a higher level of performance is expected and more stringent criteria will be applied to papers and exams than if the class were offered at the lower level.
7. Students often comment: "I worked so hard in this course, and my grade didn't reflect how hard I worked." Others say: "My grade doesn't correspond to how much I learned in this course." In my view, these comments reflect a misunderstanding about the nature of university courses. I believe there are four primary aspects of a university course with which one should be concerned, and while they have an impact on each other, the meaning (and sometimes the results) of each is quite different:
 - A. Credit Received: Did I do what was required to earn the credit hours for this course?
 - B. Grade Received: How did I perform on the graded assignments?
 - C. Personal and Group Learning(s): What did I gain from the course that will help me in my work and personal life?
 - D. Contribution: What did I contribute to the course and to others' learning?

One can work hard, learn a lot, contribute and still not receive a high grade in the course, and those who receive the highest grades are not always the ones who learn or contribute the most. In my view, the most important aspect of a course is the learning and contributions that take place, on both the individual and group levels.

