

COMM 394: Intercultural Communication
Spring Semester 2002
<Preliminary Syllabus>

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines communication in the intercultural setting, both domestic and international. The course focuses upon (a) how culture influences the communication process and the development of relationships, and (b) dynamics of intercultural encounters. Special emphasis will be given to diversity in the workplace. Class activities include presentation of materials, guided discussion and analysis, exercises, simulations, and group problem-analysis.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help participants learn about:

- ❑ the nature of culture from a systems point of view;
- ❑ the relation of culture to the communication process;
- ❑ an awareness of one's own cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, and assumptions;
- ❑ an awareness of and respect for cultural diversity;
- ❑ how cultural differences, attitudinal factors, and characteristics of the communication process influence interaction in the intercultural setting; and
- ❑ how to apply theoretical concepts, research findings, and practical wisdom in the analysis of intercultural encounters.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. *Intercultural Communication: Roots and Routes*, by Carolyn Calloway-Thomas, Pamela J. Cooper, and Cecil Blake. Allyn & Bacon, 1999.
2. *Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication*, by Alberto Gonzalez, Marsha Houston, and Victoria Chen. Roxbury Publishing Company, Third Edition, 2000.
3. *Exploring the Greek Mosaic: A Guide to Intercultural Communication in Greece*, by Benjamin J. Broome, Intercultural Press, 1996.

COURSE TOPICS (indicative sample of questions we will consider)

- ' "How does culture influence the communication process?"
- ' "What is the relation between culture, communication, and identity?"
- ' "How do various societal factors (economics, mass media, religion) influence intercultural communication?"
- ' "What are obstacles to effective communication in a culturally diverse workplace?"
- ' "How can intercultural relationships be improved?"

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Intercultural Reflection Paper**- Each class member is expected to write a 5-8 page paper focused on their own experiences and observations with intercultural communication. The paper should include three sections: (A) Provide an overview of the major cultural influences on your value system and the ways in which you were first exposed to other cultures (2-3 pages); (B) Describe and provide contextual information about a specific situation you have experienced or observed in which difficulties (misunderstandings, miscommunication, conflict) arose because of differences in culture (1-2 pages); (C) Identify the cultural factors that contributed to the difficulties you experienced (1-page), and (D) describe what you learned from your experience, including a discussion of how you might deal with such situations differently in the future (1-2 pages). Give two printed copies to the instructor.

2. **Electronic Discussion Forum** – On a regular basis throughout the course, questions will be posted on the class Blackboard web site. Every person is expected to contribute to each of these discussions.

3. **Course Examination** - Each participant is required to successfully pass a take-home written examination over the course materials. A set of exam questions will be made available one week prior to the exam due date.

4. **Intercultural Analysis Paper** - Each class member is required to write a 8-10 page paper that utilizes a clearly identified framework to examine a specific intercultural situation (see attached description).

METHOD OF EVALUATION

1. Intercultural Autobiography	20%
2. Discussion Forum	10%
3. Course Examination	40%
4. Intercultural Analysis Paper.....	30%
TOTAL	100%

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

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.

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://www.asu.edu/copp/communication/academic/acadintpol.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. A 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. In my view, the most important aspect of a course is the learning that takes place. Comments I often hear from students include: "I worked so hard in this course, and my grade didn't reflect how hard I worked." or "My grade doesn't correspond to the amount of learning I gained in this course." In my view, these comments do not reflect appropriately the nature of university courses. I believe there are three primary aspects of a university course with which one should be concerned, and while the three 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 associated with the course?

B. Grade Received: How did I perform on the evaluated assignments that were used to determine the course grade?

C. Personal and Group Learning(s): What did I gain from the course that will help me in my work and personal life? What did I contribute to the learning of others in the course?

One can work hard and learn a lot and still not receive a high grade in the course, and those who receive the highest grades are not always the ones who learn the most.

COM 394 Intercultural Analysis Paper

This paper is designed to complement and extend the results of the group activities that will take place during the diversity workshops conducted during the course. In the workshops, we will address the issue of “cultural diversity in the workplace.” Three-four working groups will be formed, and each group will be facilitated by a team of ASU graduate students who are trained in the methodologies of interactive problem-solving. During the first part of our group work, we will engage in an idea-generation session focused on obstacles to effective communication in a diverse work environment. In part two of our group work we will engage in exploring how these obstacles influence one another. From these problem-analysis sessions, we will develop several products, including: (1) a list of difficulties generated by each group, (2) a set of categories or themes that emerge from the difficulties identified by all the groups, and (3) an influence structure that “maps” each group’s consensus about how these difficulties negatively influence each other. These products will form a “framework for analysis” that can be used to examine workplace diversity situations.

In the paper assignment, each student is asked to utilize the framework produced by their group to explore specific situations they have encountered in which difficulties surrounding cultural diversity led to negative consequences. These situations can be ones that you have personally experienced or observed, or they can be the result of interviews with others. Each paper should include the following:

1. **Description of the intercultural situation:** Drawing upon your knowledge of the situation, provide the necessary background information to set the stage for your analysis -- who are the players, what is the context, how did the situation unfold? (2-3 pages)
2. **Analysis of the situation:** Utilizing the framework developed in the group working sessions, explain the factors that are at work in the situation and how they impact one another – what obstacles exacerbated the situation and what were the consequences? (3-4 pages)
3. **Suggestions for improving the situation** – Based on what you have learned in the course, describe what can be done to make the situation better, or show how it could have been handled differently with more positive results. (2-3 pages)

Each paper should be between 8-10 standard printed pages (double-spaced, 12 point type, 1" margins on 8.5" x11" paper) and should use the APA style to reference materials used in the course as well as any additional materials deemed relevant to the analysis. Actual names of individuals involved in the conflict should not be used, and the specifics of the situation should be disguised so that anonymity is preserved. Co-authorship is encouraged, especially between authors that form a culturally diverse team. If authors believe that the results of their group’s problem analysis do not provide an acceptable framework for use with the situation they have chosen, then another framework may be substituted, with prior approval from the instructor.

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PRELIMINARY COURSE SCHEDULE
 (Subject to Modification)

Class	Date	Topic/Class Activity	Reading Assignment
1	Tuesday Mar. 19	– Overview of Syllabus – Administrivia and course logistics – “Foundations of Intercultural Communication”	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 1-3 – Greek Mosaic, Preface, Ch. 1
2	Thursday Mar. 21	– Panel discussion: local and national diversity issues	
3	Tuesday Mar. 26	– “Culture and Identity” – Group work: discussion of intercultural reflection papers (preliminary version)	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 4-5 – Our Voices, Part I – Greek Mosaic, Ch. 2-3
4	Thursday Mar. 28		
5	Tuesday Apr. 2	– “Encountering Cultural Diversity: Part I” – Group work: Problem-analysis sessions on “Cultural Diversity in the Workplace”	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 6-7 – Our Voices, Part II
6	Thursday Apr. 4		
7	Tuesday Apr. 9	– “Encountering Cultural Diversity: Part II” – Group work: Problem-analysis sessions continued	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 11 – Our Voices, Part III & IV
8	Thursday Apr. 11		
9	Tuesday Apr. 16	– “Culture and Communication Patterns” – Intercultural Reflection Papers due	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 8-9 – Our Voices, Part V – Greek Mosaic, Ch. 4-5
10	Thursday Apr. 18		
11	Tuesday Apr. 23	– “Intercultural Relationships”	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 13 – Our Voices, Part VI – Greek Mosaic, Ch. 6-7
12	Thursday Apr. 25		
13	Tuesday Apr. 30	– “Societal Factors and Cultural Change” – Intercultural Analysis Papers Due	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 10 & 12 – Our Voices, Part VII
14	Thursday May 2		
15	Tuesday May 7	– Course Exam due	
16	Thursday May 9	– “Intercultural Communication and the Future”	– Roots & Routes, Ch. 14 – Greek Mosaic, Postscript

Due Dates:

Thursday, April 18, Intercultural Reflection paper
 Thursday, May 2, Intercultural Analysis paper
 Thursday, May 7, Course exam