

University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
Think Tank Learning Community
Global Studies
Fall 2005
Cross-Cultural Issues in Study Abroad

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 4:30-5:30 pm and other times by appointment

Class Time and Location: Wednesday 4-5 pm Bus S220

Course Description

This course is specifically designed to prepare students who are planning to study and intern abroad as a component of their college career. The course prepares students for the challenges involved with cross-cultural interactions and the acculturation process. Students will gain the tools which are necessary to understand and interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds as well as recognize themselves as cultural beings. Through interaction with the Center for International Education, students will obtain the skills and knowledge which are needed to maximize their study abroad experience.

Course Objectives:

Through this course, students will:

- Gain an initial understanding of the complexities of intercultural interaction and adaptation through experiential education activities
- Assess their own cultural biases and analyze how these may affect their cross-cultural interactions
- Develop competencies in the following areas of cultural learning: culture-general, culture-specific, U.S.-specific
- Begin to develop the necessary skills needed to function successfully in a cross-cultural setting
- Increase their knowledge of study abroad programs, exchange programs, internships, service learning, UWM and non-UWM program offerings

Texts and Readings:

- Gannon, M. (2004). *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California.
- Nolan, R.W. (1999). *Communicating and Adapting Across Cultures: Living and Working in the Global Village*. Bergin & Garvey: Westport, Connecticut.
- Storti, C. (2001). *The Art of Crossing Cultures*. Intercultural Press: Yarmouth, Maine.

Teaching/Learning Methods:

- Lectures
- Small group & large group discussions
- Videos
- Writing exercises, reflections
- Simulation exercises
- Readings

Final Assessment:

- ***Cultural autobiography*** – Students will explore their own cultural backgrounds in order to identify cultural influences that have affected their belief/value systems and how these values and beliefs may help or hinder their experience abroad. Students should type a 3-5 page paper and prepare a 5-10 minute verbal presentation of their cultural autobiography. This is worth 25% of your final grade. Written paper due by September 21.
- ***Attend a General Advising Session I given by the Overseas Programs & Partnerships office*** – learn more about how to choose a program, the application process, financial aid, scholarships, academics abroad, etc. Session dates: 9/8 12-1pm, 9/13 10-11am, 9/16 2-3pm or 9/21 3-4pm and write a one page description of what was learned 5% of your final grade
- ***Learning contracts*** – Students will prepare learning contracts to outline what they hope to accomplish during their experience overseas. Learning contracts will include: learning objectives, learning methods and demonstrations. Contracts are due by October 5th and constitute 5% of your final grade
- ***Research 3 study abroad/exchange programs and 3 internship possibilities*** using the Overseas Program & Partnerships library, Helpful Websites handout, internet, Peterson's Guide, etc. Explain the following in a 3-5 page paper: why you chose these programs, how they would complement your academic studies here at UWM, how they would help you in regard to your future career path and personal goals. This is worth 20% for your final grade. The paper is due November 23, 2005.
- ***Paper on intercultural relationships or intercultural communication*** - Choose a country (preferably the country you are planning to study in) and research a topic within the area of intercultural relationships or intercultural communication. E.g.: the concept of family in China, interactions between the elderly and children in South Africa, communication styles in German businesses. This is a typed paper of 5-8 pages and is worth 25% of final grade and is due on December 14th.
- ***PARTICIPATION*** - As previously stated ACTIVE participation will count for 20% of your final grade. Each student is required to come prepared to each class and participate in the discussion with critically thought out comments and questions. More than one class absence will affect your final participation grade with the exception of University approved excusable absences. "Reasonable accommodation of a student's sincerely held religious beliefs with regard to all examinations and other academic requirements" will be made. Please turn off all cell phones and pagers during class sessions. Participation is worth 20% of your final grade.

SPECIAL NEEDS:

Any student with documented special needs should meet with me during office hours. All efforts will be made to facilitate your presence and successful completion of the course.

Course Topics:

Weeks 1-4

- What is Culture?
- Intro to types of overseas programs
- Goals of study abroad
- My beliefs & values – how do they affect my cross-cultural interactions?

Readings:

Communicating & Adapting Across Cultures

Chapter 1: The Cultural Basis of Difference

Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations and Continents

Chapters 2, 10, 16, 18

Activities/Discussions:

- ***Lecture on choosing an overseas program*** – what to consider before going abroad: length of program, rural area/city, size of university, study abroad vs. exchange, language of instruction, course selection, credit transfer, homestay vs. apt vs. dorm, degree of cultural immersion, cost
- ***Attend the Study Abroad Fair*** – get specific information on the program you are planning to apply for, talk to faculty leaders, the Overseas Programs staff, students who have gone on the program before, and international exchange students 9/20 from 10-3pm
- ***Cultural metaphors*** – discussions of weekly readings of Thai, German, U.S., and Malaysia from *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents*
- ***Simulation exercises*** – Students will participate in exercises that will aid in the development of cultural awareness. E.g.: Barnaga, Bafa' Bafa'

Weeks 4-8

- Stages of cultural transition/ W-curve
- Country/culture shock
- Country specific faux pas
- Ethnocentrism

Readings:

Communicating & Adapting Across Cultures

Chapter 2 – Encountering Difference

Chapter 8 – Planning your Transition

The Art of Crossing Cultures

- Chapter 1 – Country Shock
- Chapter 4 – The Problem Explained
- Chapter 5 – The Problem Solved

Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents

Chapters 3 11, 17, 19

Activities/Discussions:

- *Watch L' Auberge Espagnole or Lost in Translation* – note cultural values displayed in the film, analyze cross-cultural interactions and problems, make suggestions on what characters could have done differently to make their experiences abroad more successful
- *Analyze cross-cultural dialogues*

Weeks 8-12

- Skills needed to maximize your experience abroad
- Learning about home & host countries
- Language learning, attitudes to ease transition
- Culture general topics: individualism/collectivism, high/low context, monochronic/polychronic, styles of communication, male/female interactions

Readings:

Communicating & Adapting Across Cultures

Chapters 6 – Learning a Language I: Making Decisions

Chapter 7 – Learning a Language II: On Your Own

Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents

Chapters 4, 12, 20, 23

The Art of Crossing Cultures

Chapter 6 – Language Lessons

Weeks 12-16

- Preparing to leave – what you need to know
- Things to remember in order to get the most out of your experience abroad
- Re-entry issues – how to smooth your transition back home

Readings:

Communicating & Adapting Across Cultures

Chapter 10 – Getting Ready

Chapter 11 – Making the Crossing

Chapter 15 – Coming Home

Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 28 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents

Chapters 7, 15, 21, 27

Activities/Discussions:

- *Panel of study abroad returnees* – discuss planning, preparation, academics, etc. Q & A session.

