

COM 303: Intercultural Communication
Fall 2015
J. E. Sigler
Purdue University

TEXTBOOK:

Neuliep, J. W. (2015). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach* (6th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

In this course, we'll study the complex relationship between culture and communication using what's called the "contextual approach." We'll look closely at each of these contexts through a variety of case studies, and you'll apply what you learn to real-world intercultural communication (IC) contexts through various assignments. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Explain key theoretical distinctions between cultures.
2. Explain how key cultural differences affect both the encoding and decoding of messages.
3. Explain how people's (micro)cultures affect their assumptions, values, beliefs, associations, preferences, and communication styles.
4. Identify important elements of a new culture using communication "clues."
5. Learn how to quickly communicate competently when faced with a new culture.
6. Identify when a conflict may be the result of cultural communication differences.
7. Brainstorm successful ways to resolve intercultural communication (IC) conflicts.
8. Feel confident communicating with people of other cultures in academic, work, and leisurely settings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance, Reading, Participation: Attendance, reading in preparation for class, and active participation are expected in every college course. You therefore do not get points for doing them, because they're assumed. *However*, if you do NOT do them satisfactorily, you can LOSE points off your final grade. If you are on the verge of losing points for any of these reasons, I will give you ONE warning. I will then notify you when you have begun losing points.

If I suspect that a majority of the class is not reading in preparation for class, I will begin giving pop quizzes. These quizzes will be *deductive*, i.e., if you pass a quiz (score $\geq 60\%$), nothing will happen. If you fail a quiz (score $< 60\%$), you will lose 1% off your final grade.

Each week you'll be asked to bring a printout of a real-world case that illustrates the topic under discussion that week and that you find interesting. You'll discuss these in a group of your peers and hand them in to me at the end of class. I will then choose one or more of these cases for a discussion with the whole class on Friday.

Grade penalties for non-attendance, non-reading, and non-participation will be applied as follows:

- Absences: 3 absences are allowed. For each absence 4 and over, you lose 1% off your final grade.
- Tardies: For every 3 tardies, you lose 1% off your final grade.
- Missed Case Studies: For every 3 missed case studies, you lose 1% off your final grade.
- Non-Participation: For every 3 non-participatory days, you lose 1% off your final grade.
- Failed Quizzes: For each failed quiz (<60%), you lose 1% off your final grade.

2. Assignments: I've designed this course to be as adaptable as possible to your individual experience, interests, and goals. In that spirit, you will choose your own assignments. This is called "constructive grading," and it means that you start with zero points and earn points as you complete the assignments *you* want to complete. Not doing an assignment does not hurt your grade except to the extent that it means you lost an opportunity to earn more points.

Simply doing an assignment will NOT guarantee you the maximum number of points. Assignments are still graded, and you may earn only a portion of the points possible. You MUST earn at least 60% of the points possible for an assignment in order to receive *any* points. (In other words, if you get an 'F' on the assignment, you don't earn *any* points for it.)

Plan to do more assignments than you think you will need to earn the grade you hope to achieve in this course. That way, if you don't do as well as you'd hoped on one (or some) of them, you'll still have a chance to recover. If you don't write an assignment into your Customized Assignment Plan (aka "CAP", due Friday the first week of class), you won't be allowed to complete another assignment for "extra credit." If you plan more assignments than you wind up needing points for, it's no big deal: Just don't submit the other assignments and you won't get the points. (NO! You will NOT be docked points for not submitting assignments that you wrote into your CAP!)

Do NOT submit your CAP without first consulting your semester calendar (due dates for other courses, religious holidays, travel, wild parties, seasonal freak-outs, etc.). Once you submit your final CAP, it is *written in stone*.

Assignment Options

There are four types of assignments: (1) mandatory, (2) oral, (3) written, and (4) course-building.

For oral, written, and course-building assignments, the "Wildcard" applies. That is, you may come up with your own assignment idea (including a variation on a given assignment) and discuss it with me. We'll figure out together how it can meet the learning objectives of the course, when it should be due, and how many points it should be worth. Discuss any "Wildcard" ideas with me the first week of class, before you submit your final CAP.

Note:

1. You may not do any assignment about a culture in which you are a member. For example, if you're an international student, you may not write an assignment about your home culture (but you may write one about the United States!).
2. You may not do any assignment more than two times (on different topics).
3. All specific topics for an assignment must be approved by me on your CAP.
4. I STRONGLY urge you to get feedback on drafts/outlines/brainstorms of ALL your assignments BEFORE submitting them for a grade!

2.1. Mandatory Assignments

Only two assignments are mandatory in this course, but you MUST complete them ON TIME to pass the course!

Draft CAP: Your personal Customized Assignment Plan, with due dates, submitted in draft for feedback.

Final CAP: Your final Customized Assignment Plan, with due dates, to which you are married for the rest of the semester.

2.2. Oral Assignment Options

Choose a minimum of 1.

Discussion Leadership (50 points): Instead of me running a Friday discussion of a case study for the whole class, YOU run a Friday discussion of a case study for the whole class.

One Culture Speech (100 points): A 10–15-minute presentation in which you explore a culture you know well (either through experience or research). Apply 2–3 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Case Study Speech (100 points): An 8–10-minute presentation in which you illustrate one specific theory/concept studied in class through the use of a single phenomenon from a culture of your choice (Tibetan wedding vows, Congolese home design, etc.). Cite 3 academic sources.

Linguistic Analysis (100 points): A 7–10-minute presentation in which you analyze how a foreign language's grammar, vocabulary, prosody, etc., manifests cultural assumptions Americans do not have. Apply 2–3 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Interview Speech (125 points): A 10–12-minute presentation in which you present your answer to a specific research question through the discussion of interview data garnered from 3–5 individuals of a single different culture. Apply at least 1 theory/concept studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Good Citizen Speech (150 points): A 15–20-minute presentation in which you analyze your experience volunteering *this semester* in a context that brings you into close contact with people of (an)other culture(s). Apply 2–3 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

2.3. Written Assignment Options

Choose a minimum of 2.

Cultural Event Essay (50 points): A 2–3-page essay in which you analyze your experience of a cultural event (e.g., GlobalFest, Indy International Festival). Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 1 academic source.

IC Experience Essay (100 points): A 3–5-page essay in which you analyze an IC experience you've had. Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Foreign Culture Essay (100 points): A 3–5-page essay in which you analyze a foreign culture of your choice. Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Fictional Culture Essay (100 points): A 3–5-page essay in which you analyze a fictional culture (Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, etc.). Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Foreign Media Essay (100 points): A 4–6-page essay in which you analyze a foreign media production (e.g., ad, movie, tv show episode). Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

Cultural Conflict Essay (125 points): A 5–7-page essay in which you analyze a recent cultural conflict between the US and another country, explaining how IC differences played a role in the conflict. Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class and suggest means to resolve the conflict. Cite 3 academic sources.

Good Citizen Essay (150 points): A 4–6-page essay in which you analyze your experience volunteering *this semester* in a context that brings you into close contact with people of (an)other culture(s). Apply 1–2 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 3 academic sources.

2.4. Group Assignment Options

No minimum.

Group Ethnography (150 points): A 45-minute presentation in which you describe in-depth a particular (micro)culture that you have spent the entire semester observing. Apply 3–5 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 5 academic sources.

In-Class Culture Training (150 points): A 45-minute presentation in which you take the role of IC experts working for a specific organization. You train that organization's employees (the rest of the class) for a first-time business trip to a country of your choosing. Apply 3–5 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 5 academic sources.

Online Culture Training (150 points): A 45-minute video presentation in which you take the role of IC researchers providing a crash course in IC to American web surfers going to study/work/vacation in another culture. Apply 3–5 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 5 academic sources. NOTE: To do well on this assignment, you need pretty good video production skills.

Cross-Cultural Ad Campaign (150 points): A 45-minute presentation in which you adapt a real American series of ads to a different culture. In class, you show the old and new series of ads and explain why each change was made. Apply 3–5 theories/concepts studied in class. Cite 5 academic sources. NOTE: To do well on this assignment, you need pretty good video production skills.

2.5. Course-Building Assignment Options

No minimum, and these assignments do NOT need to be listed on your CAP. You can do them anytime.

Links2Prof (1 point per link): As you surf the web and discover interesting, helpful, or just plain awesome IC-related resources, send them to me. If I don't already have them and can actually use them in class, you'll get points.

Outstanding Classroom Citizenship (15 points): To those who participate exceptionally well in the classroom, I will award extra points – entirely at my own discretion – on the last day of classes. You cannot know in advance whether you'll get these, but I encourage you all to strive for them!

Online Forum Discussion (50 points): Keep a conversation about IC going in our BB forum. Share thoughts about the course readings; examples of IC cases that illustrate the theories/concepts we discuss in class (not to be duplicates of those submitted in class!); reflections on current IC-related events in the news or elsewhere; and actively generate discussion among others. NOTE: For this assignment to work, multiple people must commit to posting thoughtful, creative comments on a very regular basis!

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Week	Topic	Reading	Due
1	Intro to class & colleagues		
	Syllabus, Course Schedule Assignment Options, CAP	<i>Syllabus, Course Schedule, Assignment Options</i>	Draft CAPs
	CAP questions Case study example discussion	<i>Class Case Study #0 (Examples)</i>	Final CAPs
2	Why is intercultural comm necessary?	<i>Chapter 1</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #1</i>	
3	The cultural context	<i>Chapter 2</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
4	The microcultural context	<i>Chapter 3</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #2</i>	
5	The environmental context	<i>Chapter 4</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #3</i>	

Week	Topic	Reading	Due
6	The perceptual context	<i>Chapter 5</i>	IC Experience Essays
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #4</i>	
7	The sociorelational context	<i>Chapter 6</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #5</i>	
8	The verbal code	<i>Chapter 7</i>	Foreign Culture Essays Fictional Culture Essays
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
9	The nonverbal code	<i>Chapter 8</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #6</i>	
10	Developing intercultural relationships	<i>Chapter 9</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #7</i>	
11	Intercultural conflict	<i>Chapter 10</i>	Foreign Media Essays
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	

Week	Topic	Reading	Due
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #8</i>	
12	Intercultural comm in organizations	<i>Chapter 11</i>	
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #9</i>	
13	Acculturation, culture shock, and intercultural competence	<i>Chapter 12</i>	Cultural Conflict Essays
	Group case studies	<i>Bring a case study</i>	
	Class case study/Guest speaker	<i>Class Case Study #10</i>	
14	Presentations		Online Culture Training Group Projects
15	Presentations		Cultural Event Essays Good Citizen Essays
	Presentations		
	Presentations		
16	Presentations		
	Presentations		
	Presentations		