

**COMM 365-VL1 – Intercultural Communication
Summer 2018**

Prerequisite	None. COMM 105 Interpersonal Communication recommended	
Catalog Description	Cultural differences as they affect communication between individuals and groups. Communication strategies and techniques as they are influenced by cultural relativity and value systems.	
Instructor	Dr. Sandra “Sandy” L. Alspach	
Office and Hours	127 JOH	by appointment only
Contact	(o) 231-591-2779	alspachs@ferris.edu and Blackboard
Required Textbook	Ting-Toomey, S. & Chung, L. C. (2012). <i>Understanding Intercultural Communication, 2nd Ed.</i> New York: Oxford University Press.	
	This course is supported by Blackboard where you will find all assignments, lecture notes, additional materials, and links to websites that will help you be successful.	

General Course Outcomes and Assessments

Students will:		as assessed by:
1.	Construct and evaluate a cultural description of self and primary culture	Ancestry and American Culture Project (AP)
2.	Analyze and be able to adapt effective and appropriate communication attitudes and behaviors to a person from at least one culture different from self	Culture Partner Project (CP)
	LOC #3: Engage in Communication Inquiry	Interpret Communication Scholarship Apply Communication Scholarship
3.	Report and apply skill concepts and at least one theory of cultural differences that affect effective and appropriate communication between culturally-different partners; including but not limited to theories by Hofstede, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, and Hall	Ancestry and American Culture Project Culture Partner Project Quizzes and examinations Discussion Board (Discussion and Response) participation
	LOC #3: Engage in Communication Inquiry	Evaluate Communication Scholarship Apply Communication Scholarship

Assessment Summary

			Points
A.	Discussion and Response (Discussion Board)		
	1.	10 Discussion (D) postings @ 5 points	50
	2.	8 Responses (R) @ 5 points	40
B.	Quizzes: 11 chapters @ 5 points		55
C.	Ancestry and American Culture Project (AP)		50
	1.	Ancestry: Personal Family Heritage	25
	2.	American Culture Analysis	25
D.	Culture Partner project (CP)		80
	1.	Post an introduction of your partner	10
	2.	Research partner's culture (3 sources @ 10 points)	30
	3.	Prepare to Interview partner (Interview Guide)	5
	4.	Interview partner (Interview Report)	10
	5.	Interpret partner's culture	25
	a.	Adapting communication to other culture	20
	b.	Personal Journey	5
E.	Exams: 3 exams @ 50 points		150
	Total		425

Assignments

Discussion Board Postings (D) and Responses (R): Follow the Schedule for the assigned Discussion Board Posting for the week. You will “Create a thread” about some posted material by mid-week. You will not be able to see your classmates’ posts until you post your own. . Once you have posted, all postings will open for you to consider responding to a thread. Then, you will Respond to a classmate by clicking on the threat and then click on Reply; by Sunday at midnight, following the DIES formula below. While “conversations” between classmates are encouraged (and rewarded with extra credit), you should try to respond to a different classmate each week.

Ten (10) Discussion Board **Postings** are assigned (@ 5 points).

3	4	5
Late or incomplete	Answers target question	Answers target question objectively, referring specifically to assigned material

Ten (10) **Responses** are assigned (@ 5 points).

3	4	5
Late or incomplete	Affirms that the Poster has been understood, without judgment	Affirms that the Poster has been understood, without judgment Makes a personal contribution

- D: Describe (active listening paraphrase): accurately report what you hear the poster “say”
 I: Interpret (personally identify): report what you “heard”, connecting it to a personal experience or knowledge from some previous or recent source (contribution)
 s: Suspend Judgment: resist the urge to “agree/disagree”, or “like/support” the poster.
 Their experience is unique and shouldn’t be “judged” as right/wrong = it is what it is.

Additional Responses may be submitted for Extra Credit Opportunity (ECO).

Ancestry and American Culture Project (AP)

Write a **6-10 page paper** in which you:

- A. Analyze your personal ethnic identity: your family ancestry (“homeland”, “roots”, 25 pts. heritage)
- B. Analyze the “dominant” culture of the U.S. 25 pts.

[APA format: double spaced, 12 pt. font, preferably Times New Roman; Cover page and References page (not counted in 6-8 pages)]

At least four sources of information must be listed on the References page, including, but not limited to: [See Class Help Page in FLITE/Instruction]

- a. AncestryPlus or HeritageQuest

- b. Gale *Encyclopedia of Multicultural America*
- c. *Countries and Their Cultures*
- d. Oral History: one family member

Answer all of the questions below:

A. Personal Ancestry **25 pts.**

Identify the dominant or most important aspect of your ethnic identity. If you are a mixture of “roots” (as most of us are), select one “branch” of your heritage to investigate.

1. Oral History and Family Tree: 2

What is your family’s “homeland”? Contact a family member who can help you. If you identify as African American, your “homeland” is somewhere on the African continent; but you may not be able to trace your family history back to the tribe or location. Trace one branch of your family as far back as you can. Include your family contact on References as a “personal communication.”

2. Migration: Emigration/Immigration 5

Discover when and how your family came to America. What problems might they have encountered becoming American citizens? Especially look for any immigration laws at the time your people came.

If you are an African American whose family experienced slavery in America, try to learn the experiences they went through becoming free; or, imagine by examining information about the period between 1800 and 1880 what African Americans experienced transitioning from slavery to freedom.

If you are a Latin@ American, trace any struggles members of your family have encountered becoming American citizens.

If you are not American, what challenges have you encountered in your effort to study at an American university?

3. General Culture Patterns 6

What world views or values would be typical of someone from your “homeland”?

If you are African American, consider the co-culture that your people have developed that might differ from “mainstream” Anglo-European American culture or Latin@ American culture.

Search Gale *Encyclopedia of Multicultural America* and *Countries and Their Cultures* e-books (available through FLITE) for cultural descriptors about this “homeland” based on the patterns listed below:

- a. Individualism – Collectivism

- b. Perceptions of Power: “Distance” between self and authority
e.g. “democratic” versus “dictatorship”
 - c. Avoiding Uncertainty (Traditional) or Embracing Uncertainty (Risk Takers)
 - d. Masculine (Dominating) – Feminine (Nurturing)
 - e. Orientation to Human Interaction with Nature:
 - 1) “Doing”: using or adjusting Nature to serve human needs
 - 2) “Being”: “flowing with” Nature
 - 3) “Being in becoming”: moving through Nature to some other level of existence
 - f. Orientation to Time:
 - 1) Honoring the past
 - 2) Living in the present
 - 3) Looking toward the future
4. What verbal (language; both written and spoken) and nonverbal patterns of behavior might be typical of someone from this “homeland”? 6
Differences between cultures have been research in the following categories:
- a. Language Formality (“proper”) – Informality (slang)
 - b. Language Directness (Low Context) – Indirectness (High Context)
 - c. Kinesics: gestures, facial expression, eye contact, posture/movement
 - d. Proxemics: distance between people in different situations
 - e. Haptics: touching or touch avoidance
 - f. Sense of Time:
 - 1) Monochronic: tasks matter, time is valuable and scheduled
 - 2) Polychronic: relationships matter, time is fluid and “seamless”
5. As an American, what world views or values from your “homeland” ancestry do you recognize as important to you? What “homeland” behaviors or customs do you practice, if any? What aspect(s) of the ethnic heritage you have described above, if any, has influenced your thinking and behavior? 2
If you are not American, what challenges, if any, have you encountered practicing your “homeland” customs in the U.S.?
6. What contributions have people from your homeland, individually or as a group, made to American culture: in customs, science/technology, the arts? 2
7. Based on the most recent U.S. Census data, what percentage of Americans share your ethnic identity? 2

B. “American” Culture: the United States of America

25 pts.

Describe “mainstream” [Anglo-European (WASP)] American culture.

1. Read Miner’s essay “Nacirema”, or search for other examples based on the “Nacirema” model. Write a brief description of some element of American culture in the same “anthropologist” style Miner used to describe an American bathroom of the 1950’s. 5

2. Read Gannon and Pillai’s chapter “American Football” in which they compare American culture, especially business, with America’s favorite sport. Write a paragraph summarizing one element of American culture captured in this analogy. 5

3. Read (or listen to) Powell’s essay “The America I Believe In”. Read Loudermilk’s essay “America: Love It or Leave It”. Write a paragraph contrasting (explaining the difference) these authors’ opinions of the value of immigrants for American culture. 5

4. Watch the scene from “The Newsroom” in which actor Jeff Bridges gives an unexpected answer to the question, “Why is America the greatest country in the world?” Write a paragraph in which you isolate one fact presented in his monologue and update it with the most recent information you can find, including your source. 5

5. McLuhan suggested that studying our culture is challenging because “the fish doesn’t know it lives in water.” This metaphor for ethnographic study is helpful to remember when we try to describe “American” culture. 5
 Read a metaphor for American culture. Write a paragraph explaining why this metaphor “resonates” or “rings true” for you.
 ECO: write your own metaphor for American culture.

“Other” Culture Project (OC)

1.	Introduction: Locate a person who is <u>not</u> from the USA or Canada, or whose parents are not from these two countries. This person can be a member of your community or an online ‘virtual’ subject (including a classmate). Post on Discussion Board: Other Culture:	
	a. Your partner’s name and culture	5 pts.

	b.	Introduce your “partner” as if you were in class, explaining why studying this person’s culture is of interest to you	5 pts.
<p>2. Research Summary (RS):</p> <p>Locate and summarize information about your target culture from at least three (3) relevant articles or essays (journal, in-depth magazine article, etc.). Think of this part of the project as a “term paper” done one source at a time. Use the format of an APA “Literature Review”: see the sample in Blackboard. Be sure to use appropriate internal citation when you quote or paraphrase materials from your sources.</p> <p>These articles must be from respected publications or online sources with authorship clearly identified. Secondary sourced articles must clearly identify the primary sources from which the author(s)’ information comes. Wikipedia may <u>not</u> be cited; however, it might yield sources of information that would satisfy this requirement. Only one U.S. government source (e.g. CIA) may be included. Material longer than 2 pages on your partner’s culture located in Blackboard folders may be included. In general, avoid “.org” sources as they tend to be produced by interest groups and may be biased.</p> <p>Students who find partners from the same cultural category, e.g. South America or Asia, are encouraged to share research sources (“swarm”); however, each student is responsible for writing his/her own final paper.</p>			
	a.	RS #1, Gale <i>Countries and their Cultures</i> database (FLITE)	10 pts.
	b.	RS #2	10 pts.
	c.	RS #3	10 pts.
<p>3. Interview:</p>			
	a.	Based on your research and information given about this culture in the textbook, write a set of at least 10 questions you will ask your partner. These questions should not repeat what your research found, but rather seek explanations and examples from your partner’s perspective and experience. Questions should begin at the surface level (Iceberg Metaphor) and move to deeper cultural patterns as the relationship grows.	5 pts.
		Group members (“swarms”) may share their Interview Guides so that they can compare the answers each member gets from his/her partner to the same question.	
	b.	Interview your partner, using your Interview Guide questions as a starting point. When it seems comfortable for you and your partner, probe more	10 pts.

	<p>deeply into a topic by asking follow-up questions, like “tell me more about that”, or “can you give me an example?” If possible, spread your interview across several “conversations” with your partner.</p> <p>Report the information you learn from this interview, either as a narrative (story/essay) or as a script (dialogue: Question/Answer).</p>	
4.	Interpretation:	
a.	<p>Summarize what you have learned about the target culture, focusing on the general culture patterns we have studied in this course. Note especially any discrepancies between information sources. Use your resources to try to explain these discrepancies. Remember to separate your partner’s unique experience from the generalizations (stereotypes) made in your research sources. Focus on how you would adapt your communication to someone from this culture for improved communication competence (refer to Ch.12 in the textbook)</p>	15 pts.
b.	<p>Report your emotional journey of discovery about yourself and your understanding of this “different other culture”. In what ways are you and your partner alike; in what ways are you different? How could these differences make a difference in your continued relationship? From your personal understanding, try to explain why there might be differences in your data observations.</p> <p>Groups may share their discoveries and compare experiences in their conclusions.</p>	5 pts.

Extra Credit Opportunities (ECO): opportunities to earn additional points will occur throughout the semester. You may earn a maximum of 30 points through ECO.

Film or Book Analysis ECO Option

Watch a film or read a full-length work of fiction (novel) or nonfiction (biography or documentary) in which cultural difference plays an important role. Write a 5-7 page (double spaced) essay in which you:

1.	(Observe and Describe) Summarize the story. This section should be no longer than 3 pages. Focus on conflicts and how they are resolved.	10 pts.
2.	(Interpret) Explain what you think is motivating the characters. Why do they do what they do, in your interpretation? Do you identify with the characters; why or why not? Apply theories of intercultural	10 pts.

	communication that help you understand these characters and their behavior choices.	
3.	(Evaluate) Decide what message you think the director or author is trying to send through this film or book. Evaluate whether you think this message is an appropriate one and explain. Evaluate whether you think the director's or author's work is effective in getting the message across. Give reasons and provide examples as evidence for your evaluations.	5 pts.
	Style	5 pts.
	Total	30 pts.

Film Viewing Guides

Several Viewing Guides are included in this course:

1. **“Dances with Wolves”**: this film is assigned and will be included on Exam 2.
* You may substitute Cameron's award-winning **“Avatar”** for this film on the exam.
2. “Gran Torino” (Clint Eastwood directed and acted in this film featuring intercultural communication between a Polish American living in Detroit and his Hmong neighbors.)
3. “Crash” (this Academy Award winning film weaves 5 subplots of different cultures co-existing and “crashing” into each other in Los Angeles over a 24 hour period.)
4. “Invictus” (this Academy Award winning film chronicles newly-elected President Nelson Mandela's efforts to unite his South African people using their beloved sport of rugby to bridge racial differences.)

You may follow the pattern of any Viewing Guide to write your ECO analysis.