

Program for undergraduate Science students

Name: Dr. Ulrich Zeuner

Course Designator: CAS IP 400

Title: The Sociology of Culture

Instructor's Contact Information:

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Office hours: September 4 – October 6: on Mondays between 10:00 and 11:30 AM;

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1. Course Objective

The course examines the mutual interdependence between social structure and culture, focusing on the ways in which belief, faith, knowledge, symbol, ritual and the like both produce and are products of social organisation. In this way it intends to give supporting measures to the students in order to help them to adapt more quickly to German life and society and to reflect their new culture experience more consciously and in that way raising (inter)cultural awareness.

2. Course Overview

The course **aims** at:

- getting theoretical knowledge for a more conscious interpretation of cultural differences the students could be faced with during their studies;
- becoming more sensitive to the fact that one's own perception and interpretation of the world is culturally bound, depending on one's own cultural standards, which may lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretation of what is happening in the other culture.
- Giving reasons for misunderstandings which may occur between Americans and Germans and
- Providing strategies for avoiding them.

Contents of the course:

- culture: definitions and cultural standards
- problems of perception in a new culture - perception training
- stereotypes and stereotyping
- understanding cultural differences – structures of culture
- manifestations of cultural differences in symbols, heroes, rituals and values
- comparing values, behaviours, institutions across nations (Hofstede's Dimension of Culture)
- areas in which communication problems and misunderstandings between Americans and Germans may occur
- methods of avoiding misunderstanding in other cultures
- cultural discussion of the excursions/ field trips

3. Methodology

Methods how to reach these aims, are:

- reading and discussing theoretical texts from the field of cultural anthropology and sociology to get some knowledge about describing cultural differences
- exercises and discussions in order to become aware of intercultural rich points in university life
- working on strategies to cope with these intercultural rich points
- perception training in real life situations (mini projects) and discussion of what was perceived and why it was perceived in that way.
- discussion of experiences in the excursions

- **writing a log-book (project work):** Students are asked to write weekly notes about intercultural rich points, such as things or people's behaviour they noticed as strange, funny or odd. They should write about non expected behaviour of people and about misunderstandings that occurred. They should also write a short summary about what they have learnt in class.

4. Required Reading

Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: Understanding Cultural Differences. – Intercultural Press, Inc. 1990 ff.

Geert Hofstede: Culture's Consequences : Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations. - Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2001

Greg Nees: Germany: Unraveling an Enigma. - Intercultural Press 2000

Additional materials (texts, photos, songs, photocopies etc.) will be provided by the course instructor in a Course reader.

5. Grading Criteria

Attendance and Participation: 10 %

Presentation in class: 10 %

Log-book preparation: 10 %

Midterm exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Essay (5 to 10 pages on a topic chosen from the themes of the course): 30 %

6. Chronology

All sessions will be held as seminars. The detailed readings and detailed contents for each session as well as the course reader will be prepared until the beginning of the course and will be handed out in the first session.

The excursions/ field trips will be planned by Frau Thomas and take place in addition.

Session	Contents
1	What is culture? - Definitions of culture and cultural standards Cultural Standards and stereotypes
2	Reasons for stereotyping and how to avoid it
3	Understanding Cultural Differences: Underlying Structures of Culture (Hall)
4	Understanding Cultural Differences: The Americans (time, space, mobility, communication style ...) (Hall)
5	Understanding Cultural Differences: The Germans (time, space, order, communication style ...) (Hall)
6	manifestations of cultural differences in symbols, heroes, rituals and values cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
7	cultural dimensions (Hofstede): Power Distance Index; Individualism cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
8	cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips Midterm exam
	Midterm Break
9	cultural dimensions (Hofstede): Masculinity; Uncertainty Avoidance Index; Long-Term Orientation cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
10	cultural dimensions (Hofstede): Comparing the United States and Germany cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
11	areas in which communication problems and misunderstandings between Americans and Germans are possible cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
12	areas in which communication problems and misunderstandings between Americans and Germans are possible cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
13	comparing East Germany and West Germany cultural preparation and discussion of the excursions/ field trips
14	Final Exam

7. Terms & Conditions

Students are expected to attend all lectures and excursions; students have to sign up for each session. Up to two excused absences are allowed.