

CAS DR IP 400 - The Sociology of Intercultural Communication

Name: Dr. Ulrich Zeuner

Date: March 2017

1. Course Objective and Description

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. It intends to give supporting measures to students in order to help them adapt to German life and society and to reflect their new cultural experience more consciously.

2. Course Overview

Objectives:

- 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:

- 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

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
- discussion of experiences in everyday life in Dresden
- **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.(8 – 10 pages total)

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 will be provided by the course instructor.

5. Grading Criteria

Attendance and Participation: 10 %

Log-book preparation: 10 % (8-10 pages)

Midterm exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Essay (ca. 12 pages on a topic chosen from the themes of the course): 30 %

6. Chronology

All sessions will be held as seminars.

Session	Contents
1 03/02 1.30 – 4.45 PM SE2/221	<p>What is culture? - Definitions of culture and cultural standards Cultural Standards and stereotypes Reading: Material will be provided by the course instructor</p> <p>Germany – a Patchwork Country Reading: Greg Nees: Germany: Unraveling an Enigma. - Intercultural Press 2000, pp. 1 – 33.</p>
2 03/09 1.30 – 4.45 PM SE2/221	<p>Major German Cultural Themes Reading: Greg Nees: Germany: Unraveling an Enigma. - Intercultural Press 2000, pp. 35 – 59.</p> <p>Areas in which communication problems and misunderstandings between Americans and Germans are possible – discussion of some Dresden experiences with the help of some log book entries Reading: Greg Nees: Germany: Unraveling an Enigma. - Intercultural Press 2000, pp. 61 – 96.</p>
3 03/16 1.30 – 4.45 PM SE2/221	<p>Areas in which communication problems and misunderstandings between Americans and Germans are possible – discussion of some Dresden experiences with the help of some log book entries Reading: Greg Nees: Germany: Unraveling an Enigma. - Intercultural Press 2000, pp. 61 – 96.</p> <p>Understanding Cultural Differences: The Germans (time, space, order, communication style ...) (Hall) Reading: Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: Understanding Cultural Differences. – Intercultural Press, Inc. 1990 ff. , p. 35 - 55</p>
4 03/23 1.30 – 4.45 PM SE2/221	<p>Understanding Cultural Differences: The Americans (time, space, mobility, communication style ...) (Hall); Reading: Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: Understanding Cultural Differences. – Intercultural Press, Inc. 1990 ff. , p. 137 – p. 154</p> <p>Manifestations of cultural differences in symbols, heroes, rituals and values Reading: Geert Hofstede: Culture's Consequences : Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations. - Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2001, p. 24 – 36. Additional Assignment: Material provided by the course instructor</p>
5 03/30 1.30 – 4.45 PM SE2/221	<p>Cultural dimensions (Hofstede): Power Distance Index; Uncertainty Avoidance Index; Individualism ; Masculinity; Long-Term Orientation - Material provided by the course instructor</p> <p>Final Exam</p>

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. The **deadline for the essay (March 30) is binding.**