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CAS IR 531/COM 531 Intercultural Communication

Spring 2014

"Intercultural communication was plagued by ignorance and folly, fraud and mistrust, cupidity and arrogance; indeed, as time wore on, the interference got worse rather than better." James H. Merrell Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1999

"...the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not primarily be ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural."- Samuel Huntington The Clash of Civilizations? 1993

"...the United States and the West have little useful context in which to try to understand Osama bin Laden" Anonymous. Through Our Enemies' Eyes, 2003

Course Guide:

This seminar course aims to examine the processes by which people communicate across cultural lines. Among our goals will be to familiarize ourselves with the dynamics of cross-cultural communication; the cultural background that shapes cross-cultural encounters; the patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication that vary from one culture to another; the ways that members of a culture understand, absorb, and transmit culture; and the obstacles that culture places in the way of communication and understanding. We will seek to discover how culture is reflected in behavior, language, and perceptions of the world.

During the course of the semester we will examine historical and contemporary aspects and problems of communication between and among individuals, groups, tribes, nations, states with divergent beliefs, customs and cultures. We will also look at how culture affects perception, values, thought patterns, and styles of expression.

In class discussions, students will be asked to reflect on the ways their own cultural background has affected the way they perceive the world, and the way others perceive them. They will be asked to apply the principles of intercultural communication to their own backgrounds and learn skills valuable in crossing cultures.

We will also make an effort to follow world news through the prism of intercultural communication. Students are urged to read news daily, and pay special attention to reports about how people and governments in foreign countries respond to cultural challenges at home or from outside. On most weeks, we will devote a portion of the class to discussion of one or more of these episodes.

By the third week of classes, January 30, each student will be asked to choose a foreign country where anti-Americanism is strong or where the United States is deeply engaged in local conflicts. Through self-guided research, students will seek to learn about that country's culture; understand how it differs from American culture; and see why those differences become flashpoints for misunderstanding or conflict. Students are expected to contribute to class discussions with observations about the culture on which they are focusing; on the day we focus on religion as a cultural determinant, for example, they should come to class prepared to discuss how religion influences the culture they have chosen and how that shapes perceptions and misperceptions of others. Countries that students may choose include Afghanistan, China, Cuba, Egypt, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mexico, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, and Venezuela. For graduate students a paper based on this research will constitute a large part of their final grade. Undergraduates may choose to write a paper instead of exams but they need to consult with me before they choose this option.

Reading requirements

As this is a seminar, class participation is encouraged. Trenchant questions and lucid insights are welcome and will be reflected in grading.

The reading requirements for this course include a combination of books, article and online resources.

Key readings have been divided into required and recommended. Required readings are those all students are expected to read whereas recommended readings are those which would help a deeper understanding of the subject. Students are expected to either purchase or loan the required readings. Majority of the recommended readings will be posted on the course website. Recommended readings are listed in order of priority.

Students are required to check the course website as throughout the course of the semester articles will be posted on the website. Articles and reports from various think tanks and research organizations on topics under discussion will either be posted online or handout in class.

Students are urged to read news daily, and pay special attention to reports about how people and governments in foreign countries respond to cultural challenges at home or from outside. We will devote a portion of the class to discussion of one or more of these episodes.

Thorough reading of a quality daily such as *The New York Times* and weekly (such as *The Economist* or *Time*) is mandatory. Access to the full daily edition of *The New York Times* is available on-line. You may also subscribe, or view hard-copy versions at Mugar library.

Grading:

For undergraduates only

Class participation	30 %
Mid-Term	30% <u>(Date: March 20, 2014)</u>
Final Examination	40%

For graduates only

Class participation	40%
Final Paper	60%

(Please finalize the topic of your final paper by March 20, 2014)

Special Remarks:

Students are expected to attend all classes except in case of a valid excuse (e.g. personal illness), in which case please e-mail me.

Academic Misconduct: All class members are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. You are expected to provide citations in papers for all quotations, paraphrases, and ideas taken from any source other than your own original thoughts. Boston University has very strict standards for intellectual integrity, and punishment for plagiarism is severe, and can include permanent expulsion from the university. For more on the definition of plagiarism and the standards to which you will be held, see the CAS Academic Conduct Code, available at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/> or the GRS Academic Conduct Code: <http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/>

Weekly Schedule

Week One (January 16, 21)

Introduction: What is Culture? What is Identity?

Required:

Peter Berger. "Four Faces of Culture." The National Interest. Fall 1997 (posted online)

Amartya Sen. "Civilizational Imprisonments: How to misunderstand everybody in the world." The New Republic. June 2002 (posted online)

Week Two (January 23, 28)

Approaches and Methods

Required:

Samovar/Porter: Preface, Chps 1 & 2

Week Three (January 30, Feb 6)

Language and Culture; Verbal and Non Verbal Codes, Role of family

Required

Communication Between Cultures, by Larry A. Samovar et al, Chp 4 "The Deep Structure of Culture: Roots of Reality"; Chp 5 "Language and Culture"; Chp 6 "Non verbal Communications"

Guest Lecture February 4

Week Four (February 11, 13)

Culture and Civilization. Nation and State

Required

Arthur Schlesinger (relevant chapters posted online)

Recommended

Anatol Lieven (posted online)

Himmelfarb (posted online)

Week Five (Feb 18, 20)

Multiculturalism, Globalization, Balkanization, Irreconcilable Concepts, Unstoppable trends?

Required

Christopher Lasch (Introduction, posted online)

Week Six (February 25, 27)

Foreign Policy; The Role of History; Imagined Communities; Role of Enemies

Required:

Benedict Anderson. Imagined Communities (posted online)

Recommended

Rubenstein, Robert, "Cultural Analysis and National Security" (posted online)

Castano, Emanuele, et. Al., "The Perception of the Other in International Relations" (posted online)

Week Seven (March 4, 6, 18)

Islam and the West: Is a Clash Inevitable? Culture in an Age of Terrorism

Required:

Samuel Huntington. A Clash of Civilizations (relevant chapters posted online)

Husain Haqqani. American Mongols (posted online)

Recommended

Bernard Lewis. Crisis of Islam (Introduction posted online)

Mid term Exam on March 20
Graduate students please finalize paper topic by March 20
Guest lectures on March 25, 27

Weeks Eight & Nine (April 1, 3, 8, 10)

Negotiating Across Cultures. Culture, Diplomacy and Propaganda

Required:

Raymond Cohen (relevant chapters posted online)

Recommended

Richard Solomon on Chinese negotiating behavior (relevant chapters posted online)

WR Smyser on German negotiating behavior (relevant chapters posted online)

Week Ten (April 15, 17)

Culture as Global Journalists View It

Required:

Holenstein, Elizabeth, "A Dozen Rules of Thumb for Avoiding Intercultural Misunderstandings" (posted online)

Week Eleven (April 22, 24)

The Cold War and American Culture

Required

May, Elaine Tyler, "Explosive Issues: Sex, Women, and the Bomb" – from Homeward Bound: American Families In the Cold War (posted online)

Manfred J. Holler (2002), "Artists, Secrets, and CIA's cultural policy, *Secretart*, 2002 (posted online)

Weeks Twelve and Thirteen (April 29, May 1)

Wrap Up, Failures to Communicate

(Articles to be distributed)

Reading List

Required

Communication Between Cultures, by Larry A. Samovar et. al.

Recommended

Anatol Lieven, America Right or Wrong, Oxford, 2004

Raymond Cohen, Negotiating Across Cultures, USIP, 1997

Thomas Frank, What's the Matter with Kansas? Metropolitan Books, 2004

Christopher Lasch, The Revolt of the Elites, W.W. Norton, 1995

Arthur Schlesinger, The Disuniting of America, W.W. Norton, 1992

Thomas Sowell, A Conflict of Visions, William Morrow, 1987

Office Hours

Tuesday and Thursday: 1-2pm

Wednesday: 2- 4pm

Other times by appointment via email

Students are expected to attend all classes except in case of a valid excuse (e.g. personal illness), in which case please e-mail me.