

Trans-Atlantic Cross-Cultural Issues

Fall 2010 Boston University in Grenoble

“Because discourse in global power systems is elaborated vis-à-vis, a sense of difference or distinctness can never be located solely in the continuity of a culture or tradition. Identity is conjunctural, not essential.” --James Clifford, 1988

Instructor: Dr. Michelle Mielly

Telephone: +33 682 00 94 68 **during working hours 9 to 6 pm (SMS anytime)**

Email: michelle.mielly@ggsb.com after working hours

Office hours: By appointment (best before or after class, but other days possible)

Total number of Contact hours: 39

Location and Meeting Times

Lectures: Tuesdays 9:45 AM- 12:45 in **DLST – D004** and certain Thursdays 3:15 PM to 4:45 PM in the Physics Building, **PHYS A 102** . Lectures will begin the week of September 6th 2010.

Course Description:

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach from the social sciences, particularly cultural anthropology, to explore intercultural issues and cultural theory in the contemporary context of globalization. With the larger goal of dealing with culture and its elusive definitions, this class will introduce students to the study of culture through the work of anthropologists, cultural historians, philosophers, economists, psychologists, and contemporary popular culture. It hopes to provide students with an appreciation for the diversity of the human experience, particularly in the French-American comparative context.

The course aims to develop a deeper understanding of cultural differences in general, with emphasis on the Trans-Atlantic context and the French culture in particular. Students will become familiarized through practice with fundamental tools of anthropologists and sociologists, namely ethnography, native informant interviews, and participant observation in order to examine and analyze the impact of culture in everyday life and the ways in which societal values impact cultural practices. Through practical field exercises, numerous readings, field trips, field journal writing, and seminar debates, students shall gain an overview of French lifestyles, customs, values and practices with a focus on recent societal trends in France. The end of the course opens up to a broader discourse on globalization, its relation to students' study abroad experience and the acculturation process, and the implications it holds for their own identity and values.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to help students cultivate:

- Awareness of similarities and differences between the home and target culture and comparative reflexes
- Greater self-awareness (emotional & cultural intelligence) through the acculturation process experienced during study abroad
- Analytical tools facilitating cultural dialogue and comparison (cultural models & theory; ethnography)
- Recognition of cultural variables and universal dimensions of culture, and ability to elaborate and describe the communication norms, rituals, and taboos of other cultures.
- Understanding of how communication processes differ among cultures to identify challenges that arise from these differences in intercultural interactions and learn ways to creatively address them.
- A holistic view of the French and their culture and a better sense of what it means to be French today

- To challenge current views on globalization and to engage in critical discussions around the topic

Terms and conditions:

Plagiarism

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code.

Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean."

Participation & Preparation

Active oral participation and homework preparation is evaluated and factored into the final grade.

Attendance is **obligatory for all classes and fieldwork assignments**. Students **must** prepare all assignments before coming to class. Arriving late will not be tolerated. If you are repeatedly late, your instructor may turn you away or count you absent.

Absences:

If you are absent, you are responsible for contacting the teacher and submitting your work on time. **All absences must be justified in writing by a doctor's note. Unjustified absences will result in the reduction of your final participation grade by 25%.**

Primary Course Activities:**

- Readings, Group Discussions based on readings from book and packet
- Individual Presentation of 2 Chapters from *Sixty Million Frenchmen can't be wrong*
- Ethnographic Field Journal & Assigned Observations (EFJ). 3 entries (minimum) per week, on separate days, to be checked by professor weekly + weekly discussions of critical incidents, of observations, etc.
- French Native Informant Interview
- **Midterm**: 3-page report based on French Native Informant Interview. Typed, double-spaced, min. 3 pages max 4 pages, 10 to 12-point font (TNR).
- Field trips and visits (to companies, to the Medical school)
- **Final Paper** based on a given aspect of French culture (topic chosen is subject to approval by professor). 5 pages min.; 6 pages max, double-spaced, 10 to 12-point font (Arial or TNR), use of citations and references, plus bibliography (or 'Works Cited' list) at end.

Grading :

The final grade is comprised of:

- 15% Attendance, Participation & Pertinence including homework completion, active and informed participation in seminar discussions, taking the lead and initiatives in all class activities, and attitude
- 20% Individual presentations of Chapters from *Sixty Million Frenchmen can't be wrong*
- 20% French Native informant Interview + written report for midterm
- 20% Ethnographic Field Observations Journal.
- 25% Final Paper based on a given aspect of French culture

Bibliography:

Books and Articles consulted:

- Agar, Michael. *Professional Stranger: An informal Introduction to Ethnography*. Academic Press, 1996.
- Asselin, Gilles and Ruth Mastron. *Au Contraire! Figuring Out the French* (Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc.,2001).

- Brafman, Ori and Rom Brafman. *Sway: The Irresistible Pull of Irrational Behavior*. NY: Broadway Books, 2009.
- Bryson, Bill. *I'm a Stranger Here Myself. Notes on returning to American after 20 years away Broadway: New York, 1999*.
- Clifford, James. 'On Ethnographic Authority' in *The Predicament of Culture*, (Cambridge US: Harvard UP, 1988).
- During, Simon. *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction by Simon During*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Julie Barlow. *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong* (Naperville: Sourcebooks Inc., 2003)
- Rabinow, Paul. "Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology" in *Writing Culture* Ed. James Clifford. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
- Stiglitz, Joseph. 'Another World is Possible' and 'Democratizing Globalization' in *Making Globalization Work* (London: Penguin 2006).
- Singer, Peter. *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*. 2nd Edition. New Haven: Yale UP, 2004.
- Trompenaars, Fons and Charles Hampden-Turner. *Riding the Waves of Culture* (New York, MacGraw Hill, 1998).

WEBSITES

For Sept 21st readings, excellent definitions and historical overview of Ethnography:

<http://www.americanethnography.com/ethnography.php>

Marshall University's Brian Hoey's website on Ethnography

http://www.brianhoey.com/General%20Site/general_defn-ethnography.htm

For Nov. 23rd readings, Globalization videos to watch:

Joseph Stiglitz Speech "Making Globalization Work", (42.24 min.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzhD7KVs-R4>

- **Noam Chomsky, "What is Globalization?"** (5.25 min. long)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdYwAXZh0ME&feature=related>
- **Thomas Friedman, "Three Eras of Globalization"** (2.55 min)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp4znWHvsjU>

Course Outline:

Homework assigned before arrival in Grenoble:

- **Purchase and read *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong*** by Jean-Benoît Nadeau & Julie Barlow (Naperville: Sourcebooks Inc., 2003). You will each present two chapters from this book (sign-up below).

Seminars

Culture and the Intercultural Adventure

Seminar 1 Tues Sept. 7th 9:45-13h

Course Introduction, Description of Assignments, Theme:

Dimensions of culture, cultural models, approaches towards a working definition of culture. Globalization's impact on cultural identity, technology & culture, exercise on values.

Homework next course: Summary of Hofstede's Dimensions & relation to cultural practices, 'The Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes' by Malcolm Gladwell from *The Outliers*

Seminar 2 Tues Sept. 14th 9:45-13h **Discussion if EFJ (Ethnographic Field Journal), Ethnographic Field Work, the use of Native Informants, Theme: *Levels of Cultural Awareness, Adjustment & Culture Shock*. EFJ Discussion. Discussion. Stereotypes vs. Generalizations – Introduction**
Homework for next class: Read “A Guide to the French: Handle with Care”, “Bennet’s Model for Intercultural Sensitivity”, “Cultural Adjustment”, ‘Cultural Informants’, ‘Intro to Ethnographic Research’ + 2 websites listed above on **Ethnography**

Writing Culture, French Identity, & Grasping what it means to be American in France

Seminar 3 Tues Sept. 21st 9:45-13h **Theme:** Introduction to Ethnography & *Culture, Reverse Culture Shock, French cultural particularities and the State. In class work on ‘Notes on the Ethnographic Method’ & Getting Ready for Fieldwork. EFJ Discussion
Homework for next class: IHT article “The Many Stripes of Anti-Americanism”, European Studies Newsletter “Anti-Americanisms in France”, Lexicon of Francophobia” (NYT), Culture’s Unacknowledged Iron Grip”,*

2 Presentations on 60 million Frenchmen can’t be wrong

Chap. 1 & 2 (Meet the Aborigines, the Land on their Mind)

Chap. 3 & 4 (Private Space, Grandeur is Better)

Seminar 4 Thurs Sept. 30th 3:15-4:45 **Theme:** Dealing Effectively with Stereotypes & ‘Six Codes’ for France; ‘French Space’. Understanding of anti-Americanism. EFJ Discussion
Homework for next class: BBC Article on “French Secularism-Laïcité”, “The Reach of War: Religious Symbols & France” (NYT), Chapter 6 in Sway (‘In France the Sun Revolves around the Earth’). Oral feedback on Field Work Assignment.

French Values & Working in France

Seminar 5 Tues Oct. 5th 9:45-13h **Theme:** Discussion of irrational behavior and national culture values, the role of motivation in human transactions: altruism versus compensation. Ethnographic methods application in class experiment.
Homework next course: Study website of following Grenoble-based Biotech start-up firm: <http://www.genostar.com/>. (Go through all of the scroll-down menus: **Solutions, Services, Data, Software, Technology, About us, etc.**) Then prepare 8 to 10 questions that you will use in individual interviews with employees for next class. Read chapter 10 from *Au Contraire: Figuring out the French* (‘With Work’)

2 Presentations on 60 Million Frenchmen can’t be wrong

Chap. 5 & 9 (‘The Art of Eloquence’ and ‘The Penchant for Absolutism’)

Chap. 10 & 11 ('The State: All for one and one for all', and 'Dogs, Town, and Local Government')

Seminar 6 Thurs Oct. 14th 8-11AM **Theme:** *Sociology of Work & Applied Science in Biotech Industry*: Meet in class for pre-visit discussion. Leave campus for visit to Montbonnot-based company GENOSTAR
Homework next course: 'Working With Emotional Intelligence' D. Goleman

2 Presentations on 60 Million Frenchmen can't be wrong

Chap. 12 & 13 ('Strong Language'; and 'Elite Education')

Chap. 14 & 15 ('The Enarchy' and 'In the Name of the Law')

Into the Field to look for Answers

Seminar 7 Tues Oct 19th 9:45-13h **Theme:** Work, Society, and Political Life in France. EFJ Discussions.
Homework: Preparation of interview questions for French interviewee based on the reading + *Riding the Waves of Culture* Chapter 4 "Relationships and Rules"

2 Presentations on 60 Million Frenchmen can't be wrong

Chap. 16 & 17 ('Civil Society: Invisible Helping Hands', and 'The Choreography of Protest')

Chap. 18 & 19 ('Redistributing Wealth' and Economic Interventionism: The State will Do')

Seminar 8 Thurs Oct. 21st 3:15-4:45 **Theme:** Meet in class to prepare for interviews. Rest of class time used to visit campus & find interviewees.
Homework: Midterm: 3-page report based on French Native Informant Interview. Typed, double-spaced, min. 3 pages max 4 pages, use of references and citations.
+ Read **Chapters 11 and 13** from *Au Contraire* ('With Politics' & 'With Society')

Seminar 9 Thurs Nov 4th 3:15-6 PM **MIDTERM reports due.** Discussion of interviews and of various individual findings given in the report. EFJ Discussions.
Homework for next course: Read 'Dossier on Healthcare in France' and 1-2 articles on Contemporary Medicine in France (Healthcare system, Organization, France's Social Medicine Model), & bring to class prepared to discuss.

Globalization and its Discontents

- Seminars 10 Tues Nov 16th 9:45-13h **Theme:** French Medical System: Institutional Context and Cultural Comparisons. EFJ Discussion. Visit to a Clinic or Hospital & with Medical staff (place to be announced).
Homework: Watch all three videos of specialists speaking on globalization (Stiglitz, Friedman, Chomsky) listed on YouTube in Bibliography.
Read Chapter 2 from Singer's *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* ('One Atmosphere').
Read Anthony Appiah's, 'The Case for Contamination' from NYT
- Seminar 12 Tues Nov. 23rd 9:45-13h **Theme:** Globalization, Multiculturalism, and Identity
Debate: *Increased cultural awareness and openness (towards polycentrism) vs. ethnocentrism and strong protectionism and preservation of national and ethnic identities*
Homework: Choose topic for final paper and prepare a 250-word proposal for next class.
 Chapters 1 and 10 from Stiglitz's *Making Globalization Work*, 'Another World is Possible' & 'Democratizing Globalization'
- Seminar 13 Tues Nov 30th 9:45-13h **Theme:** Identity and Being. Understanding the notion of cultural purity and cultural metissage in globalized context. Go over final paper assignment with professor. Work on Final papers for homework.
- Seminar 14 Tues Dec. 7th 9:45-13h **Final Class. Conclusions** about Cultural experience in France. Final papers due. Discussion of EFJ's, professor reviews individual EFJs during class (each student has 5 minute interview to go over EFJ and turn in paper).

Bon retour aux Etats-Unis, Bonne continuation et bon courage pour tout!
