

Becoming Foreign: Acquiring Global Competence to Study Abroad

Instructors: Christiane Métral, Bruno Grazioli

Subject Area(s): Communication, Global Studies, Cultural Studies

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Description:

We share this planet with over 7 billion other people who belong to thousands of cultural groups and speak thousands of different languages. With the rise of global mobility and communication, almost every person on the earth, regardless of his or her location, language, or culture, is or can be interconnected with everyone else. Now, more than at any other time in history, what happens in one part of the world touches all parts of the world. This course is about our adapting, adjusting, reflecting, and taking part in this “new world.”

The course explores the interaction between culture and communication in interpersonal and intercultural environments, and introduces students to the knowledge and skills necessary to attain global competence. Along with the study of the concept of culture and communication, this course provides the necessary tools to analyze communication behaviors in an interpersonal or intercultural context. In addition, this course introduces the construct of global competence; creates the opportunity to analyze and evaluate how our own cultural identity influences communication with others; engages interaction with the host culture; explores the challenges; and prepares the students with knowledge and skills to be effective and ethical intercultural communicators.

The course will include class discussions, simulations, interactive examples, case studies, and media presentations. It will also include meetings with international students on their study abroad experience at Smith and Skype sessions with Smith students who are studying abroad for the semester.

Learning Objectives

Analytical / Critical Thinking Skills

- Observe and analyze culturally defined situations without being judgemental
- Examine and explain causes of intercultural misunderstandings
- Question and assess your own cultural values and beliefs

Affective & Behavioral / Attitudinal Skills

- Become more aware of your own cultural values and the influence of those values upon your attitudes towards “difference”
- Cultivate sensitivity towards norms and values prevalent in cultures other than your own
- Develop attitudes and strategies which will help adapt to life in a foreign country and operate autonomously in that country

Cognitive / Knowledge skills

- Recognize the role that culture plays in effective communication
- Identify contexts where intercultural communication skills are important to success
- Be able to describe the process by which you gained intercultural awareness
- Demonstrate sophisticated understanding of certain aspect of cultural products and practices

Instructional Format

Class will meet once a week for 100 minutes each time. The basic feature of the methods used in class is to relate the topics we will work on to the personal experience of every participant, therefore the methodology used will be highly interactive. All materials needed in this course are available here: <https://sophia.smith.edu/becoming-foreign/>

Special Accommodations

If you require special accommodations or have special learning needs, please inform the instructor

Grading rubric

The instructor will use numerous and differentiated forms of assessment to calculate the final grade you receive for this course. For the record, these are listed and weighted below. Content, criteria and specific requirements for each assessment category will be explained in detail in class. Questions about requirements should be discussed with your faculty well in advance of the due date for each assignment.

FORM OF ASSESSMENT	VALUE
Weekly readings, class discussion and participation	30%
Online Weekly Reflections (4x5%)	20%
Online Forum (3x5%)	15%
Completion of Survey and “Can Do” Statements	15%
Meetings with int’l students / Presentations	20%

Weekly readings and class discussion (30% each):

In class we will present and discuss a different topic relating to the general domain of intercultural competence and communication. Specific readings will be assigned each week to help you focus on a topic and help you prepare for class discussions. You will be expected to participate in these discussions actively by voluntarily sharing your ideas, interpretation of the assigned reading, doubts, etc. All course readings are available on the WordPress site posted above. Active, spontaneous and voluntary class participation is expected of you, as well as professional attitude towards instructors and other students.

Online Weekly Reflections (30%):

After most classes, you will write a reflection based on class discussions, readings etc. that you have completed for that week. You will write these reflections directly in our WordPress site. This will be like an online portfolio. Your portfolio will be read by your instructors, but it will also be readily available to you any time you want to review, update, amend what you have written. Online portfolios are a work-in-progress tool of self assessment. They will allow you to keep track of your personal progress, both culturally and linguistically, and demonstrate your development over time.

Online Forum (15%):

Three times during the course, you will complete a specific assignment in the form of an online forum. In this forum, your instructors will post a question to which you will reply by showing evidence of how your critical thinking has evolved as a result of readings and class discussions. You will access this forum in our WordPress site. They will be checked and assessed in week 3, week 5 and week 7.

Completion of Survey and “Can Do” Statements (10%):

You will complete a survey and the ACTFL Intercultural Can Do Statements at the beginning and at the end of the course.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to make changes or modification to this syllabus as needed

Meetings with international students / Presentations (15%): These will be out-of-class assignments. You will be paired with one international student and with a Smith student abroad and you will be responsible to set up a meeting (in person or on Skype) to discuss course topics, ask questions etc. Also, once during the course, you will give an oral presentation in class.

Workload Expectations: All students are expected to spend at least four hours of time on academic studies outside of, and in addition to, each hour of class time.

Readings:

You are expected to complete readings as assigned each class period. All articles will be made available online on the WordPress site. Supplementary readings might be distributed in class (and posted online) throughout the semester. **Please, check Moodle weekly for an updated list of readings assigned for each class.**

- Angelou, Maya (2009). "Senegal" in *Letter To My Daughter*, Random House.
- Bennett, Milton J. (1998). "Intercultural communication: A current perspective" in M.J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Selected readings* (pp. 1-34). Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.
- Corbett, John (2010). *Intercultural Language Activities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Deutscher, Guy (2010). "Does language shape how you think?" *The New York Times* (August 26). Available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/29/magazine/29language-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&#
- Goffman, Erving (1990). 'Information Control and Personal Identity'. In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Penguin Books, 57-67.
- Guo, Xiaolu (2008). *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary For Lovers*, Anchor.
- Martin, Judith N. and Nakayama, Thomas K., (2004). *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*, 3rd ed. London, Boston: McGraw-Hill, Chapters: 8,9,11,12.
- Rivera, Jennifer W., (2009). *Essential guide to Intercultural Communication*. Boston: Bedford Books, chapters: 3,4,6.
- Tili, Tiffany and Barker, Gina (2015). "Communication in Intercultural Marriages: Managing Cultural Differences and Conflicts." *Southern Communication Journal*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 189-210.
- Vande Berg, M., Paige, R.M. & Lou, K.H. (Eds.) (2012). "Part I: Setting the scene", in *Student learning abroad: What our students are learning, what they're not, and what we can do about it* (pp. 3-58). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic integrity is a core value in this course (as in others). You are expected work independently in the pursuit of knowledge, conduct yourself in an honest and ethical manner and respect the intellectual work of your peers and faculty. You may review Smith College's Honor Code [HERE](#). Violations may result in serious consequences.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week	Topic	Assignments
1 Feb 26	INTRODUCTION: Overview of the Course, Expectations and Requirements What is Culture? What is intercultural competence?	
2 Mar 5	CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: Cultural Patterns Taxonomies Hall and Hofstede's description of cultural patterns Cultural Values – The Iceberg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check Moodle for assigned readings ➤ Write a reflection in WP ➤ Fill out the “Culture Learning Strategies Inventory” ➤ Complete “ACTFL Intercultural Can Do Statements”. Give examples of what you can do at the Novice level
3 Mar 19	IDENTITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: Identity, Social/Cultural/Personal Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check Moodle for assigned readings ➤ Forum #1, 1st deadline
4 Mar 26	IDENTITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: Stereotypes and Prejudice Student Presentations Intercultural Competence: Advanced level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check Moodle for assigned readings ➤ Write a reflection in WP ➤ Meeting / Interview with international students on campus. Submit your questions, and write a summary of the interview ➤ Oral presentation on current events of target culture - Group #1
5 Apr 2	VENTURING INTO A NEW CULTURE: Culture Shock Student Presentations Intercultural Competence: Advanced level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check Moodle for assigned readings ➤ Forum #2, 2nd deadline ➤ Meeting / Interview with international students on campus. Submit your questions, and write a summary of the interview ➤ Oral presentation on current events of target culture - Group #2
6 Apr 9	NON-VERBAL CODES AND CULTURAL SPACE Non-verbal behavior, Cultural Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check Moodle for assigned readings ➤ Write a reflection in WP
7 Apr 16	LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION Language, Language and Culture, Language and Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check Moodle for assigned readings ➤ Non-verbal assignment/observation. ➤ Complete again the “ACTFL Intercultural Can Do Statements”. Give examples of what you can do at the Advanced level. ➤ Fill out the “Language Strategy Use Inventory” ➤ Forum #3, 3rd deadline

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