

WCS 311: Adv. Communicative Competence– 3 Credits

Passport to Conversation

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A study of task-oriented communication strategies enabling students to become full conversational partners. (oral communication course) Prerequisite: WCS100L

Course description:

This course is primarily a “hands on” communicative course to develop cultural competence (verbal communication). Task-oriented communication strategies in cross-cultural training will be practiced by presenting students with models who demonstrate appropriate cultural skills. The course will include cognitive learning with lectures from experts (invited speakers), analysis of critical incidents and assigned readings, application of sophisticated concepts from the behavioral and social sciences. Students will practice these skills by giving presentations, enriching self-awareness with group discussions on prejudice, racism, values and customs, and participation in guided cultural encounters (such as field trip assignments that demand new behaviors). Students will participate in role-playing and in simulations of real-life demands in extended experimental encounters with another culture or complex approximations of another culture. Effectively, students will learn how to communicate and collaborate with other people and cultures in a global age. We will investigate how misunderstandings and conflicts are created and can be resolved.

Students will learn to communicate effectively about cultural traits that may be covered by lectures, assigned readings and practiced in-group discussions, role-playing and advanced guided cultural encounters.

Learning objectives:

Students will

- become proficient in how speech, texts, images and behaviors are shaped by cultures and interpreted through one’s own cultural lens
- identify and negotiate the obstacles to effective communication across cultures
- explore case studies for critical analysis of how cultures are communicated verbally and non-verbally
- acquire knowledge of the challenges and benefits of cross-cultural communication firsthand when producing presentations and multi-media projects for specific audiences and in collaboration with people from other cultures
- demonstrate mastery of course material and reflect on how it applies to their own life and communication

Required Books:

- *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures* (6th Edition) 6th Edition by Myron W. Lustig, Jolene Koester
- *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business* (2014) by Erin Meyer

Recommended Books:

- *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The Real Secret to Success* (2015) by David Livermore

Before practicing inter-cultural communication, students will read and discuss theories that will unfold the varying layers of culture (Thrompenaars Hampden-Turner, 2009)

1. Outer Layer: Associated with the visual reality of behavior, clothes, food, language, housing, and so forth. This is the level of explicit culture.
2. Middle Layer: Basically like the “small c” (something you cannot see), it refers to the norms and values that a community holds; for example, what is considered right and wrong (norms) or good and bad (values). Norms are often external and reinforced by social control. Values tend to be more internal than norms. Society doesn't have many means of controlling their enforcement. These values and norms structure the way people in a particular culture behave.
3. Inner Layer: This core consists of basic assumptions, a series of rules and methods to deal with the regular problems that people face every day unconsciously. These basic assumptions are automatic, like breathing. We do it automatically and do not think about it.

Popular cross-cultural issues important for the student who is studying inter-cultural communication are presented as class topics to analyze; for example:

- Personal spaces are studied when a student has the chance to talk with a foreigner.
- Work customs are analyzed for the student that will have a job with an international company.
- Expressing feelings is a very difficult situation when communicating with a foreigner and can lead to misunderstandings. This class is mainly a discussion of how to translate the understanding of feelings across cultures.
- Cross-cultural breakdown studies world conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- Cross-Cultural Topics may include:
 - International Dating: Talking about one's ideal partner.
 - Friends: Introducing the word “taboo” and discussing what is proper to talk about between friends and family.

- Superstitions of other cultures
- Weddings
- Table Manners
- Family Life: In this lesson, an alumna speaks to the class about his/her experiences living in a foreign country. This is a highlight of the semester and elicits many questions about cross-cultural experiences.
- Men and Women: This topic is the cross-cultural issue that interests the students most. Students analyze the different ideas, speech functions, and writing styles of men and women via newspaper articles, academic studies, and email styles.
- Food: Groups of students make or buy a representative food from the country they are studying. As we eat this delicious treat, each group presents the recipe.

Assignments:

1.) Oral presentations: Individual oral presentations will be given at least 3 times by each student during the semester. They will be based on prompts given in the readings and topics discussed in class. Variations may include interviews, open-mic presentations and video of presentations conducted elsewhere on campus with members of the ODU campus community.

2.) Debates: Students will participate in in-class debates consisting of carefully prepared arguments based on opposing opinions. They will occur at the end of each unit in the course.

3.) Round Table Discussions: All students are required to participate orally in each class round table discussion. Topics will be based on each unit. Students will also be invited to a roundtable an ecological humanities discussion at ODU on the topic of “Slow Violence” and resiliency.

4.) Homework: A series of 1-page journal entries on specific topics along with other short written assignments following the course schedule of readings or films. Homework also includes written preparation for the oral assignments listed above.

5.) Exams: There will be a midterm exam and a final exam assessing knowledge and cultural competencies gained in the course through the reading and class discussions.

Grading:

Oral presentations: 30%

Round table discussions: 30%

Homework: 10%

Exams: 30%

Honor Pledge: “I pledge to support the honor system of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community, it is my

responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned.” By attending Old Dominion University, you have accepted the responsibility to abide by this code. This is an institutional policy approved by the Board of Visitors.

Accommodations: Students are encouraged to self-disclose disabilities that have been verified by the Office of Educational Accessibility by providing Accommodation Letters to their instructors early in the semester in order to start receiving accommodations. Accommodations will not be made until the Accommodation Letters are provided to instructors each semester.

Films:

The Art of the Shine (USA/PBS, Stacey Tenenbaum, 2018)
A Bottle in the Gaza Sea (France/Israel, Thierry Binisti, 2011)
Arranged (Brooklyn, Diane Crespo; Stefan C. Shaefer, 2007)
The Big City [Mahanagar] (India, Satyajit Ray, 1963)
Borom Sarret (short film, Senegal, Ousmane Sembene, 1963)
Breathless (France, Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)
Jiro Dreams of Sushi (USA/Japan, David Gelb, 2011)
Makala (Congo, Emmanuel Gras, dir., 2018)
Mon oncle (France, Jacques Tati, dir. 1958)
Offside (Iran, Jafar Panahi, 2007)
The Other Side of Hope (Finland, 2017)

Suggested Books for Presentations

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 2006)
Brum, Eliane, *The Collector of Leftover Souls* (Graywolf, 2019)
Djavadi, Negar, *Disoriental* (Europa Editions, 2018)
Gopnik, Adam, *Paris to the Moon* (Random House, 2000)
Jamison, Leslie, *The Empathy Exams* (Graywolf, 2014)
Janiczek, Helena, *Girl with the Leica* (Europa, 2019)
Kaminsky, Ilia, *Deaf Republic* (Graywolf, 2019)
Ma, Ling, *Severance* (Picador, 2019)
Mbue, Imbolo, *Behold the Dreamers* (Penguin, 2017)
Murata, Sayaka, *Convenience Store Woman* (Grove Press, 2019)
Nothombe, Amelie, *Fear and Trembling* (St. Martin's, 2002)
Olivarez, José, *Citizen Illegal* (Haymarket Books, 2018)
Orange, Tommy, *There* (Knopf, 2018)
Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, (Vintage, 2007)
Saadawi, Ahmed, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (Penguin, 2013)

Articles (although I might send more during the semester depending on topical issues)

“Slow Violence” by Rob Nixon in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Slow-Violence/127968>

“Humans Translated: In Dialogue with Asylum Seekers” in 2017 Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza (to be distributed in class) by Maurizio Veglio

“A Translation Crisis at the Border” by Rachel Nolan in *The New Yorker*, Dec 30, 2019, 1-30 (to be distributed in class)

Guest Speakers (Live and by Skype)

Dr. Sara Russell Riggs, International School of Business, ODU
Tirza Leibowitz, International Human Rights Lawyer, Soros Foundation, New York
Mischa Zabotin, former Managing Director of Credit Agricole International Finance
Ambassador Christer Persson, Amb. (ret.) Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Ambassador Bismark Myrick, Ambassador in Residence, ODU, Former American
Ambassador to Liberia and Lesotho
Kotobuki Japanese Restaurant, Norfolk VA, Owner and Manager
Muriel Singer, Department of Health, City of New York
Sacha Zabotin, Brooklyn-Based Artist and alumnus of Bates College Study Abroad Program in Bhutan

Class Speaking Activities

In addition to the in-class roundtables and presentations

** Each student will be responsible for interviewing an international professor, student, professional or resident of Hampton Roads for 20-30 minutes to be recorded either in the recording studio at the ODU library (2nd floor) or from a voice recorder (also available to take out at the library) or by phone to be converted into a podcast which we will post on either blackboard or a google.doc drive.

** Each student will participate in an “open-mic” event (the theme will be of our choosing) at the Cure Coffeehouse, 503 Botetourt, Norfolk during class time

Jan 13: Introduction: the art of speech, non-verbal communication, circumstantial communication, public speaking, international interviewing, international contexts
Screening: Two short films- *The Art of the Shine* (about various shoe-shiners in Brooklyn, La Paz, Sarajevo, Toronto and Tokyo) and if time allows, *Borom Sarret* (about an old-fashioned taxi driver in Dakar). How does the same profession vary from city to city or country to country? Does it stay the same or what are the differences in

communication with customers and locals? The art of old-world craftsmanship...an endangered endeavor?

Saturday Jan 25: Norfolk's First "Night of Ideas" at the Slover Library (from 7pm-7am) Students will attend at least one - two sessions and write a small report that they will present to the class on Jan 27

Jan 27: Screening: *Makala* (2018). Discussion of the hardships of labor in Congo. Film deliberately in Swahili without subtitles. Discussion of supra-linguistic expressions. How does not understanding the language affect our appreciation of the documentary? Is it a fatal mistake on the part of the filmmakers or does it in fact help us appreciate the characters' struggles even more?

Feb 3: Screening: *Mon Oncle* (1958). Post-War France, in full economic expansion. How do the tensions between generations play out? Are they fraught with obstacles or are their bridges to communication? Discussion of the old city vs the super modern one; neighborhoods vs suburbia; non-verbal communication and imagery.

Feb 10: Screening: *Arranged* (2007). Bridging religious and cultural differences in strict, separated communities in the big city. How do representatives of two seemingly opposing cultures bond and become friends? Discussion the notion of "arranged marriage" and the art of communicating through the dating process.

Feb 17: Screening: *Breathless* (1960). American-French romance. What are the caveats inherent in intercultural dating or romances? What are the clichés and what are the attractions? Discuss the art of communicating and listening in romantic relationships or the lack thereof.

Feb 24: Screening: *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2011). The art of preparing a centuries-old Japanese culinary tradition, and the caveats of running a contemporary restaurant in Tokyo. How does one transmit a demanding restaurant craft from one generation to another and how does it survive the challenges of time? How does one communicate artisanal food (esthetics, taste, the pleasure of "mindfulness") on today's world? Discussion of different culinary traditions and arts (students will be encouraged to seek out international culinary experiences within Hampton Roads and discuss them. Guest Speaker – the owner of the Kotobuki Japanese restaurant, Norfolk Va.

March 2: Screening: *Offside* (2017). The restrictions and oppressions of contemporary Iran but also ways in which individuals can thwart the regime and assert both their sense of individual and collective identities through soccer, camaraderie and bonding. How do the various characters communicate based on gender, power and circumstances? How and why do they overcome their barriers? Does this film give us a perspective into contemporary Iran and/or is there a universal aspect to this film? Guest Speaker- Niloufar Salimi, Iranian PHD candidate and lecturer, Graduate Program of International Studies

March 16: Midterm (take home midterm to hand in). Screening: *The Big City* (1963). Gendered notions of “bread winners” in society. How does Indian society differ from Western ones for example? Discussion of the metamorphosis of the family unit in this film as well as notions of class, generations, changing cities and the strains and/or triumphs of marriage. Guest Speakers: Roudi Banerjee and Samia Ahmet, Indian poets, ODU MFA lecturers.

March 23: **Spotlight Diplomacy.** We will be joined by two very special speakers: Ambassador Christer Persson, Amb. (ret.) Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador Bismark Myrick, Ambassador in Residence, ODU, Former American Ambassador to Liberia and Lesotho who will speak about their long careers in the diplomatic corps of their respective countries, the “language of diplomacy,” the strains and triumphs of living in hotspots throughout the world and their perceptions of changing world landscapes.

March 30: **Spotlight International Business.** We will be joined by Dr. Sara Russell Riggs, International School of Business, ODU who will speak about cover cultural dimensions for employees/supervisors, give examples of domestic and foreign investment, entrepreneurship within Latin America and Mischa Zabotin, former Managing Director of Credit Agricole International Finance, who will discuss working for a French bank as an American and doing business within a global context (US/Asia/Europe).

April 6: Screening: *The Other Side of Hope* (2017). Dialogue with refugees in Europe. Perspectives of conversation from the refugee’s point of view and the host countries. Readings: Humans Translated: In Dialogue with Asylum Seekers” in 2017 Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza (to be distributed in class) by Maurizio Veglio “A Translation Crisis at the Border” by Rachel Nolan in *The New Yorker*, Dec 30, 2019, 1-30 (to be distributed in class)

April 13: **Spotlight Intercultural Professions and Experiences – Norfolk/NYC a dialogue.** We will be joined by 4 distinguished via SKYPE from New York City, one of the world’s most diverse and international cities.

- Tirza Leibowitz, International Human Rights Lawyer, Soros Foundation, New York
- Muriel Singer, Department of Health, City of New York
- Dr. Sam Bloom, United Nations Verbatim Reporter
- Sacha Zabotin, Brooklyn-Based Artist and alumnus of Bates College Study Abroad Program in Bhutan

April 20: Book Presentations (books selected after consultation with the professor)

April 27: Open Mic Finale: Cure Coffeehouse, 503 Botetourt, Norfolk, Topic TBA

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE: MONDAY MAY 4