

COMM 467: Intercultural Communication

Fall 2007 Tuesdays 4-6:50P Holden 2107

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Office Hours: Monday 2:30-4P, Tues 11:15-12:30P & 2:15-3:15P; Thurs 11-12:30P, and by arrangement

Indeed, my culture is the logic by which I give order to the world. And I have been learning this logic little by little, since the moment I was born, from the gestures, the words, and the care of those who surrounded me . . . I learned to breathe this logic and to forget that I had learned it. I find it natural. Whether I produce meaning or apprehend it, it underlies all my interactions . . . Part of this logic is tacit, invisible, and this is the most important part. It consists in the premises from which we constantly draw our conclusions. We are not conscious of these premises because they are, for us, verities. They are everything which “goes without saying” for us and which is therefore transparent.
—Raymonde Carroll, *Cultural Misunderstandings: The French-American Experience*

Knowledge of, and ability to participate in, a particular community’s spoken life are not only resources for information transmission but are resources for communal identification, and communal being, as well. Speech is both an act of and a resource for “membering.”
—Gerry Philipsen, *Speaking Culturally: Explorations in Social Communication*

Of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful. . . . When communication occurs, all natural events are subject to reconsideration and revision; they are re-adapted to meet the requirements of conversation. . . . Events turn into objects, things with meaning.
—John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*

General Catalogue Description:

Analysis of the communication variables involved in enhancing intercultural interactions. Focus on identity and communication and their relationship to each in other in a diverse world.

Required Readings, Email, Etc.:

Martin, J. N. & Nakayama, T. K. (2006). *Intercultural communication in contexts*, 4rd edition. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Any additional course readings will be placed on electronic reserve at the Jim Dan Hill (JDH) Library. We’ll likely view several programs and movies as well; consider them to be required texts for the course. Also, please be sure to check your university email account and Learn@UW-Superior on a regular basis.

You’ll most likely need one spiral notebook, or its equivalent, so that you can keep fieldnotes and reflections. More details on that to come in upcoming weeks.

A More Detailed Course Overview:

Issues of communication, culture, and identity dwell within the heart of everyday social practices. How we come to understand these experiences, the ways we engage others and perform ourselves, would seem to be especially important in a current time of undeniable diversity and change. We'll use this class as one, hopefully significant step on the path toward building greater awareness of what it means to perform cultural and intercultural communication, and to be curious, analytic, and appreciative communicators.

We begin with the area of "cultural communication" —at a basic level, examining the distinctive communication that builds and sustains life within communities. Some useful and guiding discussion questions include:

What is "culture?" How might we work to understand culture in complex and inclusive ways? What does it mean to be a member of a "speech community?" How must community members communicate in order to be "culturally competent?" In what communities do we hold membership, and what is the communication like that builds these communities?

We use our introductory understanding of cultural communication to explore how social interaction and identity formation happens when community members interact with folks from other communities—i.e., when we perform "intercultural communication." The many dynamics of intercultural communication, and the relevance of this discourse to our lives, are of particular interest to us. We'll investigate the pervasiveness and effectiveness of cultural assumptions within communication. We'll also consider the ways in which difference, uncertainty, and expectations impact our performances as intercultural beings. Some additional questions for reflection include:

How do we perform interculturally, and how do these performances shape our everyday lives? To what extent is every moment intercultural and what does this mean to our personal/professional lives? What does it mean to be "different" and to communicate "differently," and what are the implications of communicating about "difference?" What worldviews do we bring to conversations about or involving culture and how do they affect these interactions? Who do we become as persons within intercultural communication?

This is an upper level undergraduate course (w/ graduate students) that requires critical thinking, reflexivity, and a desire to explore communication in potentially novel ways. We approach intercultural communication by using ethnography (in short, a study of patterns of cultural life) and phenomenology (generally, a philosophical approach that entails foregrounding our lived experiences to understand social phenomena, and in varying ways).

This class requires no previous coursework in intercultural communication or these research approaches. In a way, though, we've intimately known culture our entire lives—by living it!

I'm excited that we'll be utilizing numerous mediated texts to explore intercultural communication, as we'll often watch pertinent television programs and films, and use these texts as contexts for discussion and criticism. Doing so will require you to carefully and thoroughly complete readings each week, and to stay attentive during class, so that you can be an active part in our discussion of how they relate to intercultural communication.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed so that students may:

1. Understand communication, culture, and identity as prevalent elements in everyday life.
2. Learn how culture is made possible through communication, and in turn, how it influences the ways we perform.
3. Understand intercultural communication as a complex, challenging, and influential process that can be discovered by reflecting on both dramatic and mundane experiences.
4. Come to appreciate communicators as dynamic, diverse, and fluid (changing) cultural beings.
5. Become exposed to current research and various ways of studying intercultural communication, and understand that our choice of research approach impacts the questions we ask, and ultimately, our understanding of intercultural communication.
6. Better understand their own intercultural performances, the richness of communication and culture, and ways in which they can use knowledge from our course to enhance their lives.
7. Come to appreciate the ways in which mediated texts can help us learn about intercultural communication. Also, how these texts narrate intercultural often largely comes to shape our perception of the realities of the given topics.
8. Promote greater appreciation and respect for diverse persons.

Course Assignments (Subject to Change):

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| Fieldnotes Activity #1 | 50pts. |
| Fieldnotes Activity #2 | 50pts. |
| Fieldnotes Activity #3 | 100pts. |
| Fieldnotes Activity#4 | 100pts. |
| Critical Response Paper #1 | 50pts. |
| Critical Response Paper #2 | 100pts. |
| Attendance/Participation | 100pts. |
| <u>Final Paper</u> | <u>250pts.</u> |
| | 800pts. total* |

*I use a 100/90/80/70/60 grade scale. There are no formal, written exams in this course.

Attendance/Participation: Please attend all classes and actively participate in respectful, engaging, and relevant ways that illustrate your efforts to read class material, engage audio/visuals, and make conscientious connections to everyday life.

Consistently coming late to this class will result in a lowered grade. Please let me know if, due to extenuating circumstances, punctuality will be difficult. Also, you're allowed to miss one class without penalty. Absences beyond this point will result in a ½ letter grade deduction off the course total per class missed. No student may pass this course with more than three absences, or without having actively taken part in the completion of our Final Project. Please be able to provide written documentation for all university excused absences.

Please work hard to engage course readings and make them a part of your participation.

Makeup work will only be permitted when you have communicated with me about an issue at least one full day before the assigned deadline. (Effective communication in this case =/= simply sending an email to me without receiving a response.)

I'm happy to consider extensions if you need extra time to complete your work, and more often than not, grant them. Please just ask! I require that you ask for any extensions at least one full day ahead of the assigned due date.

Various Other Important Policies:

1. All students are responsible for accessing and understanding the following website and its information regarding plagiarism, medical disabilities, and other important matters: <http://www.uwsuper.edu/provost/StdInfo-SyllabusAtt.pdf>. Please see me with any questions.
2. Open and ongoing discussion is essential to your success in this course. Cultivating a mindset of appreciation and respect for diversity is expected and required of all students. Conscientiously think about what you wish to share with the class. Be honest, but also understanding of diverse ways of communicating and being. Start as many sentences as possible with "I feel" or "I believe." This will enable you to better share your particular opinion, rather than communicate uninformed and/or hastily expressed generalizations about other people in class, or people in general.
3. Please complete assigned readings prior to class. Actively read and try doing so from the vantage point of your lived experience. There's almost always *some* way to relate to readings and discussions. Also, I've found taking notes routinely assists in thinking and preparing for class. To help: Write a short passage and/or scenario describing how you connect to a particular concept. Bring to class the ways in which readings confuse, trouble, and/or excite you.

4. Call my direct office phone: **(394-8319)** for messages regarding class cancellations due to severe weather. **Do not** call Campus Safety, as they need to keep phone lines open for emergencies.
5. Save all of your assignments in multiple places (hard drive, jump or flash drive, etc.). You are responsible for being able to provide an additional copy of your assignment, as needed.
6. Unless otherwise specified, please submit only typed work. Also, only turn in work that is largely free of grammatical errors, and that is clear and descriptive. This requires you to proof read your work. The smart move (although risky) is to ask someone you trust to also read your work and offer constructive comments.
7. This is an upper-division course that requires maximum insight and effort. It also requires us to be flexible in, and to question, our beliefs, so that we all may grow as communicators. Please be prepared to work this semester.
8. Keep in touch with me about your experiences within this class. Please communicate interesting connections and, if they arise, frustrations as well. Overall, have fun in our class. Make this an exciting, interesting, and personally challenging course that helps us learn about communication and ourselves, and I'm sure that we'll have a blast!