



Exploring Community and Culture in a Global Context

Online Course

Suggested U.S. semester credit hours: 3

Instructor: Dr. Deirdre Mendez

Delivery method: Online

Suggested department listing: International Studies

Course Description

This course is designed to facilitate students' active engagement with their host communities during study abroad and to direct thoughtful and impactful intellectual analysis and discussion of concepts of cultural identity, community, and multiculturalism. This course will create opportunities for intercultural engagement and offer tools for intercultural analysis and strategy development through an exploration of the local community and local community groups. The course encourages students to engage with the communities in which they are living and question their own and others' perspectives, while learning to interact purposefully with intercultural difference to achieve meaningful integration. The course's online format provides opportunities for social learning as students compare and contrast their own observations with classmates whose intercultural experience is different from their own. Group discussions among students in multiple study abroad locations will provide diverse examples of intercultural contexts, challenges, and strategies.

Conceptual Underpinnings

There are four fundamental theoretical components in the course, introduced via readings and lectures:

1. **Multiculturalism:** Intercultural sensitivity development via movement from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.
2. **Community:** Definitions of community and membership and mechanisms for engagement and integration.
3. **Cultural identity:** Students' initial cultural affiliations, power and privilege in study abroad, the culture of tourism, and movement towards community integration.
4. **Cultural analysis:** A framework for recognizing cultural tendencies through observation and developing culturally appropriate strategies.

These concepts will be introduced through readings and discussed relative to students' experience in the host country through guided discussions. An "endnote" posting for each discussion by the instructor will further integrate theoretical content with experiential learning.

Overview of Learning Objectives

Assess students' own cultural orientation relative to that of communities in their host countries. Explore the common cultural identity as well as diversity within students' host communities in the context of their political, economic and socio-cultural structures. Explore the cultural tendencies of a sub-community in their host country and practice developing culturally appropriate strategies for Integration, while learning from the experience of classmates studying in other geographies.

Specific Objectives

- Develop a basic understanding of intercultural communication and integration processes.
- Learn a framework for cultural analysis and strategy development.
- Discuss the contemporary political, economic and social issues of their host countries.
- Discuss recent theoretical approaches to cultural identity and community.
- Identify a local sub-community in which to interact, conduct observation of cultural tendencies, and explore strategies for integration.
- Develop skills for recognizing and responding effectively to difference throughout their lives and careers.

Competencies Developed

- Self-awareness (in terms of students' own cultural orientations, preferences, and areas of relative flexibility/inflexibility)
- Awareness of culture's role in perceptions of "the other" and the nature of stereotyping of others and of themselves
- Analytical skills for recognizing cultural difference and anticipating and managing intercultural confusion and conflict
- Skills for recognizing and managing students' own culture-based emotional reactions
- Culturally appropriate strategies for integration into diverse cultural contexts
- Workplace-relevant skills and the ability to link the study abroad experience to future career plans.

Readings and Sources

Adler, Paul, (2002). Beyond Cultural Identity: Reflections on Multiculturalism, in *Mediate.com*, Nov. (originally published in *Intercultural Communication*, Samovar and Porter (eds.), Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 362-378).

Bennett, Milton. (2013). Intercultural Communication in C. Cortes (Ed) *Multicultural America: A multimedia encyclopedia*. Sage.

Bennett, Milton. (2013). Intercultural Constructivism in C. Cortes (Ed) *Multicultural America: A multimedia encyclopedia*. Sage.

Gordon, R. (2016) *Study Abroad: Traveling Like an Anthropologist*. Routledge

Mendez, D. (2017). *The Culture Solution: How to Achieve Cultural Synergies and Get Things Done in the Global Workplace*. Nicholas Brealey Intl.

Posthill, John. (2008). Localizing the internet beyond communities and networks: *New Media Society*. 10(3): 413-431.

Adichie, Chimamanda (2009). The Danger of a Single Story. TED Talk.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg>

Makepeace, Caz. (2010). Dealing with Reverse Culture Shock. <http://www.ytravelblog.com/dealing-with-reverse-culture-shock/>

Sutherland, Rory. (2011) Perspective is Everything. TED Talk
https://www.ted.com/talks/rory_sutherland_perspective_is_everything?language=en

Instructor-recorded lectures and additional resources

Methodology

Students in this course are encouraged to continuously compare, contrast and analyze their experience in their host community with that of the U.S. through online discussions and to share their experience of intercultural strategy development and integration.

To ensure exposure to diverse cultural contexts, students will be assigned to online discussion groups with classmates studying in other locations. Bi-weekly group discussions will explore multiple examples of experience with cultural difference in terms of ethnographic “emic” approaches as well as a unifying “etic” cultural framework. Bi-weekly discussions will relate theoretical content from readings to students’ personal experience.

This course will meet according to the schedule outlined in this document. “Group A” students beginning in January will study together for four weeks during Phase I of the program, after which they will be joined for Phase II by “Group B” students—those whose semesters begin in February. During this phase, discussion groups will be assigned, and the two groups will undertake a common course of study for eleven weeks. During the final four weeks of Phase III, the course will conclude for Group A, and Group B students will compare notes about their experience and learning.

Academic Honesty:

IFSA-Butler takes academic integrity very seriously. Students must not accept outside assistance without permission from the instructor. Additionally, students must document all sources according to the instructions of the professor. Should your professor suspect you of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty, you may receive a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action may result. The incident will be reported to the resident director as well as your home university.

Assessment

Bi-Weekly discussion postings: 34 postings	60%
Community Integration Project (39% total)	
Proposal	8%
Paper	20%
Final Online Presentation	12%

Online Course Structure

The workload for this course is equivalent to that of an in-class 3-hour course that meets twice weekly for 75 minutes. The discussion postings each week are designed to take about 75 minutes each to complete, with 2 ½ hours of preparatory reading and reflection per session.

There are two important differences from an on-campus course:

- Students must make a written contribution to every group discussion to be counted “in attendance,” and earn a grade based on the quality of each contribution. It is impossible to “come to class” without participating. The online format insists on preparation for and thoughtful participation in each week’s discussions.
- Students will compare and contrast their experience and observations with those of classmates studying in multiple locations. These contributions will give all students insight into diverse communities, manifestations of culture, and strategies for integration not available in an on-campus course.