

Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Florence

Course Code / Title: (FL/GLBS 280) Intercultural Communication: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Florence, Italy, and Beyond

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Global Studies / Anthropology

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

With the rise of global mobility and ever-growing migration flows, becoming a competent intercultural communicator and increasing one's knowledge about other and different cultures is a necessity. This course exposes students to the theory, knowledge, and skills necessary to skilfully negotiate a variety of situations in which cultural contact occurs, with the aim of minimizing misunderstandings and communication breakdowns and fostering more successful and productive cross-cultural relationships. Students are encouraged to develop a critical awareness of their own culture and how it can influence communication with others, as well as become conscious of how ethnocentrism can be an obstacle in intercultural learning and communication.

Cultural theories discussed in class are always related to practical case studies and real-life situations, many of which involve interactive group exercises. A varied teaching format of lectures, class discussion, simulations, case studies, media presentations, co-curricular activities, and field-based excursions is employed to engage students with the local culture and beyond.

Objectives

In this course, students:

- Explore the role that cultural contexts play in effective communication, and how this translates across cultures.
- Deepen their knowledge of verbal and non-verbal intercultural communication.
- Gain an understanding of how our perception of others can shape our identity.

Course Requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field-based course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to read all assigned materials before the relevant class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. Graded assignments include:

- Journal entries: Two- to three- page reflective journal on four different topics designed to encourage students to critically reflect upon subjects such as cross-cultural misunderstanding or stereotyping.

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- Midterm exam: 3-page essay to be chosen among four different proposals focusing on one of the main topics.
- Final project: A fictional, semi-fictional, or true story that evokes an argument about culture, people, and places as part of the student's experience abroad. Students are encouraged to convey experiences, thoughts, and reflections by any means or media: art, photography, a short story, poetry, an audio piece, an analytical essay with photos, or a short film.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

- Participation: 20%
- Journal entries (4): 20%
- Midterm exam: 30%
- Final Project: 30%

Readings

Argyle, Michael. *Bodily Communication*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Egill Brownfeld, Peter. "The Italian Holocaust: the Story of an Assimilated Jewish Community." *The American Council for Judaism* (Fall 2003).
http://www.acjna.org/acjna/articles_detail.aspx?id=300.

Garau, Eva. *Politics of National Identity in Italy: Immigration and 'Italianità'*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Hofstede, Geert. "Culture and Organizations." *International Studies of Management & Organization* 10, no. 4, (Winter 1980): 15-41.

Hooper, John. *The Italians*. New York: Viking, 2015.

Hulstrand, Janet. "Building a Fluent Workforce." *International Educator*. October, 2008.

Johnson, Paul. "Must the Whole World Speak English?" *Forbes*, November 24, 2004.
<https://www.forbes.com/forbes/2004/1129/039.html?sh=1563776540bb>.

Killinger, Charles. *Culture and Customs of Italy*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2005.

Martin, Judith, and Thomas Nakayama. *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2012.

Pickering, Michael. "Stereotyping and Stereotypes." In *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Robb, Peter. *Midnight in Sicily*. New York: Macmillan, 1996.

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Ruspini, Elisabetta. "Role and Perceptions of Women in Contemporary Italy." In *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy*, edited by Andrea Mammone, Ercole Parini, and Giuseppe Veltri, 64-76. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

Stier, Jonas. "Internationalization, Ethnic Diversity and the Acquisition of Intercultural Competencies, in Intercultural Education." *Intercultural Education* 14:1 (2003): 77-91.

Van der Vijver, F.J.R., and Kwok Leung. "Methodological Issues in Researching Intercultural Competence." In *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, edited by D.K. Deardorff, 404-416. California: Sage, 2009.

Outline of Course Content

Students cover approximately 1 topic every 1-2 weeks. Course content includes field visits to sites around Florence.

TOPIC 1 - Introduction to intercultural communication. Imperatives for developing cross-cultural literacy: situating ourselves in Florence, Italy and internationally

- Introduction to the course: cultural competence and ICC
- The disunity of Italy: geographical and historical causes
- The location: Florence as symbol of Italian culture

TOPIC 2 - Cultural diversity: terms, metaphors, evaluating our cultural skills

- Cultural contact and cultural diversity
- Italian linguistic diversity: dialects and the standard language
- Italian social and political diversity: the "southern question"
- Local and national identities in Italy

TOPIC 3 - The process of intercultural learning: theory and practice. What are the potential pitfalls and obstacles to intercultural learning and communication?

- Obstacles to ICC: Stereotypes
- Narratives and stereotypes
- The romantic myth of Italy

TOPIC 4 - Cross-cultural dimensions of culture: Hall and Hofstede

- Hall: high and low context cultures – the Italian case
- Hofstede: an empirical model of culture
- Do "national cultures" exist?

TOPIC 5 - Florence: Local identity and globalization: field visits

- Visit to the S. Ambrogio market area.
- Observation: religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in Florence
- Visit to the Synagogue

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TOPIC 6 - Verbal intercultural communication: language, thought culture

- Globalization and the English language
- The need for linguistic culture
- Language as culture: rules of politeness and requests

TOPIC 7 - Non-verbal intercultural communication: body language around the world

- The body in ICC: understanding and negotiating differences
- Gender and women in Italian culture
- When and how can you express emotions?

TOPIC 8 - Intercultural relationships: challenges and rewards

- Youth and cultural contact: the Erasmus experience in Europe
- Study abroad culture shock

TOPIC 9 - Intercultural communication in business contexts

- How do cultural accidents happen?
- “Italy” as a brand in a globalised market
- What is “national” culture today?