

Interdisciplinary Studies 492

Intercultural Development: Reflection and Integration

"You know, study abroad is like spring training for this century. It helps you develop the fundamentals, the teamwork, and the determination to succeed."

- Hillary Rodham Clinton

"If you think you're too small to make a difference, you haven't spent a night with a mosquito."

- African proverb

"My semester in Mexico was an essential part of my life as an undergraduate student. It gave education a whole different meaning; before that semester I didn't even know if I really belonged in school. It provided the necessary fuel to successfully finish my undergraduate years and to follow a career path with social responsibility."

- former student

Course Description

2 credits; minimum of 30 contact hours

In this course, you have the opportunity to reflect upon your own cultural backgrounds and learn about the diversity and complexity of cultures within Mexico, as there are "many Mexicos," just as there are multiple cultures within any nation. You will also be encouraged to examine the ways in which your experiences in Mexico can help you in your future academic and/or career pursuits.

This is a required course for all CGEE-Mexico students, except for those enrolled in the Social Work program, as they will cover the same material in SWK 294. Spring semester students will share numerous class sessions and activities with the Social Work students. The course is rooted in Augsburg College's mission of educating students "to be informed citizens, thoughtful stewards, critical thinkers, and responsible leaders. Moreover, the goals are largely inspired by the intercultural knowledge and competence value rubric developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACandU).

In this course you will explore your own cultural backgrounds and develop greater cultural self-awareness while increasing your knowledge about diverse cultures, including many different cultures within Mexico. You will examine cultural patterns regarding communication, values, and behavior and build your own cultural competence by successfully managing cultural transitions and communicating across lines of difference. You will also demonstrate your ability to live and work with "others" you may differ from yourself. We hope that throughout the course you will develop and/or strengthen your commitment to intentional diversity in life and work.

A central component of this course is the bi-weekly join class discussion about cultural issues that you will participate in with Mexican university students. Together you will discuss a variety of cultural issues in your countries of origin. Through these discussions with Mexican students and others with your host families, as well as required readings. You will strengthen your ability to live and work with people who differ from yourself.

You will develop personal leadership skills through being trained in and learning how to use mindfulness techniques to heighten your awareness of emotionally reactive situations and engage in critical, transformational dialogue, which is an important personal and professional skill regardless of the career that you choose.

In addition, you will reflect upon your own personality type and strengths and the ways in which those can support you while you study abroad, as well as influence your graduate school and/or career choices. You will also learn to express the way in which your study abroad experience, language and intercultural skills make you a stronger professional and job candidate. Finally, you will improve your writing and interviewing skills and learn to write a cover letter and resume that reflects your intercultural experience and skills, as well as your strengths and career interests.

Primary Texts

Schaetti, Barbara F., Sheila J. Ramsey, and Gordon C. Watanabe. *Personal Leadership: Making a World of Difference*. FlyingKite Publications, 2008. ISBN-10: 0979716705 ISBN-13: 978-0979716706.

Ting-Toomey, Stella and Leeva C. Chung, *Understanding Intercultural Communication, 2nd Edition*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2012. (several chapters)

You will also complete a few online tests about your strengths, personality, and career interests. In addition, you will read selected articles and other handouts that will be provided in Cuernavaca.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you will:

1. Articulate greater cultural self-awareness regarding your own cultural identities, communication style, values, behavior, and approach to conflict.
2. Express insights into your own cultural rules and biases.
3. Demonstrate a strong understanding of the complexity of elements important to many members of diverse culture in relation to their history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, and/or beliefs and practices.
4. Articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal communication, including direct and indirect communication, non-verbal cues, etc.
5. Demonstrate the skill of shifting communication styles in order to communicate effectively with people from culture's whose dominant communication styles differ.
6. Adapt behavior to show recognition of the feelings of members of cultural groups that differ from yours.
7. Identify several different cultures within the nation of Mexico.
8. Ask complex questions about other cultures and recognize the multiplicity of cultural perspectives.
9. Maintain or develop stronger skills in suspending judgment when interacting with people from cultures that differ from your own.
10. Demonstrate the ability to live and work with others who differ from yourself.
11. Express an understanding of the uses of power and nature of oppression.
12. Demonstrate the ability to apply the Personal Leadership methodology of "critical moments" to effectively work through alternative cultural interpretations when conflict or misunderstandings emerge.
13. Express greater clarity about your own personality, strengths, and career interests and the ways in which they relate to your study abroad experience and vice versa.
14. Improve your interviewing skills and write a cover letter and resume that reflects your intercultural experience and skills, as well as your strengths and career interests.

15. Articulate the ways in which the semester in Mexico has helped you in your personal and professional development.

Course Requirements (100%)

A. Active Class Participation (30%)

Class participation includes attending and actively participating in guest speakers and excursions by asking thoughtful and informed questions, coming to class discussions prepared to make informed and thoughtful comments and questions about required readings, completing tasks outside of class such as homework assignments. Moreover, an integral part of the course is your participation in a cultural/language exchange with Mexican students from International House in Cuernavaca every 2-3 weeks. You will meet with them approximately every other week of the semester and will draw on your interactions with them for class discussions and your final paper on culture. You will need to work with another student to facilitate a one-hour session, and your facilitation grade will count for 10% of your class participation.

B. Papers on Culture (3 papers; 10% for first, 20% for second and third) (50%)

1. **My Cultural Self:** Write a 3-4 page paper in which you articulate your own cultural values, beliefs, and behaviour at the start of the semester so that you can participate in class conversations about your culture, as well as later look back and see what has been affirmed, challenged, and/or changed. **(10%)**
2. **A “Somethings’s Up” Critical Moment Dialogue (CMD):** Write a 5-6 page paper about an intercultural, interracial, and/or international experience (preferably in Mexico) in which you apply the 2 principles and 6 practices of the Personal Leadership technique. See handout. **(20%)**
3. **Cultural Learnings and My Cultural Self Revisited:** Write a 5-6 page paper what you have learned about diverse cultures within Mexico and you articulate the ways in which your own cultural values, beliefs, and behaviour have been affirmed challenged and changed through your experiences with host families, Mexican students from International House, and other experiences over the course of the semester. **(20%)**

C. Pieces for your Career Portfolio (20%)

1. **Strengths and Study Abroad Context:** Write a 1-page explanation in which you describe how you have demonstrated at least 3 of your strengths identified in the StrengthsFinder test have helped you in your experiences in Mexico thus far. (5%)
2. **Skills and Qualities Development:** Write a 1-page paper in which you identify specific skills and qualities that you have developed this semester that can help you when applying for graduate school and/or jobs. See handout. (5%)
3. **Updated Resume:** Write or update your existing resume to include your international experiences. (5%)
4. **Job Description and Cover Letter:** Find a job description for a position that interests you and then write a cover letter for it that includes skills and accomplishments from your semester broad. (5%)

Cell Phones and Laptops: Much of our time in the course will be spent with guest speakers and in discussions. It is paramount that we listen to one another respectfully. Please turn off your cell phone and laptop before class UNLESS you are taking notes on class material and/or reading an e-book, in which case you need to show it to the professor in advance and request permission.

Late Assignments: You must submit assignments on time. If you need an extension, you must talk to us **in advance** to negotiate a new deadline.

Rewriting Assignments: If you receive a grade of 2.5 or lower, you may revise a paper as long as you resubmit it within one week of the date it was returned to you. Your final grade will be an average of the two grades.

Additional Comments

Explanation of Grades

Augsburg's grading system uses the following definitions:

Grade	Grade Points	Description
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	
B+	3.33	
B	3.00	Good
B-	2.67	
C+	2.33	
C	2.00	Satisfactory
C-	1.67	
D+	1.33	
D	1.00	Poor
D-	0.67	
F	0.00	Failure

A "Pass" grade is 2.0 or above.

Grading Policy and Late Assignments

You must submit assignments on time. If you need an extension, you must talk to us **in advance** to negotiate a new deadline. If you have not been given an extension in advance and you turn in a late assignment, you will be docked half a grade (from a 4.0 to a 3.5 or 3.5 to a 3.0, 3.0 to a 2.5, 2.5 to a 2.0, etc.) If you are more than one week late, you will be docked a full grade. No assignments will be accepted more than two weeks after the original deadline; a "0" will be given after that. Assignments due near the end of the semester will not be accepted after the last day of the semester.

Augsburg Honesty Policy

You are expected to follow the Augsburg Honesty Policy which is printed in the program manual. We assume that you have read the honesty policy, understand it, and are following it. Except when the assignment expressly encourages group work, it is assumed that all course work will be your own. You may not copy other students' work. The first occurrence of plagiarism will result in the failure of the assignment. A student who commits plagiarism a second time will fail the course.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities

Students with formally diagnosed learning or physical differences have legal rights to course modifications. Those who qualify should identify themselves to the instructor as soon as possible in order to obtain extra assistance.