

COMM 451 Intercultural Communication

The University of Montana-Missoula

Fall 2009, Wednesdays, 4:10 – 7 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Phyllis Ngai

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Office Hours: 3:00-4:00 p.m., Wednesdays, and by appointment

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Course Description

This course aims to guide students through a journey of understanding the multiple dimensions of intercultural communication. The primary focus is intercultural interactions with and among USAmericans. Diversity within the United States offers a rich learning ground. Examples set in other countries are also used in exploring communication across cultures. The unit of analysis in this course involves interpersonal, face-to-face conversations and interactions among people from different ethnic, racial, linguistic, and/or cultural backgrounds. The overarching questions that guide this expedition are: (1) What do we need to know about communication and culture in order to fulfill the goals set forth for specific intercultural interactions and to avoid intercultural miscommunication? (2) How can we develop intercultural communication competence? The required text by Myron Lustig and Jolene Koester includes thorough discussions regarding key communication concepts, cultural taxonomies, suggested communication strategies, and research insights into the potential difficulties and benefits of developing intercultural competence. The second required text by Donal Carbaugh takes us one step further into the heart of intercultural communication—that is cultures in conversations. In addition, students will be introduced to a wide array of fascinating articles that illustrate the depth, breadth, and richness of intercultural communication through the voices of people who are “in the thick of it.” Their stories are based on real-life experiences that help to enhance our understanding of gender influences, multiculturalism within the U.S., indigenous cultures and values, Whiteness and “mainstream American” communication style, resistance and assimilation among Mexican Americans and African Americans, and interactions between USAmericans and Chinese, Japanese, and Africans. Through a service-learning project, students will find opportunities to apply what they learn from reading assignments, class discussions, and guest speakers and to practice effective intercultural communication in their daily lives.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have achieved the following:

- Understand the concepts related culture, communication, cultural identity, and intercultural competence;
- Become aware of the rich diversity of communication styles within the United States and beyond;
- Developed a deeper understanding of one’s own cultural influence and cultural identity;
- Become attuned to different dimensions of intercultural communication;
- Understand the distinctive roles of verbal and nonverbal communication in intercultural contexts;
- Be able to apply cultural taxonomies in the analysis of intercultural interactions;
- ways to avoid and remove barriers (e.g., cultural biases) that hinder intercultural communication;
- Be able to apply effective intercultural communication strategies to build meaningful interpersonal relationships;
- Understand how intercultural communication plays out in different episodes and contexts;
- Become a sensitive observer during intercultural encounters; and
- Continue to develop intercultural competence as a life-long learning goal.

Texts

- [Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures \(6th edition\)](#), by Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester, 2010, Allyn and Bacon. [REQUIRED]
- [Cultures in Conversation](#), by Donal Carbaugh, 2005, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. [REQUIRED]
- [AmongUS: Essays on Identity, Belonging, and Intercultural Competence](#), edited by Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koester, 2006, Allyn and Bacon. [OPTIONAL]
- [Intercultural Communication: A Reader \(10th edition\)](#), edited by Larry Samovar & Richard Porter, 2003, Wadsworth. [OPTIONAL]
- [Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication \(4th edition\)](#), edited by Alberto Gonzalez, Marcha Houston, and Victoria Chen, 2004, Roxbury Publishing Company. [OPTIONAL]
- [Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication](#), edited by William B. Gudykunst, 2003, Sage. [OPTIONAL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS]

Assessment

Assignment/Exam	Points Earned
Intercultural Project	100 points
Reflection Paper	150 points
Field Research Paper	250 points
Project Presentation	50 points
Book Club facilitation (twice) and participation (each week)	50 points (25 points each) 100 points
In-class participation	100 points
Four Reading Quizzes	200 points (50 points each)
	Total: 1,000 points

- The writing assignments aim to prompt you to reflect upon the concepts covered in the texts and the ideas discussed in class. The assignments also provide opportunities for you to apply what you have learned in analyzing the intercultural communication events that occur during your intercultural project.
- The quizzes aim to motivate you to read the required texts carefully. If you take the time to read the texts according to the class schedule, you will find the quizzes manageable. Each quiz is available for a week (from 12 a.m. Wednesday through 11:55 p.m. Tuesday) via Blackboard. See course schedule for quiz weeks.
- The in-class activities, including the weekly Book Club, allow for small-group and whole-class discussions about the reading materials, the documentaries shown in class, and the instructor's input.

- Course Points/Final Grade

		933 – 1000	A	900 – 932	A-
866 – 899	B+	833 – 865	B	800 – 832	B-
766 – 799	C+	733 – 765	C	700 – 732	C-
666 – 699	D+	633 – 665	D	600 – 632	D-
		< 600	F		

Course Policies

- You are responsible for submitting your assignments by the due date and completing online quizzes by the deadlines. Late work receives a 50% deduction from the points gained unless you provide a note from your doctor indicating that you were unable to complete the assignment because of sickness.
- You can earn a maximum of 100 points for class participation. To maintain accurate participation records, the instructor will take notes of each student's participation every week. The grading criteria are as follows:
 - You can earn 50 points by being an attentive and respectful listener.
 - To earn the next 50 points, you need to be an *active participant* in class by, for example, making meaningful contributions to class discussions, asking and responding to questions, and trying your best during in-class activities.
- In order to earn the points for participating in class, you must be present from 4:10 p.m. until the end of the class. Arriving late or leaving early reduces your opportunity to earn participation points. Your timely presence is important both practically and ethically. The success of the course depends on collaboration and cooperation in our learning community.
- You should be aware that as a student at the University of Montana, you must practice academic honesty and are bound by the following Code of Academic Conduct:
<http://www.umt.edu/studentaffairs/sccAcademicConduct.htm>
As the code explains, academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating, and deliberate interference with the work of others. It is the intellectual equivalent of fraud—a crime against the codes of the academy. *As an academic crime, plagiarism merits academic punishment, ranging from an F on the assignment or for the course, to suspension or expulsion from the University.*
- Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations in this course. To request course modifications, please contact me as soon as possible. I will work with you and Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/> or call 406.243.2243 (Voice/Text).

Communication

Check your UM email regularly. Information about quiz schedule changes, extra-credit earning opportunities, reading assignment modifications, deadline adjustments, etc. is sent via Griznet. Don't miss important notices!

Extra-Credits

Throughout the semester, you will find a wide range of lectures and workshops about different cultures and various intercultural/cross-cultural topics held on campus. The instructor will inform you of the ones that are particularly relevant to this class. You can earn up to 10 points by submitting a report after attending a designated event. A report should include three main parts: (1) a summary of main ideas, (2) important quotes, and (3) reflective comments.

The maximum number of extra-credit points one can earn is 30.