



SYLLABUS

CROSSCULTURAL COMMUNICATION/CROSSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Instructor: Gertraud Steininger

Contact Hrs: 15

Language of Instruction: English

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Content

The Intercultural Communication course is designed to offer a theoretical basis for the concept of intercultural learning/communication, but utilizes in most respects a very hands-on approach. Intercultural Learning can be an important tool in the student's efforts to understand the complexity of their stay in a foreign culture and is meant to convert the frustrations and surprises they are confronted with into a useful learning experience, while at the same time induce those students less sensitive about cultural differences to reflect on their role and identity abroad.

Objectives of the course

The students will

- look at various concepts of culture:
(Iceberg Model, Hofstede's Model, Hall & Hall's behavioural components of culture, Milton Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity)
- discover that everybody sees things differently
- see that in a group, people have a lot in common and many differences
- see that the approach to the other is influenced throughout life from childhood on by different factors like family, education etc.
- discover that how they see themselves might not necessarily be the same as how others see them
- see the relevance values have for them to determine what they think is good and what is bad and how it is to negotiate about values
- engage in dialogue on deep and sensitive issues on intercultural relations like cultural values
- discuss about their own limits for tolerance and about the origins of their behaviour towards other people
- find out where ideas about culture impact on their lives
- reflect stereotypes and prejudices
- reflect on the question if there is anything typical Austrian / typical American?
- think about how they can apply what they have learned to daily life

Instructional Methods

The course requirements will include readings as basis and preparation for discussions, group activities, role plays, simulation exercises, the regular keeping of a journal, excursions to different districts of Vienna, presentation of the student's experiences in class and a final individual paper at the end of the semester.

Experiences taken from the student's daily life in Vienna will constitute the basis for discussions and role-plays, at the same time emphasizing the general applicability of the concepts and skills they will acquire to any intercultural context, be it in the US or in any other foreign situation.

Outline of the course

1. Introduction: Goals and objectives of the course

As the first class will be taking place only three days after the students have arrived in Vienna and are in most cases still heavily fighting jet-lag we would like to begin with a general introduction to goals and objectives of the course and a clarification of the requirements.

2. Various concepts of culture

(Iceberg Model, Hofstede's Model, Hall & Hall's behavioural components of culture, Milton Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity)

The objective of this class period will be to introduce students to the concept of culture, the various levels of culture and to identify themselves as cultural beings. Students will identify their individual and societal culture and be encouraged to look at their particular characteristics and values.

Understanding why they have them and where they come from will help students see host-nationals in a more objective manner.

3. Culture Shock

Culture shock is the psychological disorientation experienced by individuals moving from one culture to another for an extended period of time. It is the result of being in an environment where the ways of doing, perceiving and valuing things are different from that of the home country.

4. Communication Barriers: Values

In all probability the students are hardly aware of their own cultural values. Students will be assisted in discovering the relevance values have for them to determine what they think is good and what is bad and how it is to negotiate about values.

5. Presentation of Project Groups

Students are told beforehand to visit different places in Vienna in order to find out if there is anything "typical Viennese / Austrian". In the next session every group presents the facts, their impressions, feelings etc. in class followed by a discussion.

6. Case studies

Students will design and present case studies utilizing a personal experience (critical incident) they encountered during their semester in Vienna regarding cross-cultural communication and miscommunication. They should attempt to analyze the situation retrospectively based on the information and insights gained during the semester.

7. Re-Entry

Re-entry shock is at times more severe than culture shock because it is unexpected. Upon returning to their home country, students may expect everything to be as it was when they departed. However, due to changes in the way they perceive their environment, their home country may seem to be less than

„satisfactory“. Knowing to expect this and treating the home country as a foreign country upon return, by applying the same coping strategies used when first going abroad, will help the re-adjustment process.

Method of Evaluation

Weekly DIE – Journal 30 %

Participation 30 %

Final Paper 30 %

Class-Project Presentation 10 %