

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
in partnership with the Gap Year Association (GYA)

SOC 199: Self and Community – Culture, Cohort, and Self

COURSE SYLLABUS

CREDITS: 4 quarter-credits – Continuous Enrollment Course

Students who plan to use this course to fulfill specific requirements should discuss transfer options and obtain written approval from a counselor or study abroad advisor at their own college/university PRIOR to enrolling in this course.

PREREQUISITES:

There are NO prerequisites for this course.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

This course is a field-based self-study. The course instructor will correspond with the student and provide written feedback on course assignments via email and other remote communication.

INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD:

PSU has approved the following Instructors of Record, one of whom will be assigned to you (typically two+ weeks prior to the beginning of your program):

- Britt Basel, MS - brittbasel@ecothropic.com
 - Dianna Hahn, MA - dianna@gapyearassociation.org
 - Alexander Papouchis, MS - alexpapouchis@gmail.com
 - Cam Sylvester, MA – ccamsylvester@gmail.com
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to provide hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students who undertake study-away opportunities. It offers the student an opportunity to reflect on the complex relationships within the host culture surrounding a particular event, the cohort of peer-students in which students form a relevant identity, and their own history. Students will have an option to write an ethnology based on living within an unfamiliar culture for a few months and use their cohort experience for a detailed study of social systems and self-growth.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

- **Environment of Respect:** Disagreement and diversity of opinions are encouraged. You will be challenged to think critically about the impact of cultural differences, which may emerge in concepts of gender, race, the roles environment has in business and market development, socioeconomic status, physical and cognitive ability, sexuality, and other forms of diversity. You are encouraged to ask difficult questions and engage in discussion and critical reflection. Please be respectful of others, listen, and try to understand differences.
- **Experiential Learning:** In this course, learning is an experiential process in which you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences throughout the term. The richness of the course will depend on the questions, insights, and active participation that you bring.
- **Personal Responsibility:** You are expected to engage fully in the coursework and take action if you need help. Please communicate any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or course activities to your Instructor of Record.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please adhere to university policies. Take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. Each student is expected to prepare their own assignments, and any assignments submitted should be the sole work of the student. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information, will not be tolerated. PSU's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/psu-code-student-conduct-and-responsibility>

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Examine differences and similarities between the community of their experience and that of their home environment.
- Expand their knowledge and understanding of the customs of different cultures.
- Analyze and summarize insights gained from the cohort experience.
- Evaluate particular social issues through the lens of a particular event (e.g., Semana Santa, Day of the Dead, Holi, Carnival, etc.)
- Understand core issues in cross-cultural communication and interpersonal skills.

CONTACT HOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

A total of 40 contact hours will be facilitated. These hours will come in the forms of:

- Introduction to Social Systems in the host location
- Homestays
- Weekly cohort meetings and intense social-living for an extended period of time
- Social-service based volunteer projects
- Observations of cultural affairs/ceremonies/festivals
- Cross-cultural correspondence and education
- History lectures and historical excursions

ASSIGNMENTS

REQUIRED HOURS: You must complete 40 contact hours as described above. The Gap Year Association will provide verification of hours.

DAILY JOURNAL: The journal requirement is an important component of your grade for this course. It will count for 30% of your final grade. Elements that make a strong journal include self-reflection and evidence of critical thinking.

If you are enrolled in multiple courses, you are only required to **maintain one journal for all courses**

Journals should be **handwritten and legible**, as handwritten reflections tend to be deeper and more insightful than those maintained digitally. Additionally, many programs have limitations to device usage in different locations; as such, a typed version may not be an option.

Journals will be graded as follows:

- **Self-reflection (20%):** Ask yourself critical questions about the experience you are having. How is this different from what you expected? What personal challenges are you experiencing? How are you learning and growing from this experience?
- **Reflection about your location and host culture (20%):** What is similar to and/or different from your home culture/environment? What is unique about this place/location? How is your day-to-day experience and learning in the host culture challenging or validating your worldviews?
- **Sharing reflections on group dynamics (20%):** What lessons can you take away from the experience you are having with your cohort? How are you developing or changing within the group?
- **Reflection on specific course themes (20%):** Review the student outcomes from the courses you are registered for. In your journal entries, speak directly about your inquiry and learning related to those course themes.
- **Quality & Consistency (20%):** Journaling every day or every few days with focus on the above elements will lead to higher quality journals and a better overall journal grade.

REQUIRED READING: You must read at least **ONE** book from the Recommended Reading list and demonstrate knowledge learned and/or perspectives expressed (**with MLA or APA citations**) in your FINAL REPORT.

A **FINAL REPORT** of insights gained from your study-away experience is required in order to complete the course. **Our expectation is that the paper you submit will reflect college-level writing.** Your report should be 8-10 pages in length. Reports must be typed (double spaced) with a cover page that includes your name, the academic quarter (e.g. fall 2021), the name of the program you attended, and the course number.

Choose from one of two options:

Option 1: Submit a report reflecting on your small cohort experience.

Read one or more books off the recommended reading list. Submit a comprehensive analytical paper detailing your experience living and traveling in a small cohort. What did the cohort experience teach you about yourself? How would you like to use this self-learning moving forward?

As you brainstorm, consider the following: what were the ups and downs of the cohort? Who did you learn the most from? Did the cohort go through stages of cohort development? What did you learn about communication skills? Did you learn about non-violent communication, love languages, active listening, Plato's Circle of Truth, etc.? What was the impact of traveling in a cohort rather than being a solo traveler?

Final Report for Option 1 will be graded as follows:

- Description of the cohort experience - 20%
- Analysis of how the cohort impacted your self-awareness and learning - 40%
- Clarity and Organization of Ideas - 20%
- Grammar and Punctuation - 10%
- Ability to Demonstrate Knowledge from the Required Readings - 10%

Option 2: Submit a comprehensive analytical ethnography paper.

Ethnographers study human culture by researching a culture's material products (artwork, architecture, tools, etc.) and non-material creations (music, symbols, values, etc.). They also study social relationships in human communities such as marriage, family life, authority, and conflict. This project should give you a chance to intentionally observe the area, people, culture, historic sites, political system, art, music, society, history, education, foreign relations, geography, scientific research, leisure-time activities, etc. of the region and culture you visit during your program.

Ethnology Project Assignment Instructions:

- Find a cultural event/issue related to your semester that you know little or nothing about.
- During your semester: Interview, in-depth, at least 3 people about this event or issue.
- Write an 8-10 page research paper documenting your experience:
 - Describe what you think will happen for that event/issue. What do you think the environment will be like? What will the people be like? What will you experience? What biases/ideas/projections do you bring to the experience?
 - As you participate in the event, describe what you see/feel/hear, focusing on the surrounding environment, the people in it, and the activities taking place.
 - After describing the experience, begin to ask questions that bring you into relationship with it. What are the people doing? How do they do it? Why do they do it that way? What cultural assumptions of yours, if any, are exposed?
- Summarize your thoughts and feelings: Was this a challenging experience? Comfortable or uncomfortable? Why? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about the local culture/people? Would you do anything differently?

**** For this option, you must choose your own book related to the topic and get pre-approval from the course instructor. **The books listed in this syllabus do not support option 2.***

Final Report for Option 2 will be graded as follows:

- Description of the event/issue - 20%

- Summary and analysis of interviews - 20%
- Analysis of your own preconceptions and biases as an ethnographer - 20%
- Clarity and Organization of Ideas - 20%
- Grammar and Punctuation - 10%
- Ability to Demonstrate Knowledge from an approved book - 10%

DEADLINES & SUBMISSIONS:

All course requirements must be submitted by:

- Fall Semester: January 20th
- Spring Semester: June 20th

SUBMITTING JOURNALS & FINAL REPORTS:

- **Journals:** Once complete, please capture legible images/scans of your handwritten journal and submit as **ONE COMPLETE** document via email/shared drive to your instructor. Instructors reserve the right to refuse your journal submission if it is not legible. Some tips for quality submission when photographing or scanning your journal:
 - Ensure adequate light
 - Use equal camera height/distance if taking photos of journal
 - Turn OFF the flash
 - Pay attention to shadows and reflections
 - Ensure the entire page is captured and sections are not cut off (even margins)!
- **Final report:** Please email or share your final report with your Instructor of Record

COURSE EVALUATION:

- **Daily Journal** (30% of total course grade): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, clearly presented ideas and observations, creative thought, and relevant concepts.
- **Final Paper** (70% of total course grade): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, appropriate grammar and verb use, format, content relevance, organization, analysis, originality, and summarization skills.
- **Required Readings:** This is a requirement for successful completion of this class and 10% of your paper grade depends on your referencing examples and lessons learned. Citations are required.
- **Required Hours:** The Gap Year Association will provide verification of these hours.
- **Grading:** This course is graded with letter grades A - F. See more details about PSU's grading system [here](#).

READING LIST

Students must read and cite at least ONE book in the final assignment. The following books have been approved for this course. Any other books not on this list must first be approved by your Instructor of Record.

ALL REGIONS:

Conscious Living, Finding Joy in the Real World, by Gay & Katie Hendricks

Five simple lessons of "conscious living," rooted in the ancient traditions of Stoicism and Taoism, help us overcome obstacles and fears and awaken our own creativity.

Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life, by Marshall Rosenberg

Nonviolent Communication partners practical skills with a powerful consciousness and vocabulary to help you get what you want peacefully.

Getting to Yes, by Bruce Patton, Roger Fisher, William Ury

Getting to Yes offers a proven, step-by-step strategy for coming to mutually acceptable agreements in every sort of conflict.

7 Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen Covey

The integrated, principle-centered 7 Habits philosophy has helped readers find solutions to their personal and professional problems and achieve a life characterized by fairness, integrity, honesty, and dignity.

How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie

Learn the Three fundamental techniques in handling people, the six ways to make people like you, the twelve ways to win people to your way of thinking and the nine ways to change people without arousing resentment.

The Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman

Dr. Gary Chapman's proven approach to showing and receiving love will help you experience deeper and richer relationships in your life.