

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY –
in partnership with the Gap Year Association study abroad**

**COMM 215: Introduction to Intercultural Communication; Building Effective Cross-Cultural
Communication Skills**

COURSE SYLLABUS

CREDITS: 4 quarter-credits – Continuous Enrollment Course

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

PREREQUISITES: There are NO prerequisites for this course.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

This course is field-based. The course instructor will be available via e-mail.

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.hahn@gmail.com
 - Alexander Papouchis, MS - alexpapouchis@gmail.com
 - Cam Sylvester, MA – camsylvester@gmail.com
- Office: 503-206-7336
Web: <https://gapyearassociation.org>
Address: PO Box 17427, Portland, OR 97217

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will provide hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students who participate in study away experiences. It offers students the chance to learn outside of the classroom while building intercultural competencies through global learning and community-based participation. Through immersive experiences and service learning engagements, the course will help students develop stronger communication skills with individuals from a variety different backgrounds including (but not limited to): socio-economic, racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious lived experiences.

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 include 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 have the opportunity to engage in and reflect on a variety of different experiences throughout the term. The richness of this class will depend on the questions, insights, and active participation that you bring.
- **Personal Responsibility:** You are expected to engage fully in this class and take action if you need help. Please communicate any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or classroom activities.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please adhere to university policies. Please take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. It is expected that each student will prepare his or her own assignments and that any assignments submitted will be the sole work of the student. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information, will not be tolerated. The University's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct>.

STUDENT OUTCOMES:

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

- Begin to effectively communicate with individuals with different native languages, lived experiences, socio-economic backgrounds, racial backgrounds, and cultural norms, etc.
- Begin to develop a deepened understanding of cultural values different from their own
- Understand methods of improving intercultural communication through practical applications
- Explore the dynamics of power structures in different contexts
- Analyze how communication methods differ among cultures
- Identify challenges that arise from differences in communication between cultures and learn ways to creatively address them
- Acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that increase intercultural competence

CONTACT HOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

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

- Homestays
- Volunteering with local service-learning projects, nonprofits, etc.
- Interviews with local community members
- Participation in local cultural events
- Excursions to local museums, monuments, historically significant sites, etc.
- Cross-cultural correspondence and education
- Deep immersion in new culture through accommodation, events, ceremonies, festivals, shared meals, holidays/celebrations, etc.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS:

REQUIRED HOURS: 40 contact hours as noted above. The Gap Year Association will provide verification of hours.

A DAILY JOURNAL in English will be a descriptive study/journal of your semester. Use it to keep brief narratives of your daily experiences. It should contain notes on places visited, interviews, daily purchases, oral language activities, student observations of different and unique cultural traits, etc. Self-reflection will involve answering questions that force you to think critically about your experiences. When writing journals consider questions like:

- How is this experience different from my expectations?
- What challenges have I faced throughout this experience? How am I overcoming them?
- Explore differences, similarities to your home culture.
- What have been the most poignant learning experiences? How have they impacted my world-view?

REQUIRED READING – must read **a MINIMUM of ONE book** from the Reading List and demonstrate knowledge learned and/or perspectives expressed (with citations) **in your FINAL REPORT.**

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

Submit a comprehensive analytical paper reflecting on the time you spent immersed within another culture. From your experience compare and contrast communication nuances between cultures? What are some core similarities and differences you observed and experienced in the way people communicate compared to that of your home culture? Expand on different means by which communication occurs: informal vs. formal settings, verbal vs non-verbal, written communication, visual communication, etc. In your paper,

spend time reflecting on the ways in which language influences culture and intercultural communications.

Consider exploring the following as you write your analysis:

- What is cross-cultural awareness?
- Why does cross-cultural awareness and intercultural communication matter?
- When were you able to communicate effectively? When was your communication ineffective? How did you overcome this?
- Describe differences in power structures across cultures you have engaged with.
- Reflect on your initial interactions with a new culture. In what ways did your communication change over time? How would you anticipate these interactions to change further in future interactions should they occur?

Final Report will be graded as follows:

- Analysis of cross-cultural communication - 20%
- Compare/contrast similarities and differences between cultural groups - 20%
- Exploration of why cross-cultural awareness and intercultural competence matter - 20%
- Explanation of different methods of communication (verbal vs. non-verbal, etc.) - 10%
- Clarity and organization of ideas - 10%
- Grammar and punctuation - 10%
- Ability to demonstrate knowledge from the required readings - 10%

DUE DATES, SUBMITTING JOURNAL AND FINAL REPORT:

Calendar/Schedule:

All course requirements must be submitted by:

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

Submitting Journals & Final Reports:

Please email your final report to the instructor, and post any necessary journals or supportive documents to:

The Gap Year Association
PSU Grading Instructor
PO Box 17427
Portland, OR 97217

*** Purchase tracking for anything you post as some materials have gotten lost in the past.

COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Daily Journal (30%): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, clearly presented observations, creative thought and appropriateness.

Final Report (70%): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, insight, format, content appropriateness, organization skills, and analysis of topic.

Required Readings: This is a requirement for successful completion of this class and 10% of your paper grade depends on your referencing key lessons learned or examples. (Citations are required)

Presentation: Successful completion of the presentation is required for this course.

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 properly reference ONE of the below readings in their final papers.

Alternative readings may be used if approved by your Instructor of Record.

Beyond Culture by Edward T. Hall

Hall presents concepts that are crucial for understanding cultural differences while exploring broad concepts and describing how they are all interrelated.

Crossing Boundaries by Aziz Abu Sarah

Through sharing inspiring, funny, and surprising stories of the author's experiences around the world, this book is an exploration of how to heal our world from stereotypes, prejudice, and ignorance through travel. The author is a Palestinian peace activist, National Geographic Explorer, and TED fellow who has dedicated his life to bringing people together.

Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation by Michael H. Agar

Through his anecdotal experiences, Agar coins the term "languaculture" to define how interrelated and embedded language is to culture and vice versa taking you on a fun and enlightening journey.

Seeing Culture Everywhere: From Genocide to Consumer Habits by Joanna Breidenback and Pal Nyiri

Cultural differences are used to explain much of what is occurring in modern society and much of what we see on the news.

So, How Long Have You Been Native?: Life as an Alaska Native Tour Guide by Alexis C. Bunten

An informative, first-hand account of the cultural tourism industry in Alaska. Bunten takes us on a journey as a summer tour employee in native Alaska and questions of who gets to "sell" culture.

The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business by Erin Meyer

A practical guide to working effectively and sensitively in a cross-cultural situation.

The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity by Kwame Anthony Appiah

Explores the nature and history of identities that bind us challenging us to think about who and what we are.

The Silent Language By Edward T. Hall

"According to Dr. Hall, the concepts of space and time are tools with which all human beings may transmit messages. A leading American anthropologist, Hall analyzes the many ways in which people "talk" to one another without the use of words."