

W o r k i n g C o u r s e S y l l a b u s
6/17/2005

CROSSING BORDERS OF UNDERSTANDING
Cross-Cultural Preparation for Study Abroad
MLNG A-293 (02) or IS A-293 (02) or HR A-293 (02)
1-credit; Fall 2005; Wednesdays 1:10 – 2:00 p.m.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed for students who aspire to develop greater cross-cultural competence through their experience studying outside the United States. The intent is to provide students skills for the understanding of others' behavior and values and for interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The course will develop students' ability to analyze and evaluate knowledge in the context of a globalized world. Such skills and abilities, which are a characteristic of an educated and civilized person and leader, can be invaluable for students to contribute as citizens and compete in the marketplace throughout their lives.

Since students may not have already decided upon their study abroad program at the beginning of the semester, country-specific assignments will only come during the latter part of the course.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The purpose of overseas study, distinguishing it from study on the home campus, is to present participants with a challenge – the emotional and intellectual challenge of direct, authentic cultural encounters. This course prepares students for this challenge and guides their reflection upon these encounters. It will develop students' competencies in the following broad areas:

1. Cultural learning
 - a. Cultural general: The ability to creatively imagine another's perspective, to code switch into this perspective and to know where one's own values interrupt such code switching.
 - b. Location specific: An awareness of who key leaders are and an understanding of customs, history, and developments.
 - c. United States specific: An awareness of the values and way of life of the United States (if home country), the student's place in the U.S., and its place in the world.
 - d. Awareness of cultural representation and responsibility.
2. Language learning
 - a. Recognizing language as a vehicle for the transmission of culture and identity.
 - b. Acquiring language learning skills.
3. Academic growth with an international dimension which is structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results. In general: integrating international perspectives into the art of careful observation, accurate reporting, reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis.
4. Personal development underpins all of the competencies. Personal development especially surfaces in understanding one's own values, in being able to be creative, and in analyzing other perspectives in a useful and understanding manner.

TEACHING / LEARNING METHODS

1. Interdisciplinary guest lectures.
2. Panel discussion.
3. Video showings.
4. Cultural adjustment and transition exercises.
5. Individual research.
6. Presentations.
7. Guided reflection process to turn the overseas experience into experiential education, moving the student from the questions of what happened to the larger questions of what the journey means.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

“The born traveler – the man who is without prejudices, who sets out wanting to learn rather than to criticize, who is stimulated by oddity, who recognizes that every man is his brother, however strange and ludicrous he may be in dress and appearance – has always been comparatively rare.” (Hugh and Pauline Massingham, “The Englishman Abroad”)

Study Abroad: A Journey of Separation-Initiation-Return

- What is international cross-cultural competence; ethnocentric stages
- Diagnostic assessment of international/intercultural knowledge/skills
- *Charting A Hero's Journey* – writing your story: journals and journal writing
- Movie *L'Auberge Espagnole (L'Albergue Espanhol)*

Encountering an American Self

- Study abroad students as national and global actors
- American cultural patterns
- “America” as a notion which is part of the global imagination (global communication; American cultural infiltration of other countries)

Culture-Learning Strategies

- Concept of culture and how it impacts one's ability to understand and function in a new and unfamiliar environment
- Culture-specific and culture-general learning
- Differentiating cultural from personal and universal

Strategies for Intercultural Communication and Nonverbal Communication

Language-Learning Strategies: listening, expanding vocabulary, speaking to communicate

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

After receiving a Master of Arts degree from the University of Chicago in International Relations, Ms. Vogelweid embarked on a life journey of cross-cultural discovery. During twenty-five years, she lived and worked in Brazil, Switzerland, and Portugal, learning the languages only after arriving in the countries. She traveled extensively throughout Europe on business. Ms. Vogelweid learned how to be an American who is respected and accepted by people in other cultures.

COURSE MATERIALS

Chisholm, Linda A. (2000). *Charting A Hero's Journey*. New York: The International Partnership for Service Learning.

Assigned chapters and exercises from:

Guidebook for Maximizing Study Abroad: Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use. (2003). University of Minnesota – Learning Abroad Center. (assigned sections and activities)

On-Line Cultural Training Resource for Study Abroad. Hosted by the University of the Pacific on its website.

Texts from other sources.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS

1. Report assignments (4):

- US Foreign Policy (i.e. Iraq/Afghanistan) viewed by host country – Inform yourself on both the host country's government position as well as the popular opinion. This is meant to be done on a general level, not requiring in-depth research.
- Article reviews (3) – Each week you will select an article that relates to the political, economic, or social situation in the country or region where you will study. Article reviews are due at the beginning of the lecture and should be typed, double-spaced and 1 to 2 pages long. Each article should come from a different source. Attach a copy of the article to the summary. Possible sources for the articles include The Financial Times, The Economist, The Wall Street Journal (domestic or international editions), The International Herald Tribune, local newspapers from your host country or region, Time, or CNN online. These resources are available in Pius XII Library. Each review should contain the following:
 - i. A summary of the article.
 - ii. A discussion of why this topic is important.

Alternative assignments -- Students may substitute any of the following assignments for two of the article reviews. Follow same instructions for a review: typed, double-spaced and 1 to 2 pages long.

- Explore what is going on in the host country related to an activity you are already interested in (i.e. film, print media or other media channels, civil liberties, art, music, sports, volunteering, political or social activism, relationship between church and state, educational system) and write about it.
 - Delve into an author, past or contemporary, by either reading and reviewing a book or by profiling his/her influence.
 - Discover disparities and similarities between your host country and the US by interviewing someone from there now living here. Your write-up should include specific examples/instances from the person's experiences.
- ### 2. General country briefings – Use sources on the attached reference list to complete the country briefings: Politics and History; Economics, Environment and Population;

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Education; Daily Life. When citing statistics for the country or region, indicate the year the statistic was published.

3. Reflection journal entries (minimum of 2) – These will be based on the 12 stages presented in the book *Charting A Hero's Journey*. Each entry should be from one to three pages in length. Students are required to write entries corresponding to the following:
 - Stage I: Hearing the Call
 - Stage II: Preparing for the Journey

While abroad, students are encouraged to complete additional journal entries, choosing among Stages III through XI. These stages are:

- Stage III: Departing and Separating
- Stage IV: Crossing the First Threshold
- Stage V: Taking up the Challenges
- Stage VI: Battling the Beasts
- Stage VII: Passing through the Gates
- Stage VIII: Recognizing Guides and Guardian Spirits
- Stage IX: Celebrating the Victories
- Stage X: Discovering the Boon
- Stage XI: Charting the Course
- Stage XII: Returning Home.

4. Optional activities upon returning to SLU's home campus:
 - Interview a recently arrived foreign national –Students will be encouraged to interview a foreign student, scholar, or other person on intercultural issues, such as transition, identity, and culture shock, and write an article based on the conversation.
 - Presentation – Students will be encouraged to give a public presentation on their study abroad experience.