

**Anthropology 27 (now ANT 112)  
Crossing Cultures**

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Crossing Cultures deals with theory and practice of living and studying in cultures other than your own. It is intended for students who are about to study abroad, (and also for those who are studying abroad here in the United States). It is designed to help you understand the general character of the cross-cultural experience, to explore learning and coping strategies to maximize that experience, and to gain a better understanding of your own culture so that you can understand others.

This course should help you develop and refine skills in cross-cultural observation, to learn to recognize and understand verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, to learn about culturally appropriate ways to ask and answer questions, and to analyze cultural behaviors and differences. It aims to give you a vocabulary for talking about culture and your cross-cultural experiences. I expect that people who take this course seriously will do better in their studies abroad, make friends more easily, and generally have a better time than people who don't. I expect they also won't offend as many people in their host cultures (a good thing, as a rule). These are culture-general skills more than culture-specific ones. The perspectives and skills you learn in this course should serve you well for every trip you make abroad over the course of your lives, not just to one country one time..

### **Course Outline and Readings**

Below is a working list of topics and readings that will guide us over the next ten weeks. It will be revised as the course unfolds. Every week or so I will give you a hand-out describing the upcoming seminar lecture topics, films, and reading assignments.

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The course includes a 'lab' conducted by Prof Culbert in the Arts Department. The aim of the lab is \_\_\_\_\_ . The lab will consist of \_\_\_\_\_

Introduction to the course and to cultural anth

Understanding culture and the culture concept:

The Mechanics and Logistics of Going Abroad - guest Prof Thomas, director of International Programs

How you learn another culture

Reading due: Kohls chaptrs 10-15. DeVita chptrs 6, 11, 13. On reserve: Miner.

How anthropologists study other cultures:

The "Other"

Assignment: read Said, Orientalism pps 87-91

Cultural Identity and Perspectives on "Otherness"

Assignment: Gauguin pp. 1-40

Cultural Identity and "The Exotic Other"

Assignment: Gauguin 40-65

Concept of Self - individualist and collectivist

Assignment: read Storti 1-35; read Pipher, foreword, prelude, chapt 1  
Gmelch "Nice Girls Don't Talk to Rastas"

Culture Shock

Assignment: read Bennett, Transition Shock: Putting Culture Shock in Perspective, 215-223

Personal vs. Societal responsibility - universalist and particularist

Assignment: read Storti 36-52; Pipher, chaps 2-4

Concept of Time

Assignment: Storti 53-65, Pipher 5-6

Styles of Communication

Assignment: Storti 66-126; Pipher chaps 9-12

Hopes and Fears and Star Trek

Assignment: Reading due: Kohls chapters 1-4.

write a short, 2 page (typed) paper on how the Kohls reading particularly applies to you and your prospective trip.

#### Tourism and Being a Tourist

Assignment: read selections ... In Gmelch Tourist and Tourism

Assignment: write 4 pp on the Culture, High and Popular of your host country. You don't want to look like an idiot who didn't bother to learn anything about you host Culture prior to arrival. What about the local/national culture—music, art, sports, etc.—do you need to know to make a good impression. (This isn't about small "c" culture—values, customs, and behaviors; that comes later.)

#### Theory of Study Abroad Learning

Assignment: Kaufmann chapt 5?; "Let's Go Europe: What Students Tourist really Learn," G Gmelch

#### Cross-cultural communication and Non-verbal communication

Assignment: Reading Due: Kohls, chpts 17, 20. DeVita: chptrs 8, 12. On reserve: Althen, chptr 2.

#### The dreaded "culture-shock"—or is it just "culture fatigue"?

Assignment: articles by Althen chptrs 3,4, by Adler, and by Bennett. In Kohls, chapters 16, 18.

Written work: 4 pages on general values and norms and beliefs of your host culture. Think of what we have been saying about what Americans value, believe in, like and dislike. How about the culture you are going to?

#### Cross-cultural simulation; theory into practice.

Assignment: Written Work due: 2 pages On what you can expect of the educational system where you are going. Rules, norms of behavior, class format, typical assignments and so forth are all to be covered. Many returning students say that, more than anything else, it was the differences in the educational systems that most threw them. You should prepare ahead of time. You will find talking to returned students particularly helpful as a resource

#### Health and Safety Abroad

Assignment: Read Kohls chapter 23, Postscript 1 and 2.

#### Keeping a journal

Assignment: read "Writing to Explore: a journal writer's workshop"

#### Using photography to make sense of culture Photographing other cultures and places

(At HWS they do a trimodal workshop. There may be some good ideas we could use in cc. Look at Sharon's stuff on culture from her visual anthro course.)

Travel writing

Culture Change - Globalization

Cultural Difference and Social Change

I hope that the course will convey the excitement of discovering other lifeways and of thinking about other peoples the way anthropologists do. Four objectives underlie the course:

1) To acquaint you with the basic findings of anthropology, including some theories anthropologists have developed about the whys and hows of human behavior and how cultures change.

2) To acquaint you with the diversity of peoples, places and cultures that make up our world.

3) To learn more about your own culture. By learning more about other cultures, we acquire an important and critical perspective on our own society – who we are as Americans and how we differ from others.

4) To learn some basic research skills (e.g., participant-observation and interviewing).

The achievement of the course objectives will in large part be determined by your attendance and engagement in class, in small group discussions, in the two research assignments, and in the effort you give to the reading and reading reviews.

**Required Reading** (books that I am considering)

Survival Kit for Overseas Living, Robert Kohls

Distant Mirrors, DeVita and Armstrong

Whole World Guide to Culture Learning

Two Cultures, CP Snow

Catfish and mandala: a Two Wheeled Voyage through the Landscape and memory of Vietnam, Andrew Pham

Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sensei, D. Mura

Noa Noa: The Tahitian Journal, Gauguin, Paul.

Cultural Misunderstandings by Raymonde Carole

I Served the King of England, Hrabal

Tourists and Tourism, S Gmelch

Figuring Foreigners Out: A practical Guide by Storti  
Fear and Trembling by Amelie Nothomb  
Native Tours by Erv Chambers

### **On Reserve**

"Writing to Explore: a journal writer's workshop"

"What Students Don't Learn Abroad" by Ben Feinberg (Chronicle of Higher Ed, May 3, 2002)

"Lessons from the Field," G Gmelch

The Art of Crossing Cultures, C Storti

"Let's Go Europe: What Students Tourist really Learn," G Gmelch

Transition Shock: Putting Culture Shock in Perspective, J. Bennett

Abroad View Magazine (selected articles)

Lonely Planet (an exercise in which each student can deconstruct or analyze some aspect of how the country they are going to is presented) (Bill highly recommends it)

Hobart Hand-out on Journaling

An article on People Watching

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance is required; this class is based heavily on participation. Missing more than one or two classes will lower your grade.

#### 1) Reading Reviews:

For most readings you will be required to prepare notes to help guide you in your discussion (otherwise, it's really easy to read something but not absorb it; writing it down makes you do both). They are to take the following specific form. This is provided as a template. I prefer these to be typed and printed.

Name

Title of Article or Chapter

1. Write down any terms or concepts which, after having consulted a dictionary, continue to puzzle you.

2. Write a couple of sentences on the thesis of the reading in your own—not the author's—words. What is the author trying to convince you or inform you of?

3. Write an outline of the argument as it is presented.

4. How does (or might) this reading relate to you personally?

I will collect your reviews and grade them on an informal plus/check/minus basis on six dates during the term. The dates will be selected at random. No credit will be given for late papers as it defeats the purpose of having you read and write about the reading before coming to class.

You will keep ALL of your reviews and put them in a *portfolio* to be turned in at the end of the term. Again, the purpose of the reviews is: a) to get you to do the reading on time -- you can't discuss 'em if you haven't read 'em, and b) to get you to think about them before coming to class. By doing the reading, you enable us to have a more informed and lively discussion in class and in your small groups. Writing reviews or answering questions will also mean that you will have to do less studying for the biweekly mini-exams since the reading questions deal directly with material asked on the exams.

## 2) Films:

You will see several films during the term. The films are an integral part of the course and will be included on exams. (Some ideas for films -- 'Innocents Abroad' 'Cannibal Tourists' 'Life and Debt' 'The Toured' For the students going to the Czech Republic, 'Kolya,' deals with the end of socialism. And maybe 'Photo Wallahs'

## 3) Bingo Project:

To give you some hands-on experience of your own, you will do "participant-observation" and some informal interviewing at a Schenectady bingo hall and write up your findings and analysis in a short paper. I will explain the assignment in detail in class.

## 4) International Student Interview

To gain some insight into the experiences of international students living and studying on our campus (they deal with many of the same issues that you will when abroad), and to give you experience conducting a formal interview, you will select and then interview an international student at Union and conduct an interview focusing on his/her adjustment to the USA and to small college life. You will write up your data in a short paper.

## 5) Observation assignment

This assignment involves sitting in one spot in a public place for an extended period of time and using all your senses recording everything that you observe, hear, smell etc. // . Ask Steckler or Mark for guidelines //

## 6) Cultural Adjustment

You will reflect upon and write about one cultural adjustment that you have had to make in your own lives. This may be the adjustment you made in coming to college, traveling abroad, or some other.

## 7). Exams:

There will be three mini-exams and a take-home final. The exams will be about every three weeks; a take home final essay will be due on the last day of final exams.

## 6. Grade:

Your grade will be based on the four mini-exams at 12% each; the final exam 15%; the bingo assignment 15%; the international student interview assignment 15%; and your portfolio of reading reviews 12%.

A good course requires the full participation of the professor AND the students. The emphasis in this course is less on teaching (as something the professor does) and more on learning (as something we all do actively together, both in and outside of the classroom). It is your responsibility as much as mine to make this course stimulating, and that requires your active participation. Although cultural anthropology is a fascinating subject, I need your curiosity and willingness to discuss in class to make this course achieve its potential.

## **Course Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify their own cultural values and characteristics, and compare them with others from different cultural backgrounds.
2. Differentiate between stereotypes, generalizations, cultural norms and values, and verbal and non-verbal communication.
3. Describe the major research findings and theories of intercultural learning
4. Be prepared to take full advantage of their upcoming experiences living and studying abroad