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WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FINE, PERFORMING & COMMUNICATION ARTS

Fall 2007 Course Syllabus

COM 6350: Communication, Culture & Conflict, CRN 13564, 11444

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Class Meetings: W: 6-8:45 p.m., 275 Manoogian
Office Hours: T, 1:30-3 P.M. and W, 3:30-5 P.M.
Other times are available by appointment only. No Fridays

1. BROAD PURPOSE OF COURSE

The purpose of this course is to engage students in an in-depth exploration of the intersection of culture and conflict as it relates to the field of communication. Particular emphasis will be given to communication and culture in various contexts, including organizations, community and interpersonal relationships, and the public sphere; a theoretical grounding in conflict theory; as well as critical issues and methods for academic study in the areas outlined above.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course students should:

- ❑ Be able to situate the discipline of communication, as it relates to the areas of conflict and culture;
- ❑ To better understand the role that community and cultural norms and values play in the interpretation and resolution of conflict;
- ❑ Gain insight into the role of power in communication and or conflict;
- ❑ Be able to discuss and critique current literature in the areas of communication where culture and conflict intersect, including power, mass media, race/gender, and identity;
- ❑ Be able to carry out assignments using APA style

3. TEACHING METHOD

This is a graduate-level course with a focus on theoretical concepts. This course is designed as a lecture and a seminar, with considerable responsibility on students to make discussions more meaningful through active input. In addition to the required textbook for this class, students are required to read assigned articles to compliment the lessons. The instructor will provide some articles. Students are required to read assigned chapters and other supplemental reading material prior to classroom lecture/discussions.

4. GRADING

A grade of **A reflects excellent work** that is well above the level necessary to meet course requirements. A grade of **B reflects good work** that is slightly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. A grade of **C reflects average work** that meets basic requirements. A grade of **D reflects poor work** that is worthy of credit, but does not meet the basic requirements. A grade of **F reflects failure** to achieve credit for the assignment. Grades of A-, B-, C-, D-, etc. reflect the student's inability to achieve the points necessary for the higher grade. Please function as if **extra credit** is not an option. Extra credit is at the complete discretion of the instructor. Any complaints about grades should occur within one week after students receive the grade for a given assignment. Students can request a reevaluation during office hours or by appointment. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the instructor reserves the right to require the complaint in writing.

Final Course Grades

A = 930-1000 (93-100%)	D+ = 670-699 (67-69%)
A- = 900-929 (90-92%)	D = 630-669 (63-66%)
	D- = 600-629 (60-62%)
B+ = 870-899 (87-89%)	F+* = 570-699 (57-59%) fails to meet lowest expectations
B = 830-869 (83-86%)	F* = 530-569 (53-56%) significantly deficient
B- = 800-829 (80-82%)	F-* = 0 - 529 (50-52%) failure to complete assignment
C+ = 770-799 (77-79%)	
C = 730-769 (73-76%)	
C- = 700-729 (70-72%)	

* Grade on report card appears as an "F"

5. ASSIGNMENTS

Written Assignments

Assignments must be typed and double-spaced, using a 12-point font size unless otherwise announced. Include name, course, and date on a cover page. All papers must be written using APA style and include a citation list of sources unless otherwise specified. **Late assignments will receive a minimum of a letter grade or 20% deduction for each day it is late. Late assignments cannot be submitted via email. Instead, they must be dropped off either in my mailbox in Rm. 585, directly to me, or slipped under my door in Rm. 515.** I will also accept faxed assignments in the event that you cannot make it at (313) 577-6300. Be sure to include a cover page with instructions to put the fax in my mailbox. Special circumstances need to be discussed directly with me. Students should keep a copy of all papers.

Make-Ups and Rewrites:

The instructor reserves the right to rule on early or makeup exams and rewrites.

Assignment Breakdown

Critical Response Paper (3-4 pgs., 100 pts.)

You will select an article from the list of suggested readings (posted to Blackboard during week two) or from your own research and develop a written response using the critical approach. Critical scholarship has to do with the study of marginalized groups and their interactions with systems of domination. Throughout the course we will look at instances of power, resistance and empowerment. You are encouraged to pull an article that reflects this mode of thinking and research and apply a brief critical analysis. In past semesters of this course, we have examined hip-hop culture, cultural issues related to Hurricane Katrina, and communities in conflict. Students have examined international issues like domestic violence, war, and ritual mutilation of women in other countries. You are welcome to use articles that speak to any of these issues and beyond. We will discuss this project in more detail as the semester unfolds. At that time, I will present more specific criteria. You are only required to use one primary article for your response. However, you are encouraged to use additional sources – all of which need to be cited using APA style. Articles must be approved at least two weeks prior to the due date for this assignment. If the article is not submitted by that deadline, you will risk a late submission and a deduction of a letter grade in points. I will not rush to approve articles at the last minute so that you can make the submission deadline. By the same token, I will only accept a change in the article selection if you make the two-week deadline. Your change must be approved one week prior to the submission deadline.

Culture Collage Presentation (12-15 minutes, 200 pts.)

For this assignment, you will conduct a visual presentation that tells your colleagues about yourself. During the term we will examine conceptualizations of culture, as well as cultural identity and multiculturalism. For the collage, you will focus your talk on your background, cultural values, cultural experiences and other elements of your cultural identity. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage an examination of how our cultural identities play out in different contexts. In addition to identifying specific aspects of your own culture, you need to discuss how you negotiate, communicate, manage conflict and express culture in various contexts (i.e., workplace, community, church, school, family, etc.). You are encouraged to be creative with this project, including bringing in cultural artifacts, photos, and other cultural markers to share during your presentation. You may also use technology for this presentation. We will have designated days during the semester for these presentations that will be spelled out in our course calendar (week two).

Field Project Proposal (2 pgs., 100 pts.)

Intercultural Field Experience and Reflection Paper – Final Project

Our final project for this class is an Intercultural Field Experience and Reflection Paper. Your checkpoint for this assignment is a proposal that outlines your field experience and plan for the final project. You are encouraged now to begin thinking about the type of experience or area of study for which you would like to gain more knowledge and explore first hand. In the proposal, you will summarize the intended inter/cross-cultural experience; method of inquiry (interviews, focus groups, observation, participant observation, ethnography, autoethnography, etc.); and discuss your goals for the project in terms of what you hope to gain from the experience. As you think this over, begin to think about groups, communities, and interactions that will build upon your knowledge of other cultures beyond your own. For example, as an undergraduate student, I became very involved with the Eleanor Hutzler Recovery Center in Detroit, a residential care facility for infants born addicted to drugs and alcohol. My life was transformed in many ways through my experiences there just holding and nurturing those babies. This would have been a great environment for field experience. You might also think about this in terms of conflict/dispute resolution.

This project is very involved. I encourage you to work closely with me, as I have a lot of contacts that may be of help to you as you make your choices. We will develop a standard form for the field experience that you and your “client” or “participant group” will sign. I am very excited about this project and the lessons that will come from it.

Field Experience with journal entries (Hours TBD, worth 300 points): The field experience will be evaluated based on an agreed upon number of hours (may vary between master’s and doctoral students) and/or based on the method of inquiry you choose. But you will have a basic number of field hours that you need to spend with your organization/client/participant group that will be spelled out in your student contract. I am thinking 3-5 hours, but will finalize this after I consult with some coordinating groups that I have in mind. You will be evaluated based on the number and quality of the time you spend in the field. I am also evaluating the connection between your outlined goals and your final learning outcomes. Your experiences in the field will be chronicled in a journal that you will keep to track important interactions during your experience. These will be handed in with your paper and are worth 100 of the 300 points for this assignment.

Reflection Paper (6-8 pgs., worth 200 points): You will use your journal notes to develop an academic paper that details the nature of your experience; original goals, expectations, perceived challenges and reservations about the project; method of collecting data; your process of discovery (specifics from your experience); findings in detail; learning outcomes; and recommendations for others who pursue similar experiences. The paper is 6-8 pgs.

Research Workshops (in lieu of standard participation) – Two Workshops at 50 pts. each

I will host two research workshops during the term, where our class will meet in one of the labs in the Undergraduate Library (UGL). These workshops will be scheduled to coincide with research assignments. The purpose is to give you “real time” to conduct research and work on your projects. We will also go over things like citing sources, using databases, and tips for research writing.

REVISED Points/Due Dates

Each assignment will be awarded a point total. Your final course grade will result from adding together all of the point totals. Keep a record of your grades below.

Assignments	Due Date	Points	Percent of grade	Your Points
Culture Collage Presentations**	Designated Days Sept.-Nov.	200 pts.	20 percent	_____
Field Project Proposal	10/3	100 pts.	10 percent	_____
Critical Response Paper	10/24- Ph.D. 11/7- M.A.	100 pts.	10 percent	_____
Field Project Journal	11/28- Ph.D. 12/5- M.A.	100 pts.	10 percent	_____
Field Experience	11/28, 12/5	200 pts.	20 percent	_____
Field Reflection Paper	11/28- Ph.D. 12/5- M.A.	200 pts.	20 percent	_____
Research Wkshp.	9/19- LAB C*	50 pts.	5 percent	_____
Research Wkshp.	10/17- LAB C*	50 pts.	5 percent	_____

* Lab Days are tentative until I receive written confirmation from UGL

** Tentative Presentation Dates: UGL – 10/10, 10/31, 11/14, 11/28, 12/5 • MANOG. – 12/12

Minus deductions for excessive absences _____

Total points = _____ / 1000 pts possible

6. ATTENDANCE

Attendance/Punctuality/Participation

Regular attendance for this course is essential. Your attendance will be recorded. You are expected to be in class and in your seat at the beginning of each class period. A grace period will be given during the first ten minutes of class. After that, you are considered late.

You are permitted two absences in the course excluding mandatory attendance days, days on which your presentations are scheduled, and days on which we have a guest speaker. These absences should be used to cover family/personal emergency, illness, court appearance, etc. Beyond that, unexcused absences, excessive absences and excessive lateness will negatively affect your grade.

Participation Points/LABS

Participation points are reserved for research workshops. Lab Days are a privilege, reserved for students who attend class regularly, participate in discussions and can benefit from tips for effective research and writing. If you fall in the category of excessive lateness, absences, etc. you will lose those points and the privilege of earning points for the labs. I look at participation as your consistent verbal involvement in class discussions using our readings as a guide. Asking questions is not the essence of involvement. I am looking for you to critically engage the materials that are assigned to you.

Five (5) points will be deducted from your participation points for each unexcused absence beyond the allowable two. If you encounter some unusual personal circumstance that may require an extended absence (e.g., pneumonia, complex medical treatment, etc.) be sure to consult with me about your situation in enough time to make adjustments in scheduling and assignments. Do not assume that you will get an incomplete. Check university deadlines for dropping a class without a grade penalty. It is your responsibility to withdraw. If you do not officially withdraw, you will receive a failing grade. You cannot withdraw from the course after the midterm. **Students who do miss class are responsible for getting notes from a classmate and getting assignment information.** I am not responsible for getting or keeping you up to speed in the course.

Withdrawal Deadlines for Fall 2007: Before 9/10 you receive a refund. After 9/10 you will not receive a full refund, but the class will not go on your transcript if you drop it. After 10/2 the class will go on your transcript and you will need instructor approval to drop.

Excused Absences

(DEF.): *An excused absence is an absence due to personal emergencies (severe personal or family illness, personal or family tragedies, work-related emergencies) and must be documented within a week of the absence and must clearly state that the emergency required that the student miss the course on the date and at the time of the absence.* If it appears that vacation or other personal plans may conflict with an exam, please make necessary adjustment plans now; leaving early for break is not grounds for making up work.

7. REQUIRED TEXTS

Littlejohn, S.W. & Domenici, K. ((2007). *Communication, conflict and the management of difference*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland. ISBN 1-57766-503-1.

Guins, R. & Zaragoza Cruz, O. (2005). *Popular culture: A reader*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-7619-7472-5.

Mastering APA Style : Student's Workbook and Training Guide. American Psychological Association. ISBN number 1-55798-891-9

Supplemental Readings taken from:

Readings on Communication:

Shepherd, G.J, St. John, J. & Striphas, T. (2006). *Communication as... Perspectives on Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fassett, D.L. & Warren, J.T. (2007). *Critical communication pedagogy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Various academic articles –critical readings -- will be made available through our library's electronic reserve, with a link to our Blackboard site. These articles are required reads and will enhance our discussions of specific cultural contexts.

8. OTHER POLICIES

Special Needs and Accommodations: Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the semester, in time to make any special arrangements related to class lectures and exams. All disabilities must be documented in writing by a medical professional and the university. Students are required to visit the University's Educational Accessibility Services Department in the Undergraduate Library Academic Success Center (1st Floor) and obtain an accommodation letter that specifies specific arrangements for your disability.

Academic Dishonesty: Written or other work, which a student submits, must be the product of her/his own efforts. If you are unsure of how to site sources within text, please refer to the APA manual. When you submit a paper or other written work where other sources are required, it is assumed that you have incorporated appropriate style measures. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty, including dishonesty involving computer technology, are prohibited. Even online sources must be appropriately cited. This is a serious offense that can end up in a grade of E/F on an assignment, failure of the course, and further action by the university. Further information on Academic Dishonesty can be found in the current Bulletin.

In-Class Disruptions: My goal is to create an optimal learning environment. Because this class relies heavily on in-class discussion, please be respectful of your classmates when making comments. Behavior that inhibits in-class learning (including cell phone usage, outbursts, and talking that competes with lectures, speakers, and other discussions) will not be tolerated in this class. **Make sure your cell phone is on vibrate or off. If it rings in class, you will first be warned. If it rings again, you will be asked to leave the classroom.** Step outside of the classroom to answer any calls or conduct non-class-related business. Excessive chatter and talking over the professor, other speakers, or classmates who have the floor will also result in a loss of participation points (10 for each offense) and a request to leave the room. Issues involving outbursts or threats to fellow students or the professor will become a university issue and will be resolved by campus police.

Extra Credit: The professor reserves the right to rule on extra credit. Eligibility for extra credit includes no missed assignments, no missed classes outside of the allowable two, and a final score that teeters between two grades. Additional criteria may apply.