

Cross-Cultural Communication

Course code	<i>HUM119</i>
Compulsory in the programme	<i>International Business and Communication</i>
Level of studies	<i>Undergraduate</i>
Number of credits	<i>6 ECTS (44 in-class hours + 6 consultation hours + 4 exam hours, 108 individual work hours)</i>
Course coordinator (title and name)	<i>Tobias Gruenfelder</i>
Prerequisites	-
Language of instruction	<i>English</i>

THE AIM OF THE COURSE:

What is communication? What makes communication across cultures so complex—and so essential? How can we better understand and navigate interactions in increasingly diverse and global environments?

These are just some of the questions we explore in this course. Cross-Cultural Communication introduces students to key cross-cultural communication theories, the history of intercultural communication, and the growing field of intercultural and transcultural management. Through a mix of real-world case studies, interactive group activities, and reflective practice, students will strengthen their own ability to communicate across cultural boundaries—both personally and professionally.

The course emphasizes the application of theory to real-life contexts, including workplace communication, mediated settings, and global collaboration. Students will develop a deeper understanding of how cultural values, perception, identity, and power dynamics shape communication—and how to adapt effectively across diverse environments.

Key topics include (1) Foundations of communication and cross-cultural communication theory, (2) The history and evolution of intercultural communication studies, (3), Intercultural vs. transcultural approaches in communication and management, (4) Real-world case studies and role-based group activities, and (5) Practical tools for analysing and improving cross-cultural interactions. Learning outcomes: By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand and apply major communication and cross-cultural theories
- Analyse communication events from multiple cultural perspectives
- Demonstrate written and spoken communication competence in intercultural contexts
- Use theory-informed strategies to address real-world cross-cultural communication challenges

MAPPING OF COURSE LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES (OBJECTIVES) WITH DEGREE LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES (See Annex), ASSESMENT AND TEACHING METHODS

Course level learning outcomes (objectives)	Learning objectives for BSc in Social Science	Assessment methods	Teaching methods
CLO1. The student is able to explain and apply the key terms, definitions and concepts relating cross-cultural communication	BLO1.2 BLO4.1. BLO4.2. BLO4.3	Final exam, reflection paper	Lectures, seminars, individual study, self-study in groups

CLO2. The student can analyse cross-cultural communication contexts with quality and effectiveness;	BLO1.2 BLO1.1 BLO4.1. BLO4.2. BLO4.3	Final exam, reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, solving exercises, self- study
CLO3. The student can reflect and assess their own cross-cultural communication	BLO1.1 BLO4.1. BLO4.2. BLO4.3	Final exam, reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, solving exercises, self- study
CLO4. The student can compare and contrast the major interpersonal, intercultural, organizational and global communication concepts and apply them in the assessment of practical everyday life situations.	BLO1.2 BLO4.1. BLO4.2. BLO4.3	Final exam, reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, solving exercises, self- study
CLO5. The student can evaluate the impact that culture and communication have on international business and multicultural organizations.	BLO1.2 BLO4.1 BLO4.2. BLO4.3	Final exam, reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, solving exercises, self- study
CLO6. The student can recognize and the underlying cross-cultural communication phenomena in real and fictional situations.	BLO1.2 BLO4.1 BLO4.2 BLO4.3	Final exam, reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, solving exercises, self- study
CLO7. The student can participate in teamwork and display teamwork results in written or oral form, to be able to argue decisions.	BLO1.2 BLO4.1 BLO4.2 BLO4.3	Lectures, Reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, solving exercises, self- study
CLO8. The student can argue decisions, can question and respond to criticism and different opinions in debates and discussions.	BLO4.1 BLO4.2 BLO4.3	Lectures, Final exam, reflection, paper, group work	Lectures, seminars, activities

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

The ISM University of Management and Economics Code of Ethics, including cheating and plagiarism are fully applicable and will be strictly enforced in the course. Academic dishonesty, and cheating can and will lead to a report to the ISM Committee of Ethics. With regard to remote learning, ISM remind students that they are expected to adhere and maintain the same academic honesty and integrity that they would in a classroom setting.

COURSE OUTLINE

No.	Topic	In-class hours	Readings
1.	Introduction to communication and cross-cultural communication theory. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is communication? • What is cross-cultural communication? • Course • Course overview 	4	Dainton, M., & Zelle, E. D Ch. 1, 2 Bennett, 2023
2.	Communication theories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attribution Theory • Politeness Theory • Social Exchange Theory (SET) • Dialectical Perspective • Hoffman's dramaturgical model • Transactional Model of Communication 	4	Dainton, M., & Zelle, E. D Ch. 3
3.	Individual and social approaches to communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Versus Nurture • Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership • Three Message Design Logics (MDLs) 	4	Dainton, M., & Zelle, E. D Ch. 4
4.	Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is culture? • Positivism, relativism and constructivism paradigm on culture (Bennett) • Cultural self-reflection and awareness 	4	Bennett, 2013
5.	History of cross-cultural communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The origins of cross-cultural communication research • Edward T. Hall: The Silent Language • Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions • Fons Trompenaar's Cultural Dimensions • The problem-focused view on culture 	4	Hall, 1959 Hofstede, 1980 Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1993 Tung & Stahl, 2018
6.	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keynote by Milton Bennett • Group activity 	4	Bennett, 2013
7.	Intercultural and transcultural competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interculturality, Multiculturality and Transculturality • Rethinking intercultural competence • Transcultural Learning Model 	4	Bennett, 2023 Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos, 2024
8.	Cross-cultural Communication in Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural Team Dynamics • Functional Group Decision Making • Group thinking • Communities of Practice 	4	Adler, 2008
9.	Case Study Analysis 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural communication applied to real-world case studies 	4	TBA
10.	Case Study Analysis 2:	4	TBA

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural communication applied to real-world case studies • Group presentations 		
11.	Cross-Cultural Communication in International Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current research state • Outlook and future directions 	4	Stahl & Tung, 202
12.	Final recap and reflections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary and personal reflections 	4	
		Total: 48 hours	
	CONSULTATIONS	6	
	FINAL EXAM	2	

FINAL GRADE COMPOSITION

Type of assignment	%
<i>Group Components 30%</i>	
Group Project and Presentation	30
<i>Individual Components 80%</i>	
Reflection paper	30
Final exam	40
Total:	100

DESCRIPTION AND GRADING CRITERIA OF EACH ASSIGNMENT

(Provide short descriptions and grading criteria of each assignment)

1. **The final exam** will account for **40% of the final grade** and will cover the topics covered in all lectures.
2. **The group work** will account for **30% of the final grade**. It will be a case study in the field of international negotiation.
3. The **reflection paper and the class performance** will count for **30% and** is key to this class. This includes simulations, presentations and active participation in class and writing a reflection paper. Seminar grades will be published after completing the course.

Assessment requirements, procedures, and other important regulations may be communicated verbally during lectures.

Failure to attend a lecture where such information is provided does not exempt the student from the responsibility of complying with these requirements.

RETAKE POLICY

If the final (cumulative) mark of the course, including final exam score, is insufficient, students will be allowed to exercise their right of retake. The retake exam will cover all lectures and case-discussion topics discussed in class during the course. It will be 40 % and will not replace the 30% reflection paper and 30% group work. The lecturer reserves the right to choose the form of the exam (multiple choice/ open answer questions/ essay).

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

- Attendance and participation in the lectures and seminars are not obligatory, however strongly recommended. Studying solely from course book is not considered to be a sufficient preparation for the exam.
- The use of slides for the presentation of lecture contents is not mandatory. In any case, the slides are the intellectual property of teaching instructor. Students will have access to required e-books and other resources for self-study.
- Students are expected to form groups totally on their own, i.e., without intervention or mediation of the teaching instructor. Topics and dates will be assigned and scheduled for project presentations only to groups who sign up during the first 3 lectures.
- Students with particular needs regarding assignments may personally approach the teaching instructor right after lectures or seminars and request an appointment (live or remote) to be scheduled at the instructor's convenience.

READINGS (TBA in the lectures)

1. Bennett, M. J. (2023). The Relational Roots of Intercultural Communication. In J. Baumann Montecinos, T. Grünfelder, & J. Wieland (Eds.): *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity. Implications for Theory and Practice* (pp. 33-47). Cham: Springer Nature.
2. Bennett, M.J. (2020). A Constructivist Approach to Assessing Intercultural Communication Competence. In G. Rings & S. Rasinger (Eds.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Communication* (pp. 521-535). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108555067.038>.
3. Bennett, M. J. (2013). Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Paradigms, principles, & practices. Intercultural Press. Dainton, M., & Zelaya, E. D. (2017). *Applying communication theory for professional life: A practical introduction* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
4. West R., Turner, L.H. (2014) *Introducing communication theory. Analysis and application*. McGill Higher Education.
5. *Communication studies: the essential resource* / [edited by] Andrew Beck, Peter Bennett and Peter Wall London: Routledge.
6. Duck, S. and McMahan D.T. (2009) *The Basics of Communication. A Relational Perspective*. Sage publications.
7. Owen, H. Saunders, Ch. Dickson, D. (1994). *Social Skills in Interpersonal Communication*. Routledge. Burton, G. and Dimbleby, R. (2006). *Between ourselves. An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication*. Third Edition. Hodder Arnold.
8. Stahl, G.K., & Tung, R.L. (2015). Towards a more balanced treatment of culture in international business studies: The need for positive cross-cultural scholarship. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 46(6), 391- 414. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2014.68>.

DEGREE LEVEL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives for the Bachelor of Business Management

Programmes:

International Business and Communication,

Learning Goals	Learning Objectives
Students will be critical thinkers	BLO1.1. Students will be able to understand core concepts and methods in the business disciplines
	BLO1.2. Students will be able to conduct a contextual analysis to identify a problem associated with their discipline, to generate managerial options and propose viable solutions
Students will be socially responsible in their related discipline	BLO2.1. Students will be knowledgeable about ethics and social responsibility
Students will be technology agile	BLO3.1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in common business software packages
	BLO3.2. Students will be able to make decisions using appropriate IT tools
Students will be effective communicators	BLO4.1. Students will be able to communicate reasonably in different settings according to target audience tasks and situations
	BLO4.2. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively through an oral presentation
	BLO4.3. Students will be able to convey their ideas effectively in a written paper