Com 110- Introduction to Communication

Description of Module

The objective of the Introduction to Communication module is to expose the student to other cultures and how they communicate differently. This module will also stress how communication is also universal in many aspects. As the world becomes more “flat” (to use a Thomas Friedman term), the need and desire to know how to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts becomes paramount. Also, if we are truly teaching students to think critically and across disciplines, we must have them engage other ways of seeing “how” other cultures communicate on a daily (and cross-cultural) basis.

Objectives

Students should be able to:

(1.) Research and discuss how communication is utilized differently, and the same, throughout various cultures. Several areas of study are:
   A. Haptics (the study of touch)
   B. Kinesics (eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, movement, posture)
   C. Paralanguage (rate, tone, pitch, volume)
   D. Proxemics (the study of distance)
   E. Low power/high power
   F. Individualistic/collectivistic
   G. Masculine/feminine
   H. Low uncertainty avoidance/high uncertainty avoidance
   I. Long term orientation
   J. Chronemics

(2.) Present their findings to the entire class and talk knowledgeably about a culture different from their own.

(3.) Learn to work within a group and understand how to navigate varying group dynamics.

Methodology

(1.) Lectures. There will be lectures on selected cultures and communication concepts, with specific cultures highlighted (i.e.-Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indian, Australian, Mexican, etc.) as examples. Students, in groups of 3-5, will then choose which culture to examine (through brainstorming) and apply the course concepts to that culture. Lectures will also focus on different roles that group members assume when working together to solve a problem (i.e. - an assignment).
Lecture plan (this module covers roughly six weeks of class time):

Culture lecture
Culture- a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, attitudes, values, and norms which affect the behavior of a relatively large group of people

Cultural contexts (physical, social, logistical, etc.) and how they influence perception

2000 Census findings (discussed in class); discuss the probable outcomes of the 2010 Census

Co-cultures (around the world and within dominate cultures, how they struggle to maintain identity, etc.)

Culture shock and experiences of the class

Ethnocentrism and stereotypes (rise of hate crimes after the 2008 and 2010 elections, racism, prejudice, etc.)

How language influences perception (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis)

Race and DNA (how 99.9% of human DNA is the same across the globe)

Hofstede’s intercultural dimension (http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/)
Individualism/collectivism
High and low power (status, hierarchy)
Masculine/feminine (roles within culture)
High and low context (language use)
Chronemics (polychronemic and monochronemic cultures) Discuss the assigned rankings and describe how/why these rankings are established.

Muted Group Theory (how dominant groups maintain control and minority groups adapt)

Communication Accommodation Theory (how cultures “adopt” other cultures’ artifacts)

Kinesics (eye contact, gestures, posture, facial expression) and how they vary across cultures

Proxemics (Edward Hall’s theory) and the four distances (intimate, personal,
social, public)

Paralanguage across cultures (how pitch, rate, and volume varies)

Speech communities (5000-6000 in the world)

Expectancy Violation Theory (when norms are not followed within a certain context)

Group Roles Lecture
The challenge of working in groups (different styles, purposes of groups)

Types of groups (primary, secondary)

Balancing conflict in groups and promoting cohesion

Task (Information giver, information seeker) and Maintenance roles (harmonizer, encourager)

Leadership in groups (how it happens, traits of a leader, styles of leadership, etc.)

“Bad” group roles (Joker, Aggressor, etc.)

Effective group problem solving and how to conduct effective meetings

(2.) Discussions. All lectures will be followed by small group activities. These will occur both in class and in the college library.

Discussion question #1- Worksheet on cultural “norms.” Each student will fill out and then discuss their answers with others.

Discussion question #2- How does the USA compare (and rank) in Hofstede’s cultural awareness chart? What does this mean for a global society and a “flat” world?

Discussion question #3- After each group member fills out their Myers-Brigg worksheet (in the textbook), group dynamics will be discussed.

Discussion question #4- Each group will discuss their conflict style (accommodating, compromising, etc) after filling out the assessment in the textbook.

(3.) In the library, each student will have access to NC Live, SIRS and selected cultural websites (of their choosing). They will research their culture for one
hour and then present their findings. A class discussion will follow each group's report.

(4.) Multimedia. There will be audio-visuals that augment class lectures and discussions. Selected YouTube clips showing various cultures, a History Channel DVD on Body Language and Culture, a short clip of different group roles being displayed and acted out, along with the video, A World of Differences, will highlight the communication concepts that are stressed.

(5.) Online component. Everyone will take the Harvard Race Implicit Association Test (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/). After doing so, we will break into groups and every student will discuss their outcomes with 4-5 others. We will focus on “how” they formed these judgments (stereotypes, etc.) and what does this mean for cultural communication?

Assignments

(1.) Group Project 1 (10% of final grade)
In groups of 3-4, students will select a culture and present a researched report (for at least twenty minutes) on that culture’s communication practices. Emphasis will be placed on how class concepts are explained and demonstrated (a rubric will be provided to guide each group). Also, each group member will get to “grade” each person in their group, detailing what role(s) they played within the group and how much effort they put into the project. Each member must submit a one-two page report on how their group worked together to complete the project.

(2.) Group Project 2 (10% of final grade)
In groups of 3-4, students will select a festival from a culture and re-create it in the classroom. They will give a thorough description of its context (social importance, cultural significance, historical background) and its symbolic meaning to that culture. This will be acted out and have audience participation and interaction. As with the first project, each group member will get to grade their group members and state what role they assumed within the group.

(3.) Testing on final exam (15% of final grade)
These will be general short answer questions about the communication concepts covered in class and the group roles one can assume (this will be approximately 30% of the material covered on the final exam).

Sample questions:
Define the following- high/low power, masculine/feminine, and low/high uncertainty avoidance as it pertains to culture. Be thorough in your description and use examples to illustrate your discussion.
Define haptics and chronemics. Discuss how they influence cultural communication in today’s global society.

Define the three group roles that one can assume in a group (be sure to give specific examples). Also, define leadership and how it “fits” into these different types of group roles.

(4.) Optional assignment (for extra points)
Our local chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (Alpha Chi Sigma) planned a presentation entitled “6 cultures in 60 minutes”; this presentation was held during our school's annual “Harvest, Health, and Safety Fair” in October. Eight students from Com 110 volunteered to help design and conduct the presentation and it was well received. Each participant was given a passport and they had to “visit” each culture and learn about it customs, ways of communicating, etc. The students were creative and used this experience to enhance their classroom presentations (in the group projects).

Resources


Group presentation evaluation- COM 110

Group members:

**Introduction** (place, physical characteristics, etc.)

Preview of how communication in being studied? Clear organization?

**Body** (5-7 select things to study)
Types of communication examined?

Transitions?

Overall organization?

Good support?

**Conclusion**
Review and discussion of findings?

**Delivery** of individual members?
Eye contact, visuals, pace, movement

Outline?

Overall grade:  

Group Member Feedback #2
In the past, some group members have complained about students who contribute very little to the project but get the same grade as everyone else. Also, some people do extra work but get no credit. Below, please evaluate your group members and be honest!

Here are the group members that deserve **EXTRA** points and please elaborate \( \textit{was it the quality of their work, time commitment, communication with the group, etc.} \):

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Here are the group members that deserve **FEWER** points (please elaborate on your answer):
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Please elaborate on what your conflict style is and how it affected the group. Also, please explain the conflict styles of your group members and how it affected the group dynamic.

Describe your personality type (chapter 7) and how it affected your group’s dynamics. What are the other group member’s personality types? Please explain, in at least three paragraphs, how you achieved group cohesion using these personality “types” as examples.
In your groups, you will produce a fifteen to twenty (15-20) minute professional presentation on a topic of your choosing. As a group, you must research a culture’s communication norms, both verbal and non-verbal. Avoid being ethnocentric and really explore how another culture experiences and sees the world.

Here are some suggested websites to get you started:
www.lonelyplanet.com
www.culturalsavvy.com/culture.htm
www.frommers.com
www.webcom.com/one/world
http://www.augsburg.edu/education/edc210/norms-values.html
www.travelsource.com/index.html
http://travel.state.gov
www.thetrip.com

The point here is to focus on a specific culture and examine their communication practices. Start by examining their languages, traditional greetings, non-verbal gestures and meanings, communication patterns of men and women, typical eye contact, spatial distance, body adornment, clothing, eating habits, values, beliefs, conflict, travel methods, holidays, religions, etiquette, do’s and don’ts while visiting, etc. Divide up the task and remember that every group member must participate in the oral presentation. You can use any visual aids (costumes, props, surveys, audience participation, etc.) Use any and all resources available to you.

Be creative!

Start by painting a broader picture of the cultural context (geographic location, population, currency/exchange rates, climate, politics, gender roles, etc.) and highlight important things to keep in mind when we visit the culture for either business or pleasure (what should we pack if we go). Basically, answer the following question- why do cultures communicate in the way that they do? Do not do a “dry” Powerpoint presentation! Make it interesting and informative!

Each member must turn in a detailed outline by ______________ and contain the following:
1. Each member’s name
2. Group attendance record (how and when you met)
3. At least 1 page detailing your presentation (in outline form- no essays!) and some of the evidence you plan to present. Also, it must contain a bibliography with at least four sources.
4. Also, each group member will get to grade their group

Outlines are due and presentations start ______________.

Note: you cannot make up the speech if you are absent of not prepared. It counts as a zero if you are not there and your group members will probably hunt you down.

Also, your project must have an interactive component (at least 5-10 minutes). Within your specific culture, research and “act out” a specific cultural festival (be creative!). This re-creation of the festival should be informative, interactive, and fun!
A brief history of how the festival/holiday/event originated
Its religious, historical, social, and/or cultural significance
An integration of at least 3 communication concepts from the text
Where it is celebrated
How it is celebrated
Any specific traditions, rituals, ceremonies, costumes, and food that is an integral part of the event
In addition to the recreation, your group should also utilize another type of visual aid (PowerPoint, DVD, internet, music, etc.)

Be creative! The sky is the limit but show us what this event looks and sounds like. Take us to the culture; do not just tell us about it.

Here is a partial list to get you started- have fun!

Lohri (Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh)
Lantern Festival (Taiwan)
Carnival (Brazil)
Tomato festival and running of the bulls (Spain)
The Doll Festival (Japan)
Beltane (Celtic)
Cinco de Mayo (Mexico)
Ramadan (Islamic, Muslim)
Yom Kippur (Jewish)
Dia de los Muertos (Latin America)
St. Lucia Day (Sweden)
Sinterclaus (Dutch)