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MB 720 Cross Cultural Communication of Christianity

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MB 720 Cross Cultural Communication of Christianity

Spring Semester, 2004
 School of World Mission and Evangelism,
 Asbury Theological Seminary
 Instructor: George Hunter

I. Course Description:

"Studies in the literature of Intercultural communication, with attention to understanding cultural contexts and barriers, with applications to Christian witness across, and within, cultures."

II Course Objectives:

1. To understanding some of the known dimensions of the "communication" process, with application to intercultural contexts.
2. To understand some of the known features of "culture," and the influence of cultural contexts in communication and human relations.
3. To understand what is known, essentially, about the variables, the dynamics and the process of Intercultural adaptation and communication.
4. To understand a number of Intercultural Communication theories that are especially useful to the cross-cultural servant or advocate.
5. To prepare, through simulations and context-specific studies, for cross-cultural service, ministry, and witness.

III Required Textbooks for all students (in the order of assignment):

1. Storti, Craig. The Art of Crossing Cultures, second edition. Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001.
2. _____. Figuring Foreigners Out. Intercultural Press, Inc., 1999.
3. Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckman. The Social Construction of Reality
4. Kohls, L. Robert. Survival Kit for Overseas Living, fourth edition. Intercultural Press, Inc., 2001.
5. Nida, Eugene. Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith, rev. ed. Gabriel Resources, 1990.
6. Hunter, George G. III, The Celtic Way of Evangelism. Abingdon Press, 2000.

IV. Additional Required Readings (will be available on line; click on the ESJ icon.)

1. Barnlund, Dean C. "Communication in a Global Village."
2. LaRay M. Barna, "Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication."
3. Milton J. Bennett, "Toward Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity."
4. Herbert Blumer. Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method, pp. 1-21.
5. Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall. "Key Concepts: Underlying Structures of Culture", from Understanding Cultural Differences. Intercultural Press, 1990.

NOTE: Doctoral students who take a qualifying examination in "Mission in Cultural Context" will also be responsible for the several foundational texts of Edward T. Hall. (See Bibliography)

V. Optional Books on Specific Cultures

Intercultural Press (www.interculturalpress.com) has an extensive series of books on specific cultures and/or nations. IF you choose (below) the research paper option #4 -- writing on a particular culture, one of these books would give you a marvelous start. Since the instructor could not anticipate which of these books to ask the bookstore to stock, it will be necessary for you to order the book early enough to meet your research needs.

You can peruse their series by accessing their website, and looking under "Guides to Countries and Cultures." When I recently accessed that site, they featured books on the following specific cultures: Arabic, Australian, Brazilian, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Israeli, Japanese, Korean, Mexican, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Thai; they also feature books on the following cultural regions: Africans, East Europeans, Spanish-Speaking South Americans, and West Europeans. (The book on East Europeans has individual chapters on Romanians, Hungarians, etc.)

VI. Assignments and Requirements for the Course:

The instructor expects the student to accept responsibility for his/her own learning. This responsibility will normally be exercised through:

- a. Each member's regular attendance, involvement, and (especially) contributions within the course's periodic seminar format.
- b. Thorough reading (and rereading) of all assignments.
- c. Periodic submission of **one page** (no more!) reflection papers on some of the assigned reading (See class schedule below).
- d. Submission of a research paper by noon Tuesday, May 18.
- e. Completion of the final exam on Wednesday, May 19.

A **grade** for the course will be awarded through an appraisal of the student's final exam and the research paper -- with slightly more weight given to the exam, and (quite secondarily) to the instructor's appraisal of the student's attendance, participation, and contributions in the course.

The Major Paper: (Choose **one**) Due May 18

1. A Report (with Analysis and any warranted Critique) of the approach of a Cross-cultural Christian advocate -- contemporary (such as Vincent Donovan, or Don Richardson, or Bruce Olsson) or historic (such as St. Patrick, or Augustine of Canterbury, or William Carey) to people of a different culture or subculture -- based primarily upon his/her writings, recordings, etc., and an interview where possible. Suggested length: 12 to 15 pages, plus an appendix to include a verbatim of the interview and a photocopy of any brief writings or transcripts upon which the report is especially based.

2. A report (with Analysis and any warranted Critique) of the major intercultural communication theories and insights of an important cultural anthropologist (such as Margaret Mead), or an important Intercultural communication theorist (such as E. T. Hall), or a missiologist (such as Eugene Nida, Paul Heibert, or Charles Kraft). Suggested length: 12 to 15 pages.

3 A Case Study (with Analysis and any warranted Critique) of a Christian mission, a church, or a movement, of the past or present, that has communicated the faith cross-culturally and raised up an indigenous church. If you study a present day project, employ observation, relevant historical analysis, and (especially) interviews with first generation converts, and also with leaders most responsible for the communication of the message. Suggested length: 12 to 15 pages plus any appendix.

4. A research paper on a culture in which the student has special interest in communicating Christianity's gospel. The student may focus at any of four "levels" of culture, i.e., a "macro-culture" (such as Germanic culture), a culture (such as German culture), a more specific culture (such as German-speaking Swiss

culture), or a sub-culture or "micro-culture" (such as German speaking Swiss "Night People"). One prerequisite for a choice, obviously, is available sources.

[One outstanding source is the nine volume Encyclopedia of World Cultures (G.K. Hall & Company, 1994). Each volume focuses on a cultural region of the earth, complete with histories and descriptions of many specific cultures, with maps, bibliographies etc. The respective volumes focus as follows:

- Vol. 1: North America
- Vol. 2: Oceania
- Vol. 3: South Asia
- Vol. 4: Europe
- Vol. 5: East and Southeast Asia
- Vol. 6: Russia, Eurasia, and China
- Vol. 7: South America
- Vol. 8: Middle America and the Caribbean
- Vol. 9: Africa and the Middle East

The Encyclopedia of World Cultures is based upon an even more comprehensive source: the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). HRAF's articles focus on many specific cultures -- such as the Highland Scots in Europe, the Iban people of Malaysia, the Maasai people of East Africa, the Tzeltal tribe in Mexico, the Iroquois people in the USA, or Chinese-Americans in the USA. Each article is a lengthy secondary source that includes a bibliography for scholars who want to know more, with a brief description of what is covered in each article or book in the bibliography.

A complete edition of HRAF that covers hundreds of cultures is available, on microfiche, at The University of Kentucky's main library. Asbury Theological Seminary's library is now subscribing, over a 15 year period, to the newer HRAF edition as it is published on CD ROM. The first several CD ROMs already published, and available, include many cultures--including those mentioned above.

Our library tells me that we can now access the HRAF information on over 140 cultures by surfing the **Internet**. You will need your 10 digit number at the bottom of your ATS ID to access the data. The library tells us to follow the steps below. (Call Hanna Kirsch (2189) in the library if confusion reigns!)

1. Click on Asbury Theological Seminary's home site.
(www.asburyseminary.edu)
2. Click on LIBRARY
3. Click on RESTRICTED DATA BASES
4. Click on RCA (means Remote Patron Authentication!) Enter your ID# here (the number at the bottom of your student ID card))
5. Click on EHRAF—ELECTRONIC HUMAN RELATIONS AREA FILES

The student should be alert to opportunities to interview people from the target culture. The student's paper should emphasize, say, the six or eight most important cultural themes that characterize the culture and/or are the most essential for the cross-cultural Christian advocate to understand and engage, with insights regarding the possible communication of Christianity to the culture's people. (The instructor may illustrate this approach in one or two class presentations.)

In any of the four options for your paper, take care to demonstrate your mastery of the relevant categories, terms, issues, and principles of intercultural communication theory. Present your paper typed, in a manuscript cover or strongly stapled (not loose or with paper clip), with your name etc. (and your SPO Box #) on the front but not on the inside pages. The accepted form for all papers is Campbell, with the one variation that the instructor will accept footnotes, or endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a "Sources Cited" section at the end. (Just be consistent.) Your effective writing style is important in academic writing; you should be very familiar with Strunk and White's The Elements of Style.

Course Outline

(Subject to Modification)

Class sessions will vary in their manner of presentation. While some sessions will feature some version of the traditional lecture, others will be devoted to processing readings, and others will feature videos that dramatize intercultural communication themes or project the viewer into cross-cultural contexts. Some class sessions will feature case studies or simulations, which permit the kind of redundancy-based "over learning" that develops effective cross-cultural communicators.

Guidelines for occasional ONE PAGE reflection papers on the readings:

Submit, at the beginning of the class session, a **one page** reflection paper. These papers may help the instructor to perceive the quality of reading, to shape part of a class session, and to identify questions and issues for discussion. Write each paper in terms of some of these categories:

1. State the Thesis (or one of the Main Ideas) of the reading.
2. Suggest its implication(s) for the practice of cross-cultural communication and ministry.
3. Raise a **Question** that may warrant discussion in the class.
4. State, and expand somewhat, some specific insight that may inform your ministry.
5. If you have a case, experience, or "war story" that would illustrate this point within the reading, include that—extending to page 2 if necessary.

February 12: Orientation to Cross-Cultural Communication (Led by Mark Lewis)

1. Distribution of the Syllabus, introducing the course.
2. Distribution of a list of definitions of "Communication."
3. Announcement of reading and reporting assignment for next week.
 - a) From the definitions of Communication, write (and be prepared to present) your own semi-original provisional definition.
 - b) Read Storti's Art of Crossing Cultures for next week.
4. Video: "Bridging the Culture Gap."
5. Video: "Managing the Overseas Assignment."

February 19: The Challenge of Communication AND the Challenge of Cross-Cultural Adaptation
For today, read Storti's The Art of Crossing Cultures, and submit a one page reflection paper following the guidelines above.

1. Selected class readings of semi-original definitions of "Communication"
2. Presentation: Perspectives in Communication Theory
3. **Three Minute Class Presentations** from the reflection papers.

February 26: Discovering Your Stage of Progress in "Intercultural Sensitivity"

For today, read Milton Bennett's article "Toward Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity", and submit a one page reflection paper, drawing from a main idea in Bennett, following the guidelines above.

1. Video: "Better Together Than A-P-A-R-T"
Intercultural Communication: An Overview". 62 minutes
2. Processing the Bennett Model of Intercultural Sensitivity Development.

March 4: Inter-Cultural Dynamics and Diversity

For today, read Dean Barnlund "Communication in a Global Village," and Laray Barna, "Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication."

1. "Barnga" simulation: A Surrogate Experience in Cross-Cultural Conflict
2. A Case for Cultural "Diversity" in Organizations.
Joel Barker video: "Wealth, Innovation, Diversity: Putting Our Differences to Work in the 21st. Century"

March 11: Theories for Informing Effective Cross-Cultural Communication.

For today, read Storti's Figuring Foreigners Out, and submit a one page reflection paper following the guidelines above.

1. **Three Minute Class Presentations** from the reflection papers.
2. Important Theoretical Perspectives for Intercultural Communication
3. Video: "Beyond Culture Shock"

March 18: Introducing E. T. Hall: the "Pioneer" of the Intercultural Communication Field.

For today, read the E. T. Hall article "Key Concepts: Underlying Structures of Culture." Submit, a one page reflection paper, drawing from a main idea in the article, following the guidelines above.

1. Video: "International Business Practices: Hidden Dimensions". 40 minutes.
2. Theories That Inform the Practice of Intercultural Communication
4. **Three Minute Class Presentations** from the reflection papers.

March 25: No class; instructor with Moravians in North Carolina.

April 1: Reading Week; no class.

April 8: "The Social Construction of Reality" and "Symbolic Interactionism"

For today, read Berger's Social Construction of Reality, and Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism, 1-21, and submit a one page reflection paper following the guidelines above.

1. **Three Minute Class Presentations** from the reflection papers.
2. Perspectives on "Symbolic Interactionism."
3. Video clip from the film "Nell."

April 15: Case Study in Intercultural Conflict

1. Video: "A Different Place": Part One
2. Processing the "Different Place" experience.
1. Video: "A Different Place": Part Two

April 22: Categories for "Exegeting" a Culture

For today, read Kohl's Survival Kit for Overseas Living, fourth edition, 2001.

1. Presentation: The Condon Grid for "Exegeting" a Culture.
2. Video: "Going International Safely."

April 29: Introducing the World's Largest Culture

For today, read Nida's Message and Mission, and submit a one page reflection paper following the guidelines above.

1. Thematic Explorations in Chinese Culture
3. Video: "Chinese Cultural Values: The Other Pole of the Human Mind." 60 minutes
4. **Three Minute Class Presentations** from the reflection papers.

May 6: (Re)Introducing the Culture "Across the Pond."

1. Thematic Explorations in European, British, and English Cultures.
2. Video: "Welcome Home, Stranger"

May 13: A "Celtic" Case Study: Learning from a Cross-Cultural Mission, and the Church of another culture, from another time.

For today, read Hunter's The Celtic Way of Evangelism. Submit a single one page reflection paper in which you a) identify from the book, with your comments, a theological insight that helps to inform cross-cultural ministry, and b) an intercultural communication principle you saw reflected in ancient Celtic outreach. (Feel free to reflect in another direction.)

1. Video: "St. Patrick: The Man, the Myth."
2. **Three Minute Class Presentations** from the reflection papers.
3. Enduring Insights from the ancient Celtic Church.

Tuesday May 18: **Term papers due by "HighNoon!"**

Wednesday, May 19: FINAL EXAM. 12:30 PM to 2:30

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