



COMM/PSYC 290 Intercultural Communication

Course Syllabus
Spring Semester 2025

Instructor: Gabriella Brigitte Klein, Ph.D., Nevin Pecorelli, Ph.D.

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Tue, Thu, 2:15 pm-3:45 pm

Office Hours: by appointment before or after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: \$ 30 - includes guest lectures and materials for final exhibition

Course Description

In today's world in which people are increasingly on the move for many reasons (tourism, forced and deliberate transnational migration, displacement, study and work abroad programs, missionary and humanitarian work, etc.), an intercultural competence is of paramount importance and no longer limited to highly specialized professions. And an intercultural competence necessarily includes specific interpersonal communication competencies (in terms of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and emotional attitudes) relevant for an intercultural encounter as nothing happens in social life without communication. According to Ingrid Piller (*Intercultural Communication. A critical Introduction*, 2nd edition, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017; course book), "The main challenges of intercultural communication are the linguistic challenges of language learning, the discursive challenges of stereotyping, and the social challenges of inclusion and justice" (Piller, IX).



In this course, students will tackle these challenges by acquiring not only theoretical knowledge and contemporary concepts of intercultural communication. Through practical communication exercises and workshop activities they also will be able to develop specific interpersonal communication skills in order to better cope with the intercultural dimension in multicultural encounters. The theoretical knowledge together with concrete communication skills will ultimately change their attitude in the relationship with others, laying the basis for becoming Intercultural Mediators through “a dedicated interpersonal engagement to reinvent a new common culture that is mutually beneficial” (Piller, 2014).

Culture and intercultural communication are considered dynamic and transformative concepts: no intercultural communication advice or recipes are proposed, but analytical tools are presented to refine one’s own communication skills and attitude. Such analytical tools, among others, originate from research results obtained in the framework of European Union funded projects revolving around intercultural communication challenges for people on the move, written and coordinated by the professor over the past 20 years.

The course content and activities are not necessarily tailored to students of linguistics, sociolinguistics, or communication; no prerequisites are necessary. They rather provide students with tools and skills applicable both in everyday situations and professional contexts.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course’s learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students’ achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *distinguish* between different stages of culture shock (Essay)
- *distinguish* between interpersonal communication generally and interpersonal communication in an intercultural encounter (Quiz, Essay, Poster)
- *distinguish* between different levels and different planes of communication (Quiz)
- *observe, transcribe and analyze* a talk-in-interaction (Essay)
- *identify* different communication practices, techniques, procedures, and strategies in an intercultural encounter (Essay)
- *analyze* different communicative products (film, newspaper, advertisements, talk shows) for stereotypes, prejudices, overt and hidden discriminatory messages on the grounds of real or perceived national belonging, ethnic-cultural belonging, social belonging, gender & sexual orientation, disability, or age (Quiz, Essay)
- *use* correct academic vocabulary regarding the field of intercultural communication studies, anthropology, and sociolinguistics (Quiz, Essay, Poster)
- *integrate* their personal experience in Italy with contemporary theories in intercultural communication studies, anthropology, and sociolinguistics (Essay, Poster)
- *face* some of the different challenges of intercultural communication (Essay, Poster)
- *activate* productive interpersonal communication techniques, procedures, and strategies (Final Presentation)

Course Materials

Book

Piller, Ingrid., *Intercultural Communication, A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press (2nd Edition), 2017.

Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course’s Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
2 One-on-One Professor Meet-ups	10%
5 Weekly Moodle Quizzes	20%
Essay	40%
Poster	10%
Final Presentation	10%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered, and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A A-	93% - 100% 90% - 92%	Exceptional Excellent
B+ B B-	87% - 89% 83% - 86% 80% - 82%	Superior
C+ C C-	77% - 79% 73% - 76% 70% - 72%	Satisfactory
D+ D D-	67% - 69% 63% - 66% 60% - 62%	Low Pass
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: Decimal and centesimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

2 One-on-One Professor Meet-ups (10%; 5% for each)

Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with that person and therefore more likely to ask for help. It also might help you to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss an idea for your Essay or Poster project. In this course, you get 5% of your grade for coming one time before the end of Week 2 and 5% of your grade for coming one time within Week 4 to a One-on-One Professor Meet-up. See the full prompt on Moodle.

Quizzes (20%)

Students will be assigned 5 short quizzes (each of which will be due before class time of the following week and will not be reopened). The quiz will be on Moodle and students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. There will be a combination of *technical, methodological, and content questions*. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The

technical questions will help students learn the class's policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test skills that will pop up every week, like how to communicate productively.

Essay: My Culture Shock Experiences and The Development of My Intercultural Communication Competence (40%)

Students will submit a Paper discussing their personal culture shock experiences in Italy or elsewhere in the world, including the in-class workshop experience related to culture shock with particular focus on Intercultural Communication issues. Drawing on the readings and several guided communication exercises and assignments, students will reflect on how these changed their competence in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in intercultural communication over the course and their stay in Italy. See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle.

Poster (10%)

Students will design a poster summarizing what they have learned in terms of Intercultural Communication from the beginning of the course and their stay in Italy. See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle.

Final Presentation (10%)

For the Final Presentation students will prepare and carry out a 10-minute speech summarizing their learning experience and connecting it to the most important statements from intercultural communication theories contained in the course readings. The Presentation should also include how they intend to exploit their intercultural communication experience back home. See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle.

The final presentation will all be given during Week 12/Meeting 2 and Week 13. There is no make-up time, and the presentations cannot be done earlier. Please plan to be present on those days.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero.

As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodation or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused "sick days" and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence. Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and smartphones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result, you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. However, I ask students to bring their computers! but leave them in their bags and phones in their pockets and use a regular notebook. There are five exceptions: 1) if one has a vision or other accommodation; 2) if one is using a tablet/electronic pencil to take notes, one which is not connected to the internet; 3) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools; 4) if we have an in-class activity that requires them to use their computer or 5) if they make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Week 1

Culture Shock Experience

Meeting 1: *Short presentation of the course. Experiencing a mini culture shock (workshop).*

Meeting 2: *Elaborating on the workshop experience: its relevance to intercultural communication and to your experience in Italy (or elsewhere in the world).*

Readings for the week:

- Ting-Toomey, Stella, & Chung, Leeva C. "What is Culture Shock?" In *Understanding intercultural communication* (2nd ed.), Chap.5 pp. 91-109. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Piller, Ingrid. *Intercultural Communication. A critical Introduction*, 2nd ed., "Preface", ix-xi. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Week 2

What Is Interpersonal Communication?

Meeting 1: *Introduction to a communication model: getting familiar with the different communication levels, planes, and related means: verbal communication, paraverbal communication, non-verbal communication, visual communication (theory & workshop activities).*

Meeting 2: *Brief introduction to the history of intercultural communication studies; your personal experience in intercultural encounters (workshop activity).*

Readings for the week:

- Dossou, Koffi M., Gabriella B. Klein, and Andrea F. Ravenda. "Our RADAR Communication Concept." In *RADAR Guidelines. Understanding hate-oriented communication and tools for anti-hate communication strategies in an intercultural dimension*, edited by Koffi M. Dossou and Gabriella B. Klein, 5-18. Deruta/Perugia: Key & Key Communications, 2016.

Quiz 1

Week 3

Interpersonal Communication in an Intercultural Perspective

Meeting 1: *Introduction to some key concepts followed by exercises: intercultural implications of words and of voice (communication games); your personal experience in intercultural encounters (workshop activity).*

Meeting 2: *Intercultural implications of body language and of visual elements (communication games); your personal experience in intercultural encounters (workshop activity).*

Readings for the week:

- Piller: "Approaching Intercultural Communication", chap.1, 1-12.
- Piller: "The Genealogy of Intercultural Communication", chap.2, 13-30.

Assignment

Students will turn in Assignment 1: "My Culture Shock experiences" through Moodle. See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle.

Week 4

The Linguistic Challenges of Intercultural Communication

Meeting 1: *What is a 'Language'? What is a 'Culture'? A case study (communication workshop).*

Meeting 2: *'Misunderstanding' and 'Miscommunication': linguistic barriers and social barriers; your personal experience in intercultural encounters (workshop activity).*

Readings for the week:

- Piller: "Language and Culture", chap. 3, 31-53.
- Piller: "Nation and Culture", chap. 4, 54-70.

Quiz 2

Week 5

'Talk-in-Interaction': How we communicate our social, cultural, and linguistic identity

Meeting 1: *From conveying messages to observing messages; observing an interaction between individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and emerging questions (in-class activity using an Observation Template linked on Moodle).*

Meeting 2: *From observing an interaction to transcribing an interaction: Introduction on how to transcribe a verbal interaction (in-class activity).*

Readings for the week:

- Klein, Gabriella B. *Verbal interactions and their transcription*, 1-6. University of Perugia: RADAR: Regulating AntiDiscrimination and AntiRacism. 2015.
<https://www.keyandkey.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/KLEIN-Guidelines-for-transcription-RADAR.pdf>.

Assignment

Students will turn in their compiled Observation Template, as Assignment 2. See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle and use the Observation Template linked there.

Week 6

Structural and Organizational Aspects of a 'Talk-in-Interaction'

Meeting 1: *From transcribing an interaction to analyzing an interaction: Introduction on how to analyze a verbal interaction (the activity will be started in class and finalized as home-work).*

Meeting 2: *Structure and organization of 'talk-in-interaction' A case study: Service encounter at a 'Public Relations Office' (URP) of the Municipality of Perugia.*

Readings for the week:

- Gumperz, John J. and Jenny Cook-Gumperz. "Introduction: language and the communication of social identity." In *Language and social identity*, edited by John J. Gumperz, chap.1, 1-21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Assignment

Students will transcribe and analyze a video-recorded interaction between individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (with the explicit permission from the individuals involved). See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle and use the Transcription Template linked there. Students will turn in the work as Assignment 3.

Semester Break

Week 7

Intercultural Communication in Work Contexts

Meeting 1: Students will carry out a field observation in a work setting.

Meeting 2: Presentation of students' field observation.

Readings for the week:

- Piller: "Intercultural Communication at Work", chap. 7, 120-141.

Assignment

Students will report on their Field Observation carried out in Perugia in an institutional work setting. More instructions will be given during class. See the Field Observation template linked on Moodle. Students will turn in the work as Assignment 4.

Quiz 3

Week 8

The Discursive Challenges of Stereotyping in Intercultural Communication

Meeting 1: Analyzing stereotypes and prejudices in Spike Lee's film Jungle Fever (in-class working in pairs using the Jungle Fever Analysis Templates linked on Moodle). Students will present and discuss their analysis in class.

Meeting 2: Students will meet a guest with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and discuss their personal experience with stereotypes, prejudices, discriminatory and hate communication.

Film for the week

- Spike Lee: *Jungle Fever* (1991)

Assignment

Students will carry out an analysis on stereotypes and prejudices appearing in the Jungle Fever scenarios; see the Jungle Fever analysis templates linked on Moodle. Students will turn in the work as Assignment 5.

Week 9

The Social Challenges of Inclusion and Justice in Intercultural Communication

Meeting 1: Brief introduction to the phenomena of Hate Speech and Hate Communication; presentation of analysis templates and analyzing examples from public media: newspaper articles, advertising pictures, social media posts, propaganda

pictures (workshop activities).

Meeting 2: *Analyzing examples from public media: advertising videos, propaganda videos (workshop activities).*

Readings for the week:

- Dossou, Koffi M. and Gabriella B. Klein, eds. *RADAR Guidelines. Understanding hate-oriented communication and tools for anti-hate communication strategies in an intercultural dimension*, 23-31. Deruta/Perugia: Key & Key Communications, 2016. Accessed July 16, 2022. <http://win.radar.communicationproject.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/RADAR-Guidelines-EN.pdf>
- Klein, Gabriella, Koffi M. Dossou, Maria Fountana, and Stavroula Sokoli. "Discursive and Visual Construction of Internal Borders. Analysis of advertisement samples from Italy, Greece and the UK in the framework of the EU Project RADAR." In *Europe in Discourse: Identity, Diversity, Borders*, 470-488, edited by Juliane House and Themis Kaniklidou, Nashua: Hellenic American University, 2017.

Assignment

Students will carry out an analysis of the communicative construction of hate and anti-hate. See the Hate and Anti-Hate Analysis templates linked on Moodle.

Students will turn in the work as Assignment 6.

Quiz 4

Week 10

Summarizing One's Learning Experience and How to Present It in a Poster

Meeting 1: *Students will prepare their poster projects in class as a summary of their learning experience.*

Meeting 2: *NO CLASS*

Please note that you must deliver your final Poster project - without any delay - latest by Wednesday of week 11, in order to be printed on time for the Poster Exhibition. See the full prompt and rubric on Moodle.

Readings for the week:

Piller: "Becoming an Intercultural Mediator", chap. 11, 194-206.

Assignment

Students will turn in their Poster Project "*My Intercultural Communication Competence*" through Moodle. See the full prompt and the rubric on Moodle.

Week 11

Intercultural Communication for a Cultural Change

Meeting 1: *Students will discuss their Intercultural Communication experience in and outside the class.*

Meeting 2: *Students will discuss how their Intercultural Communication competence has changed in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.*

Assignment

Students will turn in their Essay "*Intercultural Communication Competence: Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes*" through Moodle. See the full prompt and the rubric on Moodle.

Students will turn in the work as Assignment 7

Quiz 5

Week 12

Importance of Becoming an Intercultural Mediator and Take Aways

Meeting 1: *Students will elaborate strategies and plans on how to actively apply what they learned (workshop activities).*

Meeting 2: *Final Presentation: Students will prepare a presentation on “The Development of My Intercultural Communication Competence”.*

Assignment

Students will give a Final Presentation on “*The Development of My Intercultural Communication Competence*”. See the full prompt and the rubric on Moodle.

Week 13 (Final Classes, Final Exams, & Special Academic Events Week)

Meeting 1: *Final Presentation: Students will give a presentation on “The Development of My Intercultural Communication Competence”.* See the full prompt and the rubric on Moodle.

Poster Exhibition: Exhibition of students’ posters