Orientation to U.S. Culture: A comparative study with other cultures

Instructor: Dr. Mary Groom-Hall     TR 1:10-2:00 McGill 210
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Course Description: This two-credit elective cross-cultural class may be taken by both lower-division (freshman, sophomore) and upper-division (junior, senior, and graduate) students from everywhere, including the USA. The intent of the course is to give students of all levels the opportunity to examine their identities in the context of an international, intercultural community. This class will be one of your few opportunities at university to discuss sometimes-sensitive topics in an atmosphere of trust, safety, and deepest consideration for all the members of the class.

Course Philosophy: Open, respectful discussions lead to greater understanding of other cultures, of our own cultures, and of ourselves.

Course Structure: Students discuss class topics in small groups and in the class as a whole, with the final 1/3 of the semester being given over to individual cultural autobiographical presentations. Students’ journal writings and discussions are based on the same set of readings.

Class Readings: Websites for readings are found on Moodle. Often you are asked to choose among several possible readings on a site.

Course Requirements

- Attendance is taken each class period with a sign-in sheet. Let me know if you have to miss class due to an emergency or illness—those absences are excused. Student athletes with documentation letters from Athletic Academic Services are excused on the dates of their events. Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences with no impact on their grades.
- Do the readings prior to class discussions so that you may contribute.
- You should complete your reflective journals by the date specified. You have much more flexibility in completing your personal journals.
- You will do an oral presentation, accompanied by Power Point or another presentation software, or you may elect to “stand and deliver” without benefit of any computer enhancement, or you may perform if you are a musician, for example. There is a great deal of flexibility with the presentation—we call it a “Cultural Autobiography,” but it may take many forms. We can talk about it!
- You will turn in a final paper, minimum 3 pages, up to 5/6 pages, double spaced, on any cultural topic you wish. We can talk about it!

Class Calendar

Week 1 (1/29-31)
- Tuesday—Intro to the course; first conversation
- Thursday—Introduction of class members
  Homework on Moodle

Week 2 (2/5-7)
- Tuesday—Small Group Discussion (SGD) All kinds of English from website http://www.pbs.org.speak
- Thursday—All Class Discussion (ACD) English
  Reflective journal due Friday 2/8
  Homework on Moodle

Week 3 (2/12-14)
- Thursday—ACD Globalization
  Personal journal due Friday 2/15
  Homework on Moodle

Week 4 (2/19-21)
- Tuesday—SGD Sweatshop/child labor
  http://www.veganpeace.com/sweatshops/sweatshops_and_child_labor.htm and
  http://oneminute.rationalmind.net/sweatshops/
- Thursday—ACD Sweatshop/child labor
  Reflective journal due Friday 2/22; Homework on Moodle
Week 5 (2/26-28)
Tuesday—SGD What we do with our bodies: from tattoos to organ donation tattoo articles already in place and any readings and/or videos on organ donation, cloning, artificial insemination…
Thursday—ACD Bodies
Personal journal due Friday 3/1
Homework on Moodle

Week 6 (3/5-7)
Tuesday—SGD Cultural relativism article already in place re “headhunters in title”
Thursday—ACD Cultural relativism
Reflective journal due Friday 3/9
Homework on Moodle

Week 7 (3/12-14)
Tuesday—SGD What’s religion; what’s cultural practice?
Thursday—ACD Religion vs cultural practice
Personal journal due Friday 3/15
Homework on Moodle

Week 8 (3/19-21)
Tuesday—SGD Global Women’s Issues
Thursday—ACD Global Women’s Issues
Reflective journal due Friday 3/22
Homework on Moodle

Week 9 (3/26-28)
Tuesday—SGD What are our priorities (as members of a global family)
http://www.cracked.com/article_19489_5-terrible-ideas-that-solved-huge-global-problems.html
Thursday—ACD Global Priorities
Personal journal due Friday 3/29
Homework on Moodle

SPRING BREAK APRIL 1-5 ~ EVERYONE HAVE FUN!

Week 10 (4/9-11)
Tuesday—Cultural Autobiographies
Thursday—Cultural Autobiographies
Presentation Response to a classmate’s presentation due Friday
Homework on Moodle

Week 11 (4/16-18) Cultural Autobiographies
Presentation Response to a classmate’s presentation due Friday

Week 12 (4/23-25) Cultural Autobiographies
Presentation Response to a classmate’s presentation due Friday

Week 13 (4/30-5/1) Cultural Autobiographies
Presentation Response to a classmate’s presentation due Friday

Week 14 (5/7-9) Cultural Autobiographies
Presentation Response to a classmate’s presentation due Friday

FINAL WEEK (5/13-17) We may meet during the final period to finish cultural autobiographies if they are not done; otherwise, there is no final exam. If we plan to meet on the final day, it will be announced repeatedly! Final papers are due May 17 5 p.m., or sooner if possible.