

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE: INTRODUCTION TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

COURSE DATA

Degree	European Track (EUPeace)
Academic Year	2025-2026
Credits	6
Course type	Elective
Department	Department of Translation, Interpreting and Multilingual Communication
Language of instruction	English
Name and email of instructor	Birgit Strotmann birgit.strotmann@comillas.edu

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This subject aims to develop intercultural communication skills, using a critical approach. Course content is provided from a descriptive, comparative and eminently practical point of view to introduce students to intercultural communication by means of simulations, critical incidents, and student research. Activities will be contextualized with reference to recent literature in the field and critical discussion will be invited.

Expected learning outcomes:

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- Students will be able to identify, analyse and participate in intercultural communication processes in a variety of contexts.
 - Students will become familiar with major concepts and theories of intercultural communication.
 - Students will compare the role of historical, political, economic and religious factors in creating cultural stereotypes and conflicts.
 - Students will reflect on power hierarchies and their effect on individuals and communities.
 - Students will improve their ability to work in intercultural teams.
 - Students will develop an attitude of open-mindedness and self-critical reflection.
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CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

TOPIC 0: PRESENTATION AND WELCOME

- Teacher and course presentation
- Icebreaker

TOPIC 1: FOUNDATIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

- Definitions of culture
- Definitions and models of communication
- Approaches to intercultural communication
- Intercultural communicative competence and intercultural citizenship
- Researching intercultural communication
- Critical intercultural Communication

TOPIC 2: CULTURE, COGNITION AND IDENTITY

- Cognition and attribution
- Conformity and obedience
- Socialization
- Identity
- Stereotype, prejudice, racism, discrimination

TOPIC 3: VALUE ORIENTATIONS AND BEHAVIOURS

- Hofstede's cultural dimensions
- Other models: Hall, Trompenaars, Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, Schwartz, Meyer

TOPIC 4: CULTURE AND VERBAL COMMUNICATION

- The structure of human language
- Language, thought and behaviour



- Cultural variations in communication styles
- Euphemism and taboo
- The issue of swearwords
- The role of storytelling

TOPIC 5: CULTURE AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Universal expressions
- Definitions, categories and approaches
- Signs and symbols
- Cultural variations in nonverbal behaviour

TOPIC 6: INTERCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT

- Approaches to intercultural adaptation
- Migration and acculturation
- Sources and types of intercultural conflict
- Conflict stages and conflict management

TOPIC 7: THE ETHICS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

- Universalism versus particularism
- Approaches to determining which behaviours are ethical
- Intercultural business ethics case studies
- Global social justice and peacebuilding

* This syllabus may be subject to changes based on class size, student performance or unforeseen circumstances during the course.

METHODOLOGY

The subject Intercultural Communication is delivered 100% online and consists of 6 ECTS that are divided into weekly synchronous sessions and diverse autonomous learning activities. In the weekly sessions the student is required to participate actively to develop the different competences of the subject and ensure comprehension of theories and concepts from a practical and applied perspective.

In-class learning activities include but are not limited to:

- Pair and group work: problem-solving, experiential learning, jigsaw activities, case studies, simulations, role plays, learning walks
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- Full class activities: Discussion, gamified activities, presentations

Independent learning activities may include (but are not limited to):

- Autonomous study (readings, video, podcast...)
- Individual assignments (Online tests, forum posts, tasks)
- Collaborative assignments (presentations, research tasks, case studies, critical incidents)

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Percentage
EXAMS	Online test 1	5%
	Online test 2	5%
	Final examination	40%
ONLINE WORK	Asynchronous tasks related to content input	30%
PROJECT WORK	Research, delivery, self-assessment	10%
PARTICIPATION	Attendance and participation in synchronous sessions	10%

- Committing any serious academic misconduct, such as **plagiarism** of previously published material, or **copying** in the exam or any other graded activity, **will imply not being able to pass the course in the ordinary assessment period.**
- The **use of AI** to create complete works or relevant parts, without citing the source or the tool or without being expressly allowed in the description of the work, will be considered plagiarism and regulated according to the General Regulations of the University.
- At the beginning of the term the professor will announce the **office hours** for the course. Tutorials are an essential part of the development of the course, and students may attend tutorials during the course within those office times but are required to give prior notice.
- Any non-face-to-face learning activity that requires the **submission of an assignment/document**, etc. will be submitted by the student through Moodle, as instructed. **Late submissions** will be penalized or rejected.
- Please note that **attendance is compulsory**. To be able to take the final exam, **students must not have missed more than one third of the synchronous sessions without justification**. If this requirement is not met, the student may lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary assessment period (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations).



- Please note **if you fail this course** you have the right to resit your exam and/or resubmit failed assignments (except for the 10% participation tasks) in the official resit period, which tends to be June. If you wish to do so, you must request this in writing.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)

Contact hours	Outside classroom	OVERALL
30	120	150

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES

Arasaratnam, L. A., & Doefel, M. L. (2005). Intercultural Communication Competence: Identifying key components from multicultural perspectives. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 137–163.

Bennett, M.J. (1998). *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communications*. Intercultural Press.

Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence – Revisited*. Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/BYRAM0244>

Evanoff, R. (2020). Introducing intercultural ethics. In: *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Communication*, Rings, G., & Rasinger, S. (eds.). Cambridge University Press.

Frischherz, B. et al. (2023). *Intercultural Business Ethics (IBE): A teaching handbook*. Globalethics.net.

Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication, The. (2014). Bratt Paulson, C., Kiesling, & S. F., Rangel, E.S. (eds.). Wiley Blackwell.

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>

Hogg, M.A., & Vaughan, G.M. (2018, 8th ed.). *Social Psychology*. Pearson.

Holliday, A., Hyde, M., & Kullman, J. (2010). *Intercultural Communication: An advanced resource book for students*.

Jandt, F.E. (2010). *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a global community*. Sage.

Liu, S.; Volcic, Z. & Gallois, C. (2015). *Introducing intercultural communication: Global cultures and contexts*. Sage.

Meyer, Erin (2015). *The Culture Map: Decoding how people think, lead, and get things done across cultures*. US Public Affairs TM.

Neuliep, J. W. (2015). *Intercultural Communication: A contextual approach* (6th ed.). Sage.

Piller, I. (2011). *Intercultural Communication: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.

Rings, G., & Rasinger, S. M (2023). *The Cambridge Introduction to Intercultural Communication (English Edition)*. Cambridge University Press. Edición de Kindle.

Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication, The (2020, 2nd ed.). Jackson, J. (ed.). Routledge.

Shaules, J. (2015). *The Intercultural Mind: Connecting culture, cognition and global living*. Intercultural Press.

Shu, H. (2011, ed.). *The Language and Intercultural Communication Reader*. Routledge.

Sorrells, K. (2022). *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and social justice*. Sage.

Ting-Toomey, S., & Dorjee, T. (2018) *Communicating Across Cultures*. Guildford Press.

Utley, D. (2004). *Intercultural Resource Pack*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zhu, H. (2016; ed.). *Research Methods in Intercultural Communication: A practical guide*. Wiley Blackwell.

OTHER RESOURCES

Moodle campus of the subject

Hofstede Insights at <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/>

Liu et al. (2019) online materials: <https://study.sagepub.com/liu3e>

Neuliep (2015) online materials: <http://edge.sagepub.com/neuliep7e> and <https://edge.sagepub.com/neuliep8e>

Clearly Cultural: <http://clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/individualism/>



APPENDIX: Detailed competences and learning outcomes

Competences – Learning Outcomes		
General skills		
CG1	Ability to think analytically, synthetically and critically in the context of international communication.	
	RA1	<i>Describes, relates and interprets situations and approaches.</i>
	RA2	<i>Selects the most significant elements and their relationships in complex texts.</i>
	RA3	<i>Identify information gaps and establish relationships with external factors.</i>
CG2	Ability to apply the knowledge of communication in international environments.	
	RA1	<i>Can determine the scope and practical utility of theoretical notions.</i>
	RA2	<i>Can correctly identify the knowledge applicable in a given context.</i>
	RA3	<i>Can relate factual knowledge with different professional practices.</i>
	RA4	<i>Can solve real-life practical cases.</i>
CG4	Ability to communicate in writing and speaking in four languages.	
	RA1	<i>Can express ideas in a structured, intelligible</i>



		<i>and convincing way.</i>
	RA2	<i>Can present ideas in front of groups with ease and assurance.</i>
CG6	Ability to think and strategically manage in the context of international communication.	
	RA1	<i>Reflects on the best strategies applicable to each situation.</i>
	RA2	<i>Manages diverse situations dynamically and identifies the knowledge and skills applicable in each case.</i>
	RA3	<i>Identifies and adequately defines the problem and its possible causes, before its effect becomes evident.</i>
	RA4	<i>Suggests possible solutions and designs an action plan for their application.</i>
CG8	Information management skills.	
	RA1	<i>Can retrieve and analyse information from various sources.</i>
	RA2	<i>Displays documentary search strategies.</i>
	RA3	<i>Quotes ad references sources correctly.</i>
	RA4	<i>Incorporates source information into own speech.</i>

	RA5	<i>Handles relevant data-bases.</i>
CG9	Critical and self-critical capacity.	
	RA1	<i>Can analyse own behaviour looking to improve.</i>
	RA2	<i>Accepts constructive criticism of own actions.</i>
	RA3	<i>Identifies incoherence, missing information and problems inherent in a given situation.</i>
CG14	Ability to apply interpersonal skills in professional communication.	
	RA4	<i>Is capable of depersonalizing ideas in group work to achieve goal.</i>
CG20	Capacity for ethical commitment in professional development.	
	RA5	<i>Considers the consequences that a given activity or behaviour may have for others.</i>
Specific skills		
CE3	Understands and analyzes facts and problems related to communication from a "global" perspective (multicultural, multilingual and transnational).	
	RA3	<i>Is aware of cultural differences in the world.</i>
	RA4	<i>Is aware of and analyzes different cultural conventions, social norms and is able to interact in intercultural contexts.</i>

	RA5	<i>Detects and analyzes different forms of idiomatic expression related to different ways of thinking and organizing ideas related to the world languages studied.</i>
	RA6	<i>Can understand and analyze the extent to which cultural and social globalization structurally affect his/her profession.</i>
CE16	Understands and values the importance of communication for interpersonal relationships (verbal and non-verbal communication).	
	RA1	<i>Can distinguish between verbal and non-verbal communication and is aware of its impact on interpersonal relations.</i>
	RA2	<i>Can use verbal and non-verbal resources to maintain adequate and effective interpersonal communication.</i>
	RA3	<i>Can interpret nonverbal language and react and respond appropriately in interpersonal relationships.</i>
	RA4	<i>Can adequately adapt language, gestures, posture, movements and voice to different communicative</i>

		<i>situations in interpersonal relationships.</i>
CE17	Knows and applies the basic parameters of intercultural communication in professional practice.	
	RA1	<i>Knows and applies the basic parameters of intercultural communication.</i>
	RA2	<i>Has developed strategies to relate and communicate effectively in intercultural environments.</i>
	RA3	<i>Recognizes different cultural contexts and uses appropriate language.</i>
	RA4	<i>Detects and analyzes different forms of idiomatic expression related to different ways of thinking and organizing ideas.</i>

Students will be able to:

- Understand and analyze facts and problems related to communication from a "global" perspective (multicultural, multilingual and transnational).
- Understand and value the importance of communication for interpersonal relationships (verbal and non-verbal communication).
- Know and apply the basic parameters of intercultural communication in professional practice.