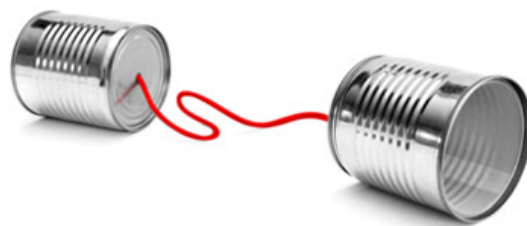


Intercultural Communication



University of Kassel
Hessen International Summer University (ISU)
🏠 Kurt-Wolters-Str. 5
34109 Kassel
Germany
☎ +49 (0) 561 / 804-1869
📠 +49 (0) 561 / 804-7168
✉ isu@uni-kassel.de

In times of a globalizing world where formerly limiting physical boundaries can now easily be overcome, it gets more and more important to also start concentrating on overcoming mostly invisible intercultural boundaries. These kinds of boundaries can be found in the minds of the people, their habits, and also in their outer appearances. Talking about multi-national companies, international cooperation, intercultural teamwork, multi-cultural societies, joint ventures and many more culture-transcending activities, we can perceive that

- (1) the focus on interculturality is often just rhetoric, and
- (2) that these interactions face severe problems that
- (3) often lead to failing cooperation.

Why does this happen? One's own culture is incorporated by every individual, and to the greatest extent, is unconscious, shaped by socialization processes, experiences and knowledge. How can intercultural problems be overcome? The access to usually unconscious feelings, attitudes, and behaviours by reflection and training is a key to understanding one's own perspective and that of others. This is then the starting point for working on gaining intercultural competence. Language is only one key to other cultures, but because we can't learn a hundred foreign languages, we concentrate on extending the knowledge about other cultures and on sensitizing ourselves to other cultures and people.

Thematic Structure:

Definition of Culture

Definition of Communication

Theoretical Background of Intercultural Communication

Examination of Intercultural Etiquette Literature

Cooperative Definition of Intercultural Competence



Method:

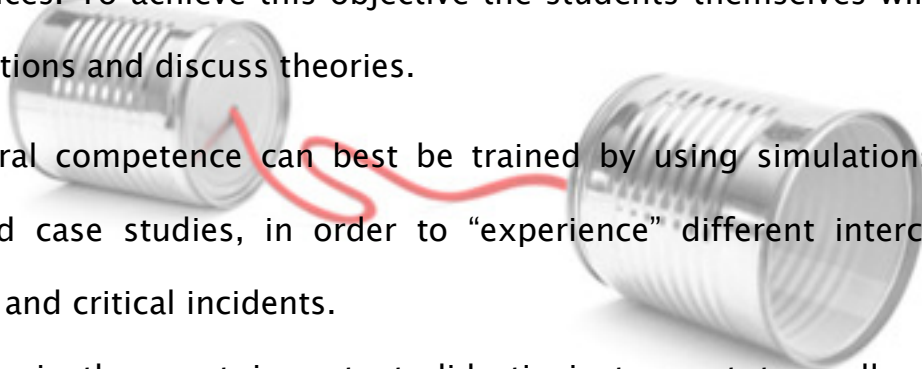
The course will critically examine and discuss existing theories about intercultural communication. Just to name a few, works of Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenars, Edward T. Hall, Alexander Thomas, belong to the theoretical background.

The main feature of this seminar is to develop practical intercultural key competences. To achieve this objective the students themselves will work out definitions and discuss theories.

Intercultural competence can best be trained by using simulations, role plays, and case studies, in order to “experience” different intercultural scenarios and critical incidents.

Interaction is the most important didactic instrument to really arouse intercultural curiosity and to create awareness for “the other”.

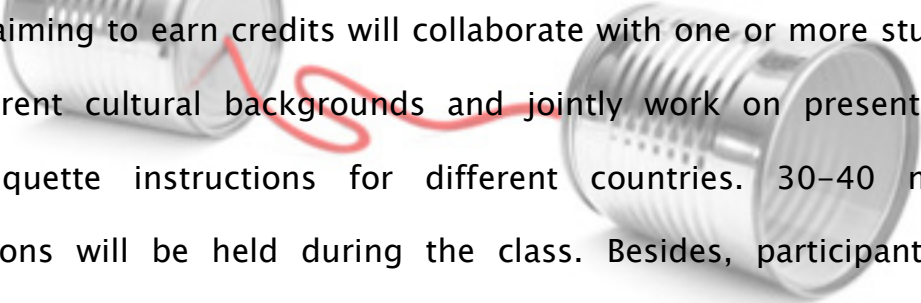
Also, the participants’ individual experiences gained in Germany or in other countries, their coping strategies with unusual situations, will be used to further sensitize themselves for alien phenomena.



Student Profile:

Ideal for students of cultural, political, and social sciences interested in gaining theoretical as well as practical knowledge about intercultural competence. Students from the natural sciences aspiring to work in foreign countries will also find this seminar useful.

Assessment:



Students aiming to earn credits will collaborate with one or more students with different cultural backgrounds and jointly work on presentations about etiquette instructions for different countries. 30–40 minute presentations will be held during the class. Besides, participants can choose to either write an exam, hand in a paper, or work on a practice-oriented project.

Literature:

Scholarly readings constitute an essential basis for this seminar. A course reader with selected readings will be made available at the beginning of the course.



Lecturer:

Dr. Sonia Schoon from the University of Kassel is an expert on intercultural competence. She has degrees in Chinese Studies, European Anthropology and Public Law. She has gained many experiences in foreign countries, studying and working in China for more than three years, and working on short-term basis in six other countries. At present she is leading a cross-cultural research team on urban governance in China, as well as the China Qualification Programme in the University of Kassel. Besides, she works as a consultant for intercultural trainings and Sino-German cooperations.

