
Fall 2015

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STS 2500

Cross-Cultural Engineering

Due Dates

Papers

Paper #1, Version 1	Sept. 11
Paper #1, Revised	Sept. 21
Paper #2, Version 1	Oct. 2
Paper #2, Revised	Oct. 14
Paper #3, Version 1	Nov. 6
Paper #3, Revised	Nov. 16

Peer Reviews

Paper #1	Sept. 13
Paper #2	Oct. 7
Paper #3	Nov. 8

Interview

Transcription/Notes	Oct. 23
Final Version	Oct. 27

Final Paper

Due any time before 5 pm, 12/11

Course Materials

Mahler, Sarah J. 2012. *Culture as Comfort*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Subscription to Scribd.com

All other readings will be available on Collab

Goals

The major goal of the course will be to teach students how to inhabit the “cultural location” of others and then to use that experience to reflect on their own cultural locations. This goal grew out of the idea that engineering problem solving requires attention to cultural differences. People from different cultural backgrounds (and even different traditions of engineering) define problems in different ways and may seek different kinds of solutions. We cannot immerse ourselves in a different cultural world here, but we can use readings, discussions, in-class exercises, and structured reflection to first immerse ourselves in a different point of view and then step back and learn from it.

Through this process of immersion and reflection, students will:

- 1) develop awareness of variation between peoples;
- 2) develop awareness of variation within cultures;
- 3) explore variation specifically in engineering problem definition and solution;
- 4) recognize the value of acknowledging differing cultural perspectives in solving engineering problems;
- 5) learn how to reflect on how their own goals, abilities and actions might be seen from another’s perspective; and
- 6) synthesize each of these aspects to engineer in a culturally intelligent way.

Expectations

I expect you to participate actively in the course. Put differently, I want you to be “present.” I do not mean merely showing up, but rather being mindful of the topics under discussion, the readings and exercises, and your own cultural location. Mindful presence requires that you prepare for class before coming (by doing the reading and the other assigned work), and that in class you to attend to the people around you, to what they are saying, how they might be feeling, and so on. In addition, it requires attending to yourself, what is actually going on with you at the moment, what you are thinking, and why you might be thinking that. A different term for this self-attention is reflexivity, and it is key to cross-cultural interaction and understanding. The only way to develop the ability to interact effectively across cultural boundaries is to be aware of your own patterns of thinking and acting. To encourage mindful presence in class, we will begin each class period with a short mindfulness meditation or other exercise.

Course Grading

Papers 1-3	7 points each
Peer Reviews 1-3	3 points each
Discussion Leading	7 points
Interview and Write-up	10 points
Eng. Cultures Townhall	8 points
Final Paper	15 points
Reflection Journal	15 points
Participation	15 points
Total	100 points

Expectations (Continued)

My expectation for myself -- my commitment to you -- is also to be mindfully present for the classroom time, office hours, grading, and other interactions that we have.

Assignments

There is a range of assignments, each meant to address some different aspect of the course learning goals. I offer brief descriptions below, but a more detailed description of each assignment will be provided in advance of the due date.

All assignments will be submitted and returned via Collab.

3 Short Papers

Writing is like any other skill: the only way you become good at it is through practice. Further, the best practice involves writing and revising. Since you need experience not just writing your work, but also revising it, you will write three papers that will go through two revisions, based on comments from your peers (and from me). Ideally, you would go through multiple revisions with editorial feedback, but we will only have time for one round of review for each paper. (Note that this does not mean that you can only write one draft. You should go through multiple drafts to get to each version.)

You will write three papers of around 1,000 – 1,200 words each (3 ½ - 4 ½ pages). For each paper you will submit an initial (complete and polished!) version for peer review. Based on the reviewer's comments, you will then revise the paper and submit a final version 1 week later. Generally, you will have two weeks to complete the initial version, and a week to submit the revised version.

Peer Review of Writing

Critiquing others' writing can boost your own writing ability. You also should learn to comment helpfully and substantively on others' work. At the same time, your peer review will provide valuable writing experience to your colleagues. The logistics of this exercise will seem complex at first, but will work smoothly once we get going.

Small In-Class Writing Exercises

In addition to the papers and the peer review, we will have short in-class writing exercises that focus on some aspect of clear writing. These will not be graded, but your participation in them will be noted.

Reading and Reflection Journal

You will keep a journal in which you will reflect on the readings and the class activities. I will collect 5 or 6 randomly chosen journals at the BEGINNING of class each Wednesday to read and respond to. You will be assessed for participation only. The entire goal here (aside from getting you to do the reading) is to give you a venue in which you can bounce the readings off of your own life. I will distribute a how-to guide for this.

Assignments (Continued)

Discussion Leading/Cultural Exercise

“You never learn something as well as you do when you have to teach it.” This truism fits well with my experience, so I would like you to have this experience as well. It also presents an opportunity for a change of pace in the classroom. You will read the course material with a different set of eyes (and ideas) than mine, so you will present material to the class quite differently than I would. This variation in perspective helps everyone learn, including myself. The assignment, then, will be for you to present one of the readings to the class and begin the discussion.

Interview

You will interview some engineer who has extensive international experience, with the hope that you can see how engineers actually do work across cultural boundaries.

Engineering Cultures Role-Playing

The final activity in the classroom will be an extended role-playing exercise in which you will have to perform as an engineer trained in a different tradition.

Final Paper

The final exam will be a summative reflective paper. It will be due anytime after the last class, but the absolute deadline is December 17, at Noon.

Evaluation

Grading

I will evaluate your performance based on your writing, your performance (and “presence”) in class, and your constructive interactions with your peers

Academic Honesty and Generosity

An academic community requires that its members engage in their work with both honesty and generosity. I expect you to share your thoughts and advice freely with others, but I also expect that you do your own work. Instances of academic dishonesty will be handled at my discretion.

Attendance

You should attend every class, unless you have a good excuse not to come. If you do miss a class, you need to email me beforehand to let me know the reason why. If you miss more than 3 classes, you will lose half a letter grade for every absence beyond those three.

Revisions

Note that this syllabus is subject to revision, please refer to the latest copy posted on Collab,

Schedule

Section	Day	Topic/Theme	Reading	Assignment
Cultural Beings	26-Aug	Welcome & Orientation	Mahler, <i>Culture as Comfort</i> , chapter 1	
	31-Aug	Growing into a Cultural Being	Mahler, Chapters 2 & 3	
	2-Sep	Integrating into Groups	Mahler, Chapter 4	
	7-Sep	Encountering "Others" and the Question of Structure	Mahler, Chapter 5	
	9-Sep	What to Do about This?	Mahler, Chapter 6	Paper #1 -- Due Fri to Peer
	14-Sep	Sociotechnical Systems and Cross-Cultural Encounters	Excerpts from Pfaffenberger and from Subramaniam	Review Comments Due Sunday Midnight, for review in class Monday
How Culture Shapes Us	16-Sep	Progress and Time	Sears & Cairns, "Making Time: Clocking Social Relations"	
	21-Sep	Local Views of Progress, seen through technology	Sahlins, "The Original Affluent Society," from <i>Stone Age Economics</i>	Revised Paper #1 -- Due Mon
			Wetmore, "Amish Technology: Reinforcing Values and Building Community,"	
	23-Sep	Communication: Beyond Translation	Tannen, "The Workings of Conversational Style" from <i>That's Not What I Meant!</i>	
			Tannen, "Pragmatics of Cross-Cultural Communication"	
	28-Sep	How Interaction can go wrong	Basso, <i>Portraits of "The Whiteman,"</i> Chapters 3 & 4	
	30-Sep	Individualism and Hierarchy	Read: Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , Vol. 2, excerpts	Paper #2 -- Due Friday to Peer
5-Oct	READING DAY, NO CLASS			
7-Oct	TBA			Peer Review Comments Due Wed
12-Oct	Reciprocity as a Key to Sociality	Read: Excerpt from Monaghan & Just, from <i>Anthropology: A Very Short Introduction</i>		
		Read: Piot, "Exchange," from <i>Remotely Global</i>		
14-Oct	Global Forces in Local Places	Read: Ferguson, "Globalizing Africa?," from <i>Global Shadows</i>	Revised Paper #2 -- Due Wed	
Case: Bali	19-Oct	Cultural Context: The Green Revolution & Balinese Ecology	Lansing, <i>Priests & Programmers</i> , Chapters 2 & 6	

Cultures of Engineering	21-Oct	Religious & Social Context: From Water Temples to Sociogenesis	Lansing, <i>Priests & Programmers</i> , Chapter 3 and Conclusion	Interview Transcription/Notes Due Friday
	26-Oct	Introducing Engineering Cultures	Read: Downey, "Low Cost, Mass Use,"	
	28-Oct	Interview Debrief	Reading: Assigned Chapters from Downey Book	Interview Due Tues at 5
	2-Nov	Enculturation into the Engineering Workplace	Kunda, <i>Engineering Culture</i> , excerpts	
	4-Nov	Engineering Identities in the Workplace	TBA	Paper #3 -- Due Fri to Peer
	9-Nov	Global Engineering Case: Mobile Telephony in Nigeria	Odumosu	Review Comments Due Sunday Midnight, for review in class Monday
	11-Nov	Global Engineering Case: Boeing Dreamliner	TBA	
	16-Nov	TBA		Revised Paper #3 -- Due Mon
	18-Nov	Bridging the Gap: Appropriate Technology	Read: Akubue, "Appropriate Technology for Development in Third World Countries"	
			Watch: Frontline/World, "Play Pump,"	
	23-Nov	Engineering and Sustainable Community Development	Read: Lucena et al, Chp. 4 & 5	
	25-Nov	Engineering Cultures Work Session		
	30-Nov	Engineering Cultures Townhall		
	2-Dec	Engineering Cultures Townhall		
7-Dec	Closing: On Cultivating Cultural Intelligence			
11-Dec	Final Exam Period 2-5 pm, Final paper due			