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Global Studies Initiative Faculty Report: Interdisciplinary Collaborations

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Global Studies Initiative

Parkland College, AY 2020–2021



Aims of Global Studies Initiative: Parkland’s Global Studies Initiative promotes the addition to Parkland’s courses of instructional materials on global issues with a focus on the European Union, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia, and East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. Further, it aims to provide faculty with instructional design tools and aid them with the implementation of new course materials in the classroom.

Global Studies Initiative Faculty Report: Interdisciplinary Collaborations

Faculty Name: Leanne Cunningham

Courses Taught (course name(s), section number): COM 120 Interpersonal Communication

Please answer the following questions to complete this report:

1. Please describe an assignment or class material covered in your course that teaches students about global issues or, better yet, teaches them about the areas of the world covered in this initiative: the European Union, Eastern Europe, Russia, Eurasia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. You can attach the assignment rubric, instructions, and/or syllabus or course schedule to this report if you wish. If you have no current materials or assignments dealing with global issues, describe an idea you have for a new assignment or course material you wish to adopt.

Please see the attached lesson plan, which has been copied at the end of this report.

A person’s cultural background impacts many aspects of their communication behavior. In the Interpersonal Communication course, we first examine some basic principles of culture, focusing on key values that influence a culture’s communication norms. Then as we proceed through the course, we examine various aspects of interpersonal communication (language, nonverbal behavior, conflict, relationships, etc.) and discuss how our culture may affect our behaviors in those arenas.

2. Parkland College faculty have developed six general learning outcomes to help students acquire essential skills, knowledge, and values that will serve them in their future careers. The Global Awareness and Ethical Reasoning outcome states that *students will demonstrate an understanding of global issues, gender and sexual orientation, multicultural perspectives, and/or the role of ethical core values in making personal, social, academic, and professional decisions*. Please reflect on how the assignment or materials you described in the previous question contributes to this learning outcome or could be modified to better fit this outcome.

This lesson introduces concepts of culture and co-culture and encourages students to look at the ways that communication behavior is affected by a person's cultural background as well as the co-cultures with which they are affiliated. Some of the many co-cultures that may be present in a society are defined by gender, sexual orientation, religion, occupation, etc. Students will have the opportunity to discuss co-cultures that are part of their identity and recognize that their peers are members of many different co-cultures. The *Grey's Anatomy* video clips used in the lesson depict a cultural belief system that may be unfamiliar to many students, and may even strike them as strange. The lesson is designed to help adopt strategies that enable them to communicate effectively with people whose cultures may be very different from their own.

3. How do you think learning about global issues and other areas of the world benefits your students in your field of study or discipline?

I believe that a vital benefit of attending college is the opportunity to meet people who are different from those in a student's "home" community. I typically ask students at the beginning of the course to identify course objectives that are unfamiliar to them; many students tell me that they lack intercultural communication skills mostly because they haven't met many (or any) people outside of their own culture. I also believe that learning about other areas of the world promotes critical thinking, empathy, and cognitive complexity—all of which are important characteristics of competent communicators.

4. Do you believe your course could benefit from more interdisciplinary collaborations on global issues participating, for instance, in some of the collaborative teaching initiatives presented by your group in your joint report? Explain your answer.

Working with this group has exposed me to some new ideas and resources that I am excited to include in my teaching. I absolutely welcome more opportunities to collaborate with faculty from disciplines across the college.

Thank you very much for participating in the Global Studies Initiative and completing this report!

COM 120: Interpersonal Communication

Lesson Module: Introduction to Culture in Interpersonal Communication

Leanne M. Cunningham, Instructor

Relevant Course Goals:

- A. (COM 120) Practice communicating across cultures and co-cultures and develop greater awareness of how culture impacts both verbal and nonverbal communication at work and in everyday life.
- B. (COM 120) Apply vocabulary and conceptual framework to the interpersonal communication process; know and practice the elements of competent communication
- C. (PC) The Global Awareness and Ethical Reasoning outcome states that students will demonstrate an understanding of global issues, gender and sexual orientation, multicultural perspectives, and/or the role of ethical core values in making personal, social, academic, and professional decisions.
- D. (PC) Civic Engagement and Global Awareness: Demonstrate an understanding of worldwide political, social, behavioral, environmental, and economic issues and ideas, as well as historical, cultural, and geographical perspectives. Demonstrate ethical core values in making personal, social, academic, and professional decisions.

Specific Learning Objectives:

1. Identify key values that influence a culture's communication norms (high/low context, individualism/collectivism, high/low power distance, uncertainty avoidance, achievement/nurturing). (A, B)
2. Describe the ways that a person's verbal and nonverbal behavior may be influenced by their culture or co-culture's key values. (A, B, C, D)
3. Identify similarities and differences between the student's culture and co-culture and those of their peers. (C, D)
4. Apply standards for competent intercultural communication to evaluate the behavior of characters in a case study. (A, B, C, D)

Lesson Plan:

Note: I plan to teach this concept using a "flipped classroom" model, in which students will receive "lecture" material via video that they will watch as homework, and class time will be used for discussions and activities to clarify and reinforce course concepts.

This module will be taught in the third week of the (16-week) course, and the basic concepts of the module will come up repeatedly throughout the course as we discuss specific topics in interpersonal communication.

In class (Day 1 of module):

- Introduction to basic concepts of culture using a modified version of this resource from the Peace Corps: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/defining-culture/> and https://www.peacecorps.gov/educators/resources/americans/?_ga=2.43545126.2016190771.1623170661-129204993.1623170661
- We will also discuss the concept of co-cultures and I will encourage students to list and share the co-cultures that they consider themselves to be part of.

Homework Assignment:

- Short video lecture describing the following cultural values and norms: high/low context, individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, achievement/nurturing. Students will be asked to watch the video and prepare notes to bring to class with them on Day 2 of the module.

In Class (Day 2 of module):

- Discuss questions from the video lecture and clarify any misunderstandings.
- Discuss qualities of intercultural communication competence (which students should have read in their text prior to class): motivation/attitude, tolerance for ambiguity, open-mindedness and knowledge/skill (passive observation, active strategies, self-disclosure).
- Show 2 clips from “Gray’s Anatomy”: <https://youtu.be/akrYIJyMuB8>, <https://youtu.be/gLaK6RP9-9g> and https://youtu.be/6HTynK9oj_Q. These clips depict the story of a young woman who is Hmong and needs surgery to address a serious medical condition. Her father does not approve of the procedure, and the patient talks about her culture’s rules and beliefs. The doctors arrange a shaman to perform a ritual prior to the surgery, which earns the father’s approval.
- Ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups:
 - Discuss the customs and behaviors you observed in the doctor and the patient's family. Be specific in mentioning cultural norms and values.
 - Evaluate the intercultural communication competence of the patient, her father and the doctors.