



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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COM 272 04 Spring 2026- Communication, Culture and Difference in American Society
School of Communication
3 Credit Hours

Course Information

Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:35 am-10:50 am

Location: Fell Hall 176

Mode: *In person*

Instructor Information

Instructor: Professor Blessing Okafor

Email: beokafo@ilstu.edu (the best way to reach me)

Office: Fell Hall 411

Student Hours: T/TR 11 am –noon (in person, zoom or by appointment if the time does not work for you)

Zoom Link: <https://illinoisstate.zoom.us/j/99748732566?pwd=MQiwiqB79Ksw7z6yuSe2SNx5rhM6NJ.1>

Catalog Description

Concepts related to living within an equitable, inclusive, and diverse America, including aspects of communication regarding specific identities (racial, sex/gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, age, and intersectionality); tolerance and appreciation (prejudice, discrimination, implicit bias); and considerations of privilege, with a focus on dialogue and civic and political engagement.

Course Description

This course delves into the critical concepts of living within an equitable, inclusive, and diverse America, focusing on understanding and navigating the complexities of identity, communication, and social dynamics. Students will explore key aspects of identity—including race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, and age—and examine how these identities intersect to shape individual and collective experiences.

Through a combination of critical readings, reflective writing, group discussions, and case studies, and real world scenarios students will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that come with living in a diverse society. The course emphasizes the development of skills necessary for engaging in constructive dialogue and taking meaningful action toward social justice.

Students will have the opportunity to apply these concepts in real-world contexts, fostering active participation in creating a more inclusive and equitable community. This course prepares students to thoughtfully engage with the complexities of identity and diversity, both within and beyond the classroom, and encourages them to become informed and responsible members of an increasingly diverse world

Learning Outcome

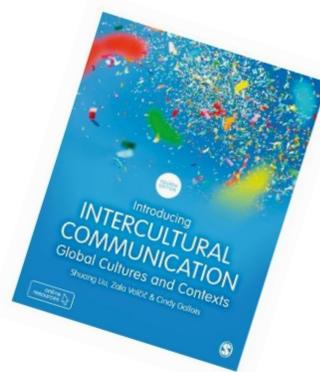
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Recognize and analyze how different aspects of identity (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, and age) intersect and influence individual and collective experiences in society
2. Critically examine the challenges and opportunities that arise in a diverse society, especially regarding communication and social interactions across different identities.
3. Develop the skills to participate in respectful and productive discussions about identity, culture, and social justice
4. Use your understanding of identity and diversity to actively contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable community.
5. Learn to apply concepts related to identity, diversity, and inclusion in real-world scenarios, actively participating in efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable community.
6. Integrate insights from critical readings, reflective writing, group discussions, and case studies to form a well-rounded understanding of communication, culture, and difference in American society.

*For [a tentative schedule](#) of what we will cover each week, please see the weekly schedule *at the end of this syllabus*.

Required Texts & Materials

1. **Textbook:** Liu, S., Volcic, Z., & Gallois, C. (2023). *Introducing Intercultural Communication: Global Cultures and Contexts*. Sage Publication



**Other resources will be provided if necessary*

Grading Policies

Assessment Breakdown

Assignment	Percentage/Points of Final Grade
Information and planning form	10points
Class Participation/Engagement Points	110points
Readiness Assessment Tests (RAT)	100points 10@ 10 points each,
Team-Led Class Discussion and Application of Course Concepts	50 points
Midterm Exam	100 points
Cultural Difference Analysis Project	200 points
Team Presentations on Cultural Difference Analysis Project	100 points
Peer Performance Evaluation	30 points
Total	700

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

A: 630 - 700 points (90% - 100%)

- B. 560-629 points (80-89%)
- C. 490-559 points (70-79%)
- D. 420-489 points (60-69%)
- F. Below 420 (Below 60%)

Meaning of Grades

- A: Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. This work is superior in every respect and represents the highest level of achievement. Its quality is good enough that even though there is still room for improvement, it would be unreasonable to expect a college student to do better.
- B: Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Not only were all the basic expectations met, they exceeded minimum expected quality levels. This work demonstrated one or more of the following characteristics: excellent understanding of the class material, excellent application of theory to practice, unusual thoroughness in thought and preparation.
- C: Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect. This score does not indicate any shortcoming. All the work was done adequately and completely, and the work showed basic understanding and mastery of the course material.
- D: Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it does not meet course requirements. While there was merit to what was done, there were also deficiencies that meant the work did not fully meet the minimal expectations.
- F: Represents performance that fails to meet the course requirements and is unworthy of credit. This work shows serious deficiencies in regard to the expectations for the assignment.

Note: This course includes topics such as identity, gender, race, power, and sexuality as part of established scholarly frameworks in communication studies. These materials are presented for academic inquiry and critical analysis in alignment with university learning goals; students are encouraged to engage thoughtfully and are free to form their own perspectives.

Assignments

Readiness Assessment Tests – RAT-(10 @ 10 pts each) 100pts:

We will have 10 Readiness Assessment Tests corresponding to the 10 chapters out of 15 chapters in the course. Each RAT will be available for 96 hours, (4 days), but you will have 30 minutes to complete it once started. The purpose of these RATs (Readiness Assessment Tests) is to ensure you come to class well-prepared for discussions and activities, and to assess your understanding of the material. RATs **MUST** be completed individually and are due 9:35 am before class time. All the RAT's are open note/book. ***Please note that late RATs or uncompleted RATs will not be accepted, as they are crucial for class preparation and participation. This assignment CAN NOT be made up.***

Class Participation/Discussions and Activities: 110pts

This class will be discussion-based, so active participation is essential. I expect everyone to come to class prepared and ready to engage with the readings and related topics. Our classes thrive when we approach them as a team effort, creating a collaborative and dynamic learning environment.

You can earn up to 110 points for your contributions to weekly discussions. Active participation means

speaking up in each class, sharing your thoughts and relevant experiences, asking questions, and contributing meaningfully to the conversation, and demonstrating respect for diverse perspectives. Engaging in this way will not only enhance your learning experience but also make the class more enjoyable for you. If you find yourself struggling to understand a theory, idea, or assignment, please don't hesitate to ask questions in class. For those who are more reserved, feel free to reach out to me during student hours or via email. Your participation should add value to the collective learning experience for the entire class.

Team-Led Discussion and Application Task @50 points:

Your team will be responsible for leading a class discussion or application activity that connects theories or topics from the course that was covered on the assigned week to current events or a real-world context, either within or outside the USA. This task is designed to deepen your engagement with the course material by applying it in a practical and relevant way. Feel free to think outside the box (**see canvas for detail**)

Mid-Semester Exam @ 100

This course includes one exam, scheduled for **Week 8**. The exam will draw on material from both the **textbook** and **in-class discussions**. It may include a combination of **multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and short-answer or essay questions**.

Cultural Difference Analysis Project (300 points total)

This scaffolded project helps students apply intercultural communication theories to real-world contexts in American society by analyzing how cultural difference is communicated in specific contexts. Students will progress step-by-step: first proposing a case, then developing a full paper, and finally collaborating to present their findings to the class

- Proposal (50 pts): Students select a robust cultural or media artifact and explain its significance and relevance for analyzing communication and difference.
- Final Paper (150 pts): A 10-page APA-style paper applying at least two course concepts or theories to evaluate how communication constructs and contests cultural differences. Students must integrate course readings and credible outside sources.
- Team Presentation (100 pts): Groups present their cases at the end of the semester, sharing findings through visuals, media clips, and class discussion.

Peer Performance Evaluation, 30 pts:

You will be evaluated by your fellow group members on your performance and team work through the semester. The evaluation prompts will be made available on Canvas. Failing to complete a peer evaluation on your fellow group members will receive a "0" score for the assignment, regardless of feedback from your peers.

Adjustments to Syllabus

I have the right to alter the syllabus to accommodate the needs of this classroom community and will provide students with advanced notice of any changes through canvass announcement which overrides what was initially stated in the syllabus. Be sure to check Canvas for updated versions of the syllabus/course schedule. **All major announcements are made in class.**

Dates and topics may be adjusted as needed

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Please note that assigned readings may be updated or revised as the course progresses.

Week	Dates	Class Topic	Readings	Important Deadlines
Week 1	Tue. Jan 13	Course introduction, syllabus review, academic integrity, AI use in the course	No readings	
	Thur. Jan 15	Intercultural Communication in a Global Community	Chapter 1	
Week 2	Tue. Jan 20	Culture and People/Communication and Culture	Chapters 2 and 3	Readiness Assessment Test 1 (RAT 1)
	Thu. Jan 22	Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context in or outside USA)		
Week 3	Tue. Jan 27	Perception and Categorization	Chapter 4	RAT 2
	Thu. Jan. 29	Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context in or outside USA)	See Discussion/Application Document on canvas	
Week 4	Tues. Feb. 3	Value Orientation and Behavior	Chapter 5	RAT 3
	Thur. Feb. 5	Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context in or outside USA)	Group 1	

Week 5	Tue. Feb. 10	Identities and Subgroups	Chapter 6	RAT 4
	Thu. Feb 12	FINAL PROJECT REVIEWS/CLASS CHECK-IN		
Week 6	Tues. Feb 17	Verbal Communication and Culture/Non verbal Communication and Culture	Chapters 7 and 8	RAT 5
	Thurs Feb 19	Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context in or outside USA)	Group 2	
Week 7	Tues.Feb 24	Business and Culture	Chapter 9	RAT 6
	Thur. Feb 26	Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context in or outside USA)	Group 3	
Week 8	Tues Mar 3	Difference matters: race, ethnicity, and social class		
	Thurs.Mar 5	Midterm Exam	In class	
Week 9	Tues. Mar 10 -15	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASSES	
Week 10	Tues. Mar 17	Difference matters: sexuality, gender identity, power/privilege	Reading on canvas	RAT 7
	Thurs. Mar 19	Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context in or outside USA)	Group 4	
Week 11	Tues. Mar 24	Prejudice, Discrimination, and Implicit bias	Reading on canvas	RAT 8
	Thurs. Mar 26	Phase 1 of Cultural Difference Analysis Project	Workday	Phase 1 Due tonight

Week 12	Tues. Mar. 31	Intercultural and intergroup relations	Chapter 11	RAT 9
	Thurs. Apr 2	NO CLASS	DR OKAFOR AT CONFERENCE	
Week 13	Tues. Apr 7	Immigration and Acculturation	Chapter 10	RAT 10
	Thurs. Apr 9	Discussion/Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context)	Group 5	
Week 14	Tues. Apr 14	Media and cultural change	Chapter 12	
	Thurs. Apr 16	Discussion/Practical Application (linking theory/topic to current events or applied context)	Group 6	
Week 15	Tues. Apr 21	Phase 2: Final Case Analysis & Recommendations	Work day	
	Thu. Apr 23	Group Presentations		
Week 16	Tues. Apr 28	Group présentations		
	Thu Apr 30	Group présentations		
	Finals Week	TBD		<i>Final paper Submission due @midnight</i>

*Jan. 26: Last day to drop course from schedule without penalty

*Feb 6 : Last day to drop a full-semester course and receive partial adjustment of charges

*April 10: Last day to drop a full semester course for a WX grade

*Research Extra Credit through: [SoC Research Announcement Board \(google.com\)](#)

Other readings on canvas