Cross-Cultural Communication

Summer 2017
Copenhagen
3 Credits

Study Tour: Belfast/Dublin


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Course Description

How do we communicate and collaborate with other cultures in a global age? As the world moves economically, technologically and culturally towards closer integration, what happens when people with different worldviews and communicative styles suddenly have to live and work together?

In this core class on cross-cultural communication, we will draw theory and methodology from fields as diverse as communication, journalism, anthropology, history, sociology and cultural studies to examine cultural and related differences in verbal and non-verbal communication. We will investigate how misunderstandings and conflicts are created and can be resolved.

We will analyze pictures, advertisements, murals and humor as forms of communication that simultaneously offend and open conversations about controversial subjects such as politics, race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion.

Our classes will be based on theoretical readings and analyses of various types of communication: Verbally, through articles, legislation, political speeches, street art and TV-series as well as non-verbally through symbols, clothing and gestures. We will observe and experience Danish society and invite guests from relevant professions to class interviews as well as go on field trips to explore Copenhagen and its majority and minority cultures. We will also directly experience cross-cultural communication by collaborating with people from other cultures to produce texts and multimedia products.

The course will not only follow ongoing debates in Denmark and study the challenges that the ‘homogenous’ Danish culture faces integrating other ethnicities. Additionally, we will travel to Northern Ireland to observe first-hand how sectarian groups communicate their beliefs, and how the symbolic landscape of the city itself expresses divides between people caught in a long-standing conflict.

This syllabus is subject to change.
In summary, the class will include a mix of discussions, workshops and field studies. If you have ambitions of a travelling life, a career in an international environment or a future in trade, communications, journalism or politics, this course will give you the opportunity to gain theoretically founded awareness, practical tools and personal experiences to benefit you in future encounters with our multicultural reality.

**Learning Objectives**
- Experience how speech, texts, images and behaviors are shaped by cultures and interpreted through your own cultural lens
- Identify and negotiate the obstacles to effective communication across cultures
- Explore Denmark, and Northern Ireland as case studies for critical analysis of how cultures are communicated verbally and non-verbally
- Experience the challenges and benefits of cross cultural communication first hand when producing written and multi-media projects for specific audiences and in collaboration with people from other cultures
- Demonstrate mastery of course material and reflect on how it applies to your own life and communication

**Core Course Instructor**
**Brendan Sweeney**  
Ph.D. (Political Science, National University of Ireland, Galway, 2005), M.A. (Cand.mag.) (Media Studies, University of Copenhagen, 1999), NCTJ Certificate in Journalism (Rathmines College of Journalism, Dublin, 1982). Worked as journalist for many years in different European countries.

**Study tours: Northern Ireland and Dublin, Rep. of Ireland**  
The course is integrated with a study tour week in Ireland, North and South.

**Course Culture**  
Since this is a communications course, the classroom culture will be workshop-oriented with open discussions, debates and creative practices rather than traditional lectures. All students will participate in framing and sharing knowledge and experiences from our readings and study tours. Although I will set an agenda for meetings, I encourage you to share your own ideas, opinions and observations with the class and engage with others doing the same, so that the classroom will become an open forum for vivid discussions and progressive learning.

**Required Readings**  
Selected texts as well as various readings online on Canvas. The texts will always be given to you with enough time to prepare.

It is important and mandatory to read all required material prior to class time in order to get the full benefit from classes.

**Grading**  
Remember not to let grades deter you from taking intellectual risks and to learn just for the fun of learning. Grades are not a punishment or a reward for a certain behavior but an honest assessment of your academic performance at this moment in time. Grades will be uploaded to Grade Center on Canvas.

**Participation in general:** 25%, includes Facebook entries, notes from field studies and presentation of the cross cultural communication project. Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled classes and field studies.

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Each unexcused absence will result in deduction of half a letter grade. **This includes regular class sessions, evening events, and field studies, as well as guest lectures.**

Before class: You are expected to complete the required readings, films, and videos, as well as to engage in our Facebook group.

During class: Classes will be very hands on and you are expected to bring your talent, experience and thoughts to the table.

Late Policy: If you arrive in class 10+ minutes late, or leave before the class has ended, you will be counted as absent for that day.

There are two parts to the grade:

1. You must post to our Facebook group in accordance with your instructor’s requirements. This could be a question, a response to a discussion, link to an article including an entry, video, images, notes from field studies, sharing ideas and topics in relation to the readings or other resources on the theme of the course. The aim is to have this be a quick and easy way for us to build a class resource of sharing information and inspiring one another. Prior to most classes, you have to post at least one comment and/or one question that can be discussed in class (10%).

2. Active and verbal participation in theoretically informed class discussions, activities, field studies and in-class exercises: You will be asked - individually or with partners in the class - to lead assigned tasks e.g. presentations, discussions and activities during the semester. The grades of these activities will be accumulated in your participation grade (10%).

**Assignment 1/ CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION - A PICTURE SAYS MORE THAN A THOUSAND WORDS**

25 %

Write a 3-4 page thesis driven paper based on a picture you have taken or seen related to cross cultural communication between a majority and minority culture in Denmark or Sweden.

**Assignment 2/ A FIELD REPORT**

Write an article and take a photograph that relates to cross-cultural communication and conflict. Analyze how the communication you have observed in Belfast reflects cultural norms in the way it is verbally and non-verbally constructed and in the way it is perceived. Submit a 2-page article and 2 pages of reflections on your writing.

**Assignment 3/ MY VIEW OF DENMARK - COLLABORATION AND REPORTING ON DANISH CULTURE: 25%**

Develop a media project on an aspect of life in Denmark in collaboration with other students and reflect on how your own culture affects the collaboration and the outcome.

**Attendance**

You are expected to attend all classes, guest lectures, field studies, and study tours. If you miss a class for religious or medical reasons let me know in advance and make sure you obtain information about the work you must do to keep up in class. If you miss a class for any reason without giving notice beforehand, you must get in touch with me as soon as possible to arrange to make up for the work missed. If classes are missed unexcused, you will be contacted by phone or mail and your work in the class may be compromised or even jeopardized.

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Paper Policy
It is crucial for your learning that you stay on task and hand in assignments on or before the due date. All work - including in-class projects - has to be completed in order to pass. Late work will be deducted at a third of a grade point per day.

Guest lectures and field studies may include:

- Guest speakers involved in cross-cultural communications
- Media organizations with a direct input to cross-cultural communications
- People from minority groups in Denmark or Sweden
Class Schedule

The schedule is likely to change to reflect the needs of the class.

1/
Introduction to the course
Getting to know each other and an introduction to the course objectives and methodology: Student presentations of readings, constant reflections, and debates about key questions.

*The class will be divided into groups and introduce each other.*

We will also talk about your hopes, interests and expectations for the semester.

Consider your hopes, interests and expectations beforehand.

**Class objective:** Getting to know each other + Mapping our mutual expectations.


2/
Identity and Culture: Who are you, and what is your culture? Who are the Danes and what is their culture?

**Class objectives:**

1) Getting to understand the complexity of the term "culture," and why an awareness of your own is so important in the meeting with others'.

We discuss how we can use anthropological questions to "peel the onion" so that you get to know the norms and values behind customs, behaviors and words of people from other cultures, as well as realizing how we can avoid creating stereotypes.

2) Non-Verbal Communication & Language as Medium


3/
"Us and Them": The discourse of "The Others"
We discuss how the majority culture frames minority cultures with examples from Danish media.

**Readings:** *The Other*, Ryszard Kapuscinski, 2008, p. 1-92 (NOTE: It’s a small book with big letters)

**Class objective:** We will discuss how "the other" is used to reinforce our own culture, and how this construction affects the way we communicate and determines power relations.

**Field Study Tour:** We will visit the Islamic Community Centre at Dortheavej Mosque and meet Imran Shah to hear about the challenges facing the Muslim community in Denmark.

4/
Communication between minority and majority cultures – Northern Ireland as case study.
We focus on the theme for our study tour week and take a critical look at the history and current situation of the interethnic conflict in Northern Ireland.

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Cross-Cultural Communication | DIS
Readings: *The Cultures of Rhetoric*, Robert Shutter, Marquette University, in "Perspectives on Rhetoric and Communication", p. 11-17
*Identity and Culture: Situating the Individual*, Larry Samovar et al, p 232-243

Class objective: Get ready for study tour week, and achieve an understanding of exactly how important ethics are in all matters of cross-cultural communication.

Getting ready for Ireland:
We will watch the documentary "Petrol bombs and Peace: Welcome to Belfast" in the DIS Library Cinema. We will be given an introduction to the conflict in Northern Ireland through the eyes of a young BBC reporter with Catholic roots, and we will discuss objectivity and bias after watching the documentary.

5/
Framing the conflict in Northern Ireland:
Based on our readings we will discuss in depth the situation in Northern Ireland and how it relates to other cross-cultural communication problems including inter-ethnic tensions in Denmark. Role play and identities. Prepare to defend your new ethno-religious identity in class.

Readings:
*Symbols and identity in the "new" Northern Ireland*, Dominic Bryan and Gillian McIntosh, 2006, p. 126-137

Guest Lecturer: Gerard McCurley, who grew up on the Falls Road in Belfast, one of the main flashpoints for the conflict in Northern Ireland, where there were regular battles between the IRA and the British Army, recounts his experiences and opens up for a wider discussion.

A detailed program for the study tour will follow closer to departure

**LONG STUDY TOUR: NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Dublin – Belfast**
We will hold a study tour orientation *in class* to brief you on the academic visits and logistics of the tour. Note that it is mandatory to travel with the group to Ireland. However, you may choose to travel on your own following the conclusion of our program, although this will be at your own expense and it is expected that you are in class the following Monday.

6/
After Ireland: Communicating Nationalism and Ethnic Identity. The symbols, structures and grand narratives forming national identities that people are willing to die for.
Readings: *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, p. 18-26, Bruce Lincoln
*Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson, p. 187-206 (*Memory and Forgetting*)

Class objective: We will discuss how Bruce Lincoln and Benedict Anderson explain the importance of...
national identity and symbols and how this can be used to get a deeper understanding of conflicted communication in Northern Ireland. We will discuss Lincoln’s theory of discourse and how it applies to Northern Ireland. Everyone in class get to pitch their article ideas for immediate feedback followed by class discussion.

Prepare a one minute presentation with one clear burning question concerning cross cultural communication in a conflict zone accompanied by a matching picture from Northern Ireland. Everyone will pitch article ideas and plans to their fellow students.

7/
Understanding the culture of the media and its framing of "the other"
Readings: Regulating Sympathy for the Muslim Man, Evelyn Alsultany, p. 100-131

Class objective: We discuss what a frame is, how it is constructed and how it affects our view of the world. We also ask ourselves: If we understand the frames - will it enhance our cross cultural communication?

FIELD STUDY: Walking tour of Nørrebro. Somali Mahammed Ali, a sociology student, will take us on a tour of guided tour of Copenhagen’s most ethnically diverse neighbourhood, including Blågårds gate and ‘Little Mogadishu’.

8/
Discussing hegemony and the use of satire and parody to create social change

Readings: A Modest Proposal, Jonathan Swift
Consider your own sense of humor before class. Have people ever reacted angrily to a joke you made? Where are your own limits? When do you think something stops being funny?

Class objective: We discuss how humor is seen in Western societies and how can it create tensions in cross cultural communication. As well as Northern Ireland we will look at famous Danish examples, including The Muhammed Cartoon Crisis from 2006.

9/
Peer review of the Belfast articles for our blog “CCC in Belfast” in class. Individual meetings to discuss papers and the final media project with Brendan.

10/
Session with presentations of media projects and peer evaluation discussions.

FIELD STUDY:
We will visit the Danish Broadcasting Corporation to talk about Danish /cultural and journalistic frames. We also go on a guided tour to learn more about architect Jean Nouvel’s iconic concert hall and the cross cultural aspects of the building.

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