

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: COMM 480: **Cross Cultural Communication**
Narrative Identities

Credits: 3 Credits

Instructor: **Pierluca Birindelli, Ph.D.**



Study Abroad, 502 E. Boone Ave, Spokane, WA 99258-0085 • (800) 440-5391 • www.gonzaga.edu/studyabroad • studyabroad@gonzaga.edu

Office Hours

By appointment: pierluca.birindelli@email.it

Meeting times

Tuesday: 15:35 - 18:35

Course Description and Objectives

The aim of the course is to introduce the concepts of communication and culture, and to develop an understanding of communicative processes across cultural boundaries. Having clarified that culture is both a producer and product of communication, we will focus on: some media representations of typical (or stereotypical) Italian, European and American cultural features (especially throughout films and TV fictions); some communicative-cultural incidents/dilemmas, and their effects on personal and collective identity construction; the mediatization of experience (television, internet and mobile phones), and the sense of otherness. Moreover we will outline some significant social effects of old and new media on the shaping of communities and public spheres, trying to grasp how modern communication affects the “sense of place” and the “sense of time”.

Part of the course will be dedicated to the communicative and cultural experience of American Students in Florence. American students are immerse in the new media, and this state of mind influences their experience of a new culture – they are connected with “home”; they have a Facebook profile throughout which they display their “on-line Self”; they instantly communicate (Skype, email etc.) their (undigested?) cultural encounters.

Finally, students will be able to answer in a critical and thoughtful way – identifying the disturbed (the double bind) or the disturbing (propaganda) communication – to the questions: “How does one’s socio-cultural background affect values and communication styles?; “Which kind of stories (culturally grounded) do I use to interpret my experience abroad?”

The historic background will give preference to the period from the end of the Second World War to the present day. The basic concepts (theories, paradigms etc.) adopted – and shared with the students – are part of Communication, Sociology, Psychology, Cultural Studies and Cultural Anthropology. The narrative approach will be our “discipline glue”.

Requirements

Throughout this class, you are expected to contribute your thoughts, ideas, questions, etc. To do so, you must do the readings, and be ready to contribute. Course requirements include a mid term exam and a final research paper.

The final research paper consists of the reconstruction of the socio-cultural background and communication style of a given individual. You will carry out an in-depth narrative interview with this person. You will be working on this paper throughout the course, and will be submitting elements of the paper at various times. You are expected to make reference to the interpretative concepts and methods of analysis acquired during the course.

Attendance is mandatory. Unauthorized absences will have negative consequences for your final grade.

There is no final exam.

Method

The course has a seminar format. Lectures will introduce the main topic, with the support of slides synthesizing concepts, paradigms, theories and examples extracted from the readings. We will also project films and TV programs that students shall interpret (writing some reflections and participating to the following class discussion).

Grading

Grading is based on a point scale of 500 total points.

- Class participation: 100 points.
- Mid-term exam: 150 points.
- Final research paper: 250 points.

Readings

A course pack with readings will be made available.

Course Outline & Schedule

Week 1 Sept. 23	Communication and Culture: Concepts, Theories and Paradigms (1)
Week 2 Sept. 30	Communication and Culture: Concepts, Theories and Paradigms (2)
Week 3 Oct. 7	Late Modernity and Self-Identity. Global, Local and the Mediation of Experience
Week 4 Oct. 14	Media Narrations: Old and New Heroes
Week 5 Oct. 21	Propaganda and Stereotypes: Being and Wishing to Be
Week 6 Oct. 28	<i>Mid-Term Exam</i>
Week 7 Nov. 4	Cultural Incidents and Miscommunication: The Double Bind
Week 8 Nov. 11	Italian and American Subcultures: Language and Communication
Week 9 Nov. 18	Cultural Shocks and Cultural Tranquillizers: Make it Strange, Make it Familiar
Week 10 Nov. 25	Communicating Cultural Differences: Values, Beliefs, Lifestyles
Week 11 Dec. 2	The Rhetoric of Cross Cultural Communicative Dialogues and Conflicts
Week 12 Dec. 9	Otherness: Loving the Alien and the Mediated Experience of Suffering
Week 13 Dec. 16	<i>Final Paper and Presentation</i>