

**Course Packet: COMS 180**  
**Intercultural Communication with Pablo Martin**

This packet contains all of the assignment descriptions and rubrics that you will need for our course this semester. Unless stated below, I will not be providing any additional handouts of this material in class. All assignments are listed in roughly chronological order. (For individual assignment point values, please see the syllabus.)

**Syllabi Quiz**

The syllabi for our course, just like any course, are basically our contract for what we can expect of one another. The information you'll find in the different syllabi I provide to you is very important, not only for your success in the course, but also for how effectively we communicate with one another. Unfortunately, some students don't read them or take them seriously and both of these things suffer as a result. To encourage all of my students to take the syllabus documents seriously, I assign a syllabus quiz on the second class meeting. You may refer to the syllabus as well as any notes you may have taken, however you will only have a short amount of time to complete the quiz. (And I'm sorry—if this seems like busy work, it's not intended to be. I've actually found it's an excellent way to ensure a more positive and successful experience for everyone.)

**Reading Journal**

The Reading Journal is an assignment designed to help you engage with scholarly material that may be dry or difficult. It can also be a helpful way to take notes on the reading. Please do not write what you think I want to see—these are for you, your interests, and your learning style. Be sure to complete your reading journals as the chapters are assigned and bring them to class in order to facilitate discussion.

You may complete your reading journal in any manner that works for you so long as your work is clearly and specifically grounded in the text. You can write line-by-line notes, use the Cornell note-taking system (see below), write a narrative response to different aspects of the text, or use any other format that you like.

**Your notes must be a minimum of 1 dense, hand-written page or 1/2 typed page.** If your journal entries are longer, you will not be penalized (however this is not true of essays or papers.) Please collate them so that the first chapter assigned is on the top and later chapters are on the bottom (i.e. 2,3,4,5). I will collect these periodically throughout the semester—please see the syllabus for due dates.

Cornell Notes work as follows: set up your reading journal using two columns (or in some other way that clearly and obviously indicates each reference to the book and each individual response to that reference). On the left side write down what the text says (paraphrasing or direct quotations are both acceptable; be sure to include the page number you are referencing). On the right side, write your corresponding reactions, questions, and clarifications—what you choose to focus on is up to you, so long as it is clearly grounded in the text. If you ask a question, be sure to answer it—whether you talk it through or find the answer through class or another resource. Please provide a separate response for each quotation or paraphrase from the text.

## COMS 180 Sample Reading Journal

<b>Chapter 1</b>	
p. 19: "According to a national survey, speech fright is the number one fear for Americans with death well down the list."	I remember hearing about these surveys, and I thought things had changed. I thought that this was more of a problem for people in my generation. I was born in the 70s. Based on other readings and other textbooks, I thought that people in younger generations, say born since 1980 or so, had less of an issue with public speaking. It turns out that people's fear of public speaking has lessened, but it was still high on the list as of 2001—topped only by snakes! For me, I was never that afraid of public speaking, but I know that I have used some of the techniques to overcome those fears that are mentioned in the text! They helped. I'm still not convinced that people born since 1980 are as terrified of public speaking as their predecessors...  There's an interesting discussion at this link: <a href="http://www.chrisgreencommunication.com/fear-of-public-speaking/">http://www.chrisgreencommunication.com/fear-of-public-speaking/</a>
(Entry #2)	(Response #2)
(Entry #3)	(Response #3)
(Entry #4)	(Response #4)
(Entry #5, etc.)	(Response #5)

### Daily Ice Breaker

Each of you will be asked to get class started at least once during the semester (twice if we have fewer students). Your job is simple: 1) you will play a song before class starts, and 2) you will share an intercultural communication related topic with the class. I will ask students to sign up for a date at the beginning of Week 2. If you are asked to complete two icebreakers, note that the formats for the first and second time are different.

#### Ice Breaker #1:

1. Choose a song to play over the class audio system before the start of class. Please be sure that the language and message are appropriate to the context by considering your audience and setting. (5 pts)
2. Identify and share an intercultural news story or event with the class. Highlight and break down the cultural aspects of the story or event (i.e. feeding the homeless can be seen as an intercultural event when we consider individualist and collectivist values or the destiny/people–nature value orientation). Be sure to provide a complete summary of the event or news story (providing all pertinent points of view if it's the latter) and indicate where you got your information (i.e. cite your source). (10 pts)
3. In the "Ice Breaker" forum in Blackboard, please post a relevant or helpful link to the event or article you discuss in class *prior* to sharing your icebreaker. (5 pts)

#### Ice Breaker #2:

1. Choose a song to play over the class audio system before the start of class. Please be sure that the language and message are appropriate to the context by considering your audience and setting. (5 pts)
2. Now that you've been in this class for several weeks, discuss your experience attending an intercultural event (anything from a restaurant to a wedding ceremony with a culture different from yours). Please be candid and

employ an ethnorelative mindset (we want to understand your experience but we don't want you to offend our own cultural values). (10 pts)

3. In the "Ice Breaker" forum in Blackboard, please post a relevant or helpful link to the event or article you discuss in class *prior* to sharing your icebreaker. (5 pts)

### **In-Class Activities**

Some class meetings, I will be assigning activities to be accomplished either in class or as homework prior to our next meeting. These will be worth either 10 or 20 points, depending on the nature of the activity. If you know you are going to be absent from class ahead of time, please email me beforehand and ask to receive an alternate assignment. These activities cannot be made up and late or make-up work will not be accepted.

### **Skill Builders**

Research shows that one of the best ways to master a new concept is by applying it in your life. This is what's involved in the Skill Builders assigned in this course. Ideally, you will become a more aware, sophisticated, and effective intercultural communicator. **Note: you may revise and resubmit one of the Skill Builders you've completed for reevaluation (minus any original deductions for lateness).** These are due no later than the time of the final exam, but can be submitted anytime before that.

### **Skill Builder 1**

#### **Skill Builder: How Do Your Cultural Identities Affect Your Communication Style?**

This skill builder asks you to explore and reflect on your different cultural identities and how they affect your communication style. I then ask you to share your findings in a six-paragraph essay. To begin, I suggest you take some time to reflect and engage in some kind of pre-writing and outlining activities (including your journal entries as well as your own brainstorming and free writing). *As you compose your paper, be sure to use the terminology and concepts we've discussed in the course.*

#### Specific Requirements:

- ¶ 1. Include an introductory paragraph that inspires the reader to want to read your paper and provides her with a preview of its content. It should be roughly 4 sentences long. *I suggest you write this last.* (10 points)
- ¶ 2-5. In each of your four (4) body paragraphs, please discuss **both**:
  - A) one different aspect of your cultural identity (5 points) **and**
  - B) three (3) different ways this affects how you communicate (15 points)

The following are some areas you might focus on:

#### A) Cultural Identities

- Gender identity
- Sexual identity
- Age identity
- Racial identity
- Ethnic identity
- Physical ability identity
- Religious (or spiritual) identity
- Class identity
- National identity
- Regional identity
- Personal identity
- Other identities?

## B) Communication

- Your use of nonverbal communication
  - Your use of interruption
  - Your use of silence
  - Topics you frequently talk about
  - How you argue, or avoid arguments
  - Channels of communication you rely on
  - What kinds of “rituals” do I participate in?
  - What stories do I tell and how do I tell them? What identity do I project, create, or maintain as I do so?
  - How do I communicate informally with friends and family?
  - How do I communicate in more formal settings, such as at a job/internship, the classroom, or a club?
- ¶ 6. Your concluding paragraph should both summarize the content of your paper and provide a cohesive overview of how your cultural identities affect your communication style. (10 points)
- \*Writing and Formatting:* Your paper should be written and formatted as described here and in the syllabus, be 3-5 pages in length, and be free of organizational, grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors (there will be a maximum deduction of up to 10 points for writing and formatting).

## Skill Builder 2

### Perception and Conflict: Who’s Story? Who’s Reality?

This skill builder asks you to assess the affect of culture on how we see and understand the world. Many of us believe that what we see through our own perspective is “reality”—we don’t question it. ICC scholars argue that cultural groups perceive and therefore experience the world differently. They say the way we see the world is filtered through a lens that shapes our impressions and interpretations. Getting practice identifying this difference in point of view, and exploring solutions to these differences, are what this skill builder is all about. To complete this well, you will need to employ an ethnorelative mindset, being vigilant about your own biases and point of view.

Please begin your paper by identifying an historical OR a recent newsworthy occurrence involving an intercultural conflict or misunderstanding. From there, you will 1) provide a brief and neutral summary of the event, 2) explore two different group’s versions of the event (i.e. the two different “sides” take on the event), 3) explore why this group may have had a conflict with the other group (i.e. analyzing some of their cultural value dimensions and/or ethnocentric mindset), and 4) discuss your understanding of the occurrence, and how communication between groups could be improved, after completing this work. As you compose your paper, be sure to use the course terminology and concepts we’ve discussed in the course.

Please label each section and include a references section with at least four credible sources at the end of your paper.

*Part 1–Overview:* After previewing the content of your paper, provide a brief overview of the event (the kind of balanced summary you might find on Wikipedia, for example). Be cautious not to value one group’s perspective over another. (10 points)

- a. Effective example: "In 1492, Columbus and his crew were the first 'Western' people to arrive in 'The New World.' His arrival set in motion many changes for both the peoples that lived there and those back in Europe."
- b. Ineffective example: "In 1492, Columbus discovered The New World and helped usher in an era of colonialization and civilization."

*Part 2A–Group #1 POV:* In two-three body paragraphs, describe the highlights of the event from the dominant group's (or another group's) point of view. Be sensitive to how you present this information—aim to report what this particular group experienced and *interpreted* from the event, do not present what you think or what "actually" happened. In your discussion, be sure to focus on the most important or salient elements of the event to the dominant group. In other words, focus on what *they* believe were the most important things that occurred. It may help you to write this section in the first person (as a member of the dominant group). Be sure to use specific details and cite at least one scholarly source (this is worth 2.5 points). Please provide introduction/conclusion/transition sentences. (NOTE: you cannot discuss *all* of the details of a major event in 2-3 paragraphs, so be sure to focus only on the most important ones.) (20 points)

- a. I.e.: The dominant perspective presented in many elementary school textbooks and some other aspects of the dominant culture, is that Columbus discovered America and helped civilize the savage peoples who lived there.

*Part 2B–Group #2 POV:* As you did for 2A, in two-three body paragraphs, describe the highlights of the event from a less powerful group's (or another group's) point of view. *Individuals from this group are unlikely to see the event in the same way the dominant group would probably see it, at least in small ways (if you are not finding this to be the case, I suggest you focus on a different group's perspective).* It may help you to write this section in the first person (as a member of the less powerful group). Be sure to use specific details and cite at least two scholarly sources (worth 2.5 points). Please provide introduction/conclusion/transition sentences. (20 points)

- a. I.e.: One perspective of the native people of North America is that Columbus landed on a continent already populated by highly developed civilizations but he viewed them as savages. Armed with arrogance and superior weaponry, he and his men brutalized the people they encountered.

*Part 3A–Group #1 Conflict(s):* Based on the issues raised in Chapters 8 and 9 of our textbook, discuss two areas that help us see why this group had a conflict with the other group. I suggest you analyze how their cultural value dimensions affected their interpretation of events. You might also identify any ethnocentric beliefs or actions they take. Be specific and thorough in your discussion and provide specific examples of the group's behavior(s). Please provide introduction/conclusion/transition sentences. (15 points)

- a. I.e.: Discuss how their collectivistic values shape their perception or are at odds with the other group's individualistic values.
- b. I.e.: Discuss how their masculine (aka achievement) values might cause challenges when interacting with a group that values a feminine (aka nurturing) approach.

*Part 3B–Group #2 Conflict(s):* As you did for 3A, discuss one or two areas that shine some light on why this group had a conflict with the other group. (15 points)

*Part 4–Conclusion:* In your conclusion, please do the following two things: (10 points)

- a. Discuss your current, final understanding of *what actually happened*. (NOTE: You may find that identifying the *truth* is very difficult.)
- b. Suggest one or more different behaviors or lenses each group could employ to have a more effective interaction in the future.

*References:* A references section (i.e. works cited or bibliography) with at least four credible sources. (10 points)

*Writing and Formatting:* Your paper should be written and formatted as described here and in the syllabus, be 3-6 pages in length (apart from a references section), include labels for each section (1-4), and be free of organizational, grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors (there will be a maximum deduction of up to 10 points for writing and formatting).

### **Midterm Exam**

This is a 50 question multiple-choice exam focusing on Chapters 1-6. I will be providing you with a study guide with more detailed information. You will need to bring a pencil and one Scantron form 882-E.

### **Final Exam**

This will be a 100 point final. It will take one of two forms: a cumulative multiple-choice exam with an emphasis on Chapters 7-13, or a two-part exam with multiple choice questions focusing on Chapters 7-13 and short answer questions covering the entire semester. I will notify you of the exam format several weeks before the end of the semester. I will also provide you with a study guide with more detailed information.

### **Class Participation**

You can earn 4 points per "hour" (i.e. 8 points per week) based on your active, engaged presence in class (including participation in reading discussions). Please see Syllabus, Part B for more information.

### **Extra Credit**

Students can earn up to 25 points of extra credit over the course of the semester by participating in a number of activities, including visiting a writing tutor. Please see Syllabus, Part B for more detailed information.