Assignments and Team Project: Working with Cultural Difference

Course Assignments

Course grades are based on a combination of individual and team assignments. Individuals complete reading summaries, on-site “China Logs,” on-site discussion and analysis (class meetings, oral). Groups complete a team project focused on a particular dimension useful in mapping cultural differences so that communications and, especially, intercultural collaborations, can be more productive.

Points for the course assignments are provided below:

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<th>SA 10303 Points</th>
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<td><strong>SA 10303 Points</strong></td>
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<td>Reading summaries (2,000 to 2,500 words), completed by individuals</td>
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<td>&quot;China Logs&quot;—12 observational and learning logs due each on site, one per day, completed by individuals; 2 pts for for each, +1 all “on time&quot;</td>
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<td>On-site daily discussion, analysis and event participation, 1 point per day, 3 points for 100%</td>
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<td>Team project: due via email from team leader within one week of course completion</td>
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Final grades will be submitted to Purdue Study Abroad, along with the requested course credit (ME 497, MSE 497, or FLL 490) in time to be posted as scheduled for Summer Module 1 courses.

Collaborative Project Assignment

As a final collaborative project for “Intercultural Teamwork,” each team will investigate a particular cultural dimension assigned in class. The “data” collected will be based on on-site experiences with Chinese peers at the two partner universities, HIT and NBU, Shanghai and Beijing visits, as well as first-hand observations at other cultural sites.

The purpose of the team project is to enhance our understanding of major cultural differences between “East” and “West” as experienced in China and in the U.S. Such understanding helps in appreciating and anticipating issues that develop when people from these two diverse backgrounds work together.

During our on-site class meetings we will review this on-going collection process and work with important observations from each team. That way, everyone participates and also benefits from the collaborative work on the selected cultural dimensions.

**Reading List Resources:**
While all of the articles included in the reading list for the course can be expected to have some relevance to the team project, the most important resources are likely to be the Hofstede and Nisbett...
articles. Most of the team’s collaborations should focus on collecting valuable examples and on describing the relevance of those examples.

Data—Experiences and Observations:
In addition to the interpretive discussion, each team report should include a “data” appendix constructed by each individual team member. In that appendix, individuals list specific observations that they have contributed to the overall team effort. Individuals should strive for at least five distinct “data observations.” These observations should be presented in images and then described in a few sentences identifying the observation and indicating the connection to the cultural dimension explored in the team report. Choose the best five if more than five are available!

Data included in these appendices can take various forms such as pictures, conversation summaries, quotes, or other descriptions. A date and place should be included for each “data point.”

Report Format:
Please use formal report format to make the project report as readable and easy to navigate as possible. Provide a cover sheet with title and team member names. Use page footers with an abbreviated title and a page number. Please single space text and use an open line to separate paragraphs. Optional subheadings may be used to divide material within each major division, as desired.

Suggested major divisions are provided below. Each appendix should have a title and author with page footers providing both the author’s last name and a page number. The text for reports is expected to be two or three pages with appendices following. Everyone on the team should contribute to writing the text portions as well as completing their individual contribution of one appendix.

a. Introduction/Problem space: The cultural dimension of interest is presented and defined, with an emphasis on what is different between the U.S. and China. (at least ½ page)
b. Analysis: Observations are summarized and reviewed evidence that the cultural dimension of interest is important and useful or not so useful. (at least 1 page)
c. Discussion/Conclusion: Overall findings are summarized and reviewed. Which observations most fully illustrate the “workings” of the cultural dimension of interest? Are there some puzzling exceptions? What is particularly surprising? (at least ½ page)
d. Appendices: The population of all events collected by the team members is included in the appendices, each team member contributing one appendix. Events can be documented by textual narratives and/or by photographs. For photos, be sure to provide accompanying captions and some discussion to explain what should be noticed in the photo, what is the purpose of including the photo. Note that pictures can be the most vibrant form of evidence! Just be sure to use some text to identify what is illustrated by the visual!

The team leader coordinates the various contributions. While team discussions should assure a collaborative analysis, the responsibility for various segments can be assigned to one or two individuals for efficient production. Of course, each appendix is written by a different team member, and identified as that member’s work. Finally, everyone should review the entire final product prior to submission.

Ideally, the team leader has a somewhat lessened responsibility for actually writing report segments, given the extra responsibility of cumulating the parts into a whole, circulating that document for review, and forwarding the report to course instructors. The team project should be emailed no later than one week after returning to the US. Please format all elements of the formal report as a single Word document with a file name that includes the team number.

Questions are welcome via phone (765.427.8829) or by email. Instructor: Dianne Atkinson, dla@purdue.edu; also diannelatkinson@gmail.com