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<b>Course title:</b>	Managing Interculturality
<b>Track:</b>	B-Track
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>Contact hours:</b>	72 (6 per day)
<b>ECTS-Credits:</b>	6

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### **Course description**

Today we live and work in a globalized world. Organizations choose their human resources from a diverse and deep international talent pool. It is well established that diversity of perspective can shed new light on old and taken for granted products, processes and services. Since there is so much to be gained from a global talent pool, companies, and more specifically managers, must be equipped and confident enough to effectively coordinate international team members, maximizing productivity and minimizing frictions.

This presents managers with a challenge. Frictions arise because it is not always easy to manage people from different cultures, or systematize them for optimal productivity, since people's actions and thinking are based on what things mean to them, and the meanings come from culture.

This course responds to this challenge. It introduces future (and possibly current) managers of multinational companies to innovative theories of intercultural processes and communication in relation to the needs of management. Course members will be encouraged to develop a basic level of intercultural competence leading to better management of diverse teams.

To do this we will work on understanding what culture is and how it works. We will reflect on why differing cultural worldviews can cause offense by studying the relationship between culture and identity.

We will debate cultural universals and cultural incommensurabilities (seemingly unavoidable culture clashes)—and strategies for overcoming them, or at least minimizing them. We will explore best practices for managing and facilitating productivity in intercultural workspaces. We will be attentive to the danger of killing creativity with too much tolerance, and thus to the need to generate constructive frictions (rather than destructive ones). Our ultimate goal is to design our own actionable best practices for producing synergy from difference and avoiding entropy.

In order to meet these goals, we will first study conflict and disagreement as logical and affective phenomena. We are going to discuss the factors trust, culture, language, power and authority, which have to be understood if we want to manage disagreement. Afterwards, we focus on elaborating best practices for managing intercultural teams. To this end, we read

and discuss theoretical essays on culture and intercultural processes and communication from management literature, watch and discuss films dramatizing intercultural frictions in different contexts, and participate in (and later reflect on) field trips to Berlin businesses to learn about their experiences with a multinational workforce.

**Student profile**

This course is for students interested in business and organization management in the context of globalization, particularly those who want to be able to operationalize teams that draw on human resources from different countries. The course is designed to be accessible and fruitful for both lower- and upper-division students.

**Prerequisites**

Students should be competent in reading, writing, listening and expressing themselves orally in academic English.

**Course Requirements**

Punctual attendance at all sessions; active participation (verbal and written) in all sessions; abstention from electronic device use in class; small team work; one team presentation on cultural constraints (15 mins); one team presentation on best practices (15 mins); one final paper.

**Grading**

Active participation: 20%  
 Two 15-minute presentations: 60%  
 Final paper: 20%

**Reading**

A course reader will be provided at the first course meeting.

**Course schedule**

Date	Program*
Tuesday, June 5, 2018	<p><b>Sessions 1 and 2: Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course introduction/overview; student introductions; self-presentation</li> <li>• Culture as symbolic system or system of meaning; meanings of interculturality; the right to retract; the commitment to learning (rather than the need to be right)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 3: Difference and Dialectics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialectics, or collective reasoning</li> <li>• Plato’s dialectic of interlocutors (people arguing in pursuit of knowledge)</li> <li>• Hegel’s dialectic of ideas (one person thinking alone, putting ideas “into conversation”)</li> </ul>
Friday, June 8, 2018	<p><b>Session 1: From symbolic dimensions of disagreement to the dialectics of reason</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From disagreement to conflict.</li> <li>• Managing disagreement</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Sessions 2 and 3: Views of culture, views from culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sociological views of culture</li> <li>• How do culture clashes develop?</li> </ul>
Tuesday, June 12, 2018	<p><b>Session 1: What is language?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature of language and how it works</li> <li>• Avoiding misunderstandings caused by language</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 2: Language and (mis)communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity: Why don't we understand expressions like "I'm going to kill him" in a literal way? Where are the difficulties for non-native speakers to understand them in the way they are meant?</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 3: Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Nutty Professor</i>. Dir. Jerry Lewis, 1963.</li> </ul>
Friday, June 15, 2018	<p><b>Session 1: Culture, language, film.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking of <i>The Nutty Professor</i> we discuss what we can learn about intercultural competence from its "polysemic" character.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 2: Comfort zones</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does one lose or gain something by stepping outside of one's cultural comfort zone? Did Lewis gain something, or lose his bearings? We will explore these questions using the film and a related video as a prompt.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 3: Fear of speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our goal for this session is to create empathy for team members who are unfamiliar with "common" cultural references. Ignorance, for want of a better word, can inspire fear and loathing towards participation. We will explore how to manage it.</li> </ul>
Tuesday, June 19, 2018	<p><b>Session 1: Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Outsourced</i>. Dir. John Jeffcoat, 2007.</li> <li>• Representation of cultural expectations; expectation failure; learning, to be discussed at lunch.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Sessions 2 and 3: Lunch and field trip</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We lunch together in what is called an "ethnic" restaurant. We will engage our hosts with questions about the opportunities and difficulties that operating in an intercultural environment presents. Autoethnography as a research method and how to apply it.</li> <li>• Visit to an intercultural enterprise/business, arranged in coordination with the Colombian Embassy in Berlin.</li> </ul>
Friday, June 22, 2018	<p><b>Session 1: (Inter) cultural commons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We report from our auto-ethnographies and look for common experiences, perceptions among ourselves, and common practices among the people we visited.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 2: Trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons for trust being foundational for the success of any relationship. Similarities/differences of trust across cultures. Relationship between trust and self-interest.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 3: Triggering trust</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We investigate how to develop trust in the intercultural workplace.</li> </ul>

Tuesday, June 26, 2018	<b>Session 1: Final planning of first presentations</b>
	<b>Session 2: First set of presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each presentation will be followed with a question and answer period.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 3: Second set of presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each presentation will be followed with a question and answer period.</li> </ul>
Friday, June 29, 2018	<b>Session 1: Papers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will discuss paper topics, expectations, and related queries.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 2: Power and authority</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will define power and authority, distinguishing and comparing the two concepts and our understandings of them. We then discuss the way relationships are often if not always relationships of power, and explore what this means, and what it has to do with leadership.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 3: Field trip</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will visit an intercultural neighbourhood or context and engage in narrative inquiry in order to understand how invisible logics or norms structure relationships.</li> </ul>
Tuesday, July 3, 2018	<b>Session 1: Reports on power and authority</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We present our reports on power and authority in an intercultural context.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 2: Essentialism and anti-essentialism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why one has to overcome the tendency to essentialize in order to be a successful intercultural manager. We will define (anti-) essentialism and explore examples of it.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 3: The culture of thought?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking is often said to be cultural. We will explore what this means. We will also investigate how we can escape the patterns culture imposes on thought in order to create a way of thinking which is adequate and responsive to our intercultural reality.</li> </ul>
Friday, July 6, 2018	<b>Session 1: Intercultural competence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define/discuss intercultural competence</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 2: Understanding skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline specific intercultural skills (using role play).</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 3: Field trip</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will visit a supposedly monocultural space, a space that should be free from frictions. We will engage in narrative inquiry to understand how conflict is avoided.</li> </ul>
Tuesday, July 10, 2018	<b>Session 1: Reports on a monoculture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will share our reports and what we've learned about communication and understanding.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 2: Peer review for papers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer feedback session: each student brings in two hard copies of her/his paper and exchanges them with class mates for comments.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 3: Best practices?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulating a set of "best practices" for managing intercultural teams on the basis of intercultural competence. Our goal is to come up with some robust responses to the problems that intercultural teams may face.</li> </ul>

Friday, July 13, 2018	<b>Session 1: First set of presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each presentation will be followed with a question and answer period.</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 2: Second set of presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each presentation will be followed with a question and answer period.</li> <li>• Final observations and closure</li> </ul>
	<b>Session 3: Farewell Ceremony</b>

\*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.