

# Cross-Cultural Seminar – B8812-001/B8813-001 Summer 2020

Shi Lui -sliu19@gsb.columbia.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

## For Bidding Purposes Only

### Overview

This course will focus on national and organizational cultures in the context of your internship or student experience and beyond. In particular, we will investigate how cultures differ along several dimensions, and how you can identify areas of good and bad fit between a previous culture and the culture in which you now work or study. We will present information on how to classify any culture, how cultural attributes influence organizations and work expectations, and how workers can manage the adjustment to the workplace or academy in non-native cultures.

The online class lecture (webinar) will provide you a formal way to analyze how you approach work assignments across cultures and managing cross-cultural teams.

### Course Objectives

The course is designed to meet two primary objectives. The first is to provide you with an organizing framework for the analysis of culture and its effects on organizations. With this in mind you should complete the course with the ability to identify where a particular nation falls within this classification scheme, whether a particular organizational culture reflects national culture, and how to best navigate work and work relationships in unfamiliar cultures.

The second objective is to understand your own strengths and weaknesses with respect to cultural and organizational fit, in which areas you may need to make accommodations to other cultures, and in which areas you may need to operate in a manner consistent with your native culture. You should be able to identify potential cultural pitfalls and turn these to your advantage.

In addition to the lecture, there are assigned readings. The lecture materials and readings should be incorporated into the course assignments as a way to organize thought about your cross-cultural experiences, specifically as those experiences relate to culture.

## Course Requirements

### 1. Internship Journal (50% of final grade)

Written reflection helps you draw lessons from your experience. To this end, you will submit a **3-4 page (double-spaced)** internship journal. First, provide a very brief summary (approximately one paragraph) of what you did on your internship. There is no need to share confidential or proprietary material and you may reveal the company for which you worked or keep this hidden. Next, see the last page of this syllabus for a list of 9 discussion topics that might serve as starting points for your journal. Think about your internship experience with respect to international and organizational culture in addressing these topics. The point is not to answer every question, but to use a subset of these questions to guide what you write. Given the length of this paper, choose two or three that are most relevant to your situation and take it from there. You are not limited to this list of topics. Submit your internship journal via the drop boxes on Canvas (please label files with your name).

### 2. Watch the online video and fill out Qualtrics Survey (30% of final grade)

**The video for the course will be available on Canvas.** Please watch the video and then complete the accompanying Qualtrics survey to reflect on what you have learned and share your views about your experiences. This process will help you reflect on experiences in diverse environments and the way your internship may be influencing your worldview.

### 3. Optional Group Paper (20% of final grade): Required to get an H

**In order to get an H from this course, you are required to write this group paper.** You are a start-up team and you have had a successful launch in the United States but now you want to expand globally. You and your team of up to five people should submit a **maximum 1000-word** paper that explains your plan for a smooth integration into these other markets. Building off the Lead class, explain your strategy with respect to people (e.g., selection and socialization), teams (e.g., diversity, information sharing, cohesion building, empowerment) and the larger organization (e.g., culture, reward system, social networks). What issues do you need to consider to be successful in these other cultures? You can choose countries represented by your teams' home countries but ensure your organization expands to at least two continents other than North America. **Please inform Shi Liu ([sliu19@gsb.columbia.edu](mailto:sliu19@gsb.columbia.edu)) if you plan to complete this optional assignment no later than (TBA). The assignment will be due by (TBA).** Please submit onto Canvas.

## Readings

- Galinsky, A. D., Todd, A. R., Homan, A. C., Phillips, K. W., Apfelbaum, E. P., Sasaki, S. J., Richeson, J. A., Olayon, J. B., Maddux, W.W. (2015). Maximizing the gains and minimizing the pains of diversity: A policy perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10*, 742–748
- Clouse, M. A., & Watkins, M. D., Three keys to getting an overseas assignment right, *Harvard Business Review*, October 2009, 115-119.
- Black, J. S., & Morrison, A. J., A cautionary tale for emerging market giants, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2010. 99-105.

## Optional Readings

- Chatman, J. A., & Cha, S. E. (2003). Leading by leveraging culture. *California Management Review, 45*, 19-34
- Brett, J., Behfar, K., & Kern, M.C., Managing multicultural teams, *Harvard Business Review*, November 2006, 85-91
- Meyer, Erin (2013) Navigating the cultural minefield. <https://hbr.org/2014/05/navigating-the-cultural-minefield>

## Potential Internship Journal Topics (select 2 or 3 topics to stimulate your writing)

### 1) Cultural Assumptions

Think about the assumptions your home culture makes about the world, specifically related to business. How have these assumptions been challenged in the context of your current internship or study experience?

### 2) Culture-Job Fit

The requirements of certain jobs/tasks may change across cultures. How might your current position or course of study have changed had it occurred in your native country?

### 3) The Individual and the Team

Cultures differ regarding the extent to which the individual is emphasized vs. the team. Think about how work, credit, responsibility, etc. have been allocated on your current assignment. How much of this allocation is due to the national culture vs. the corporate culture? Is this a

comfortable fit for you? Why or why not?

#### **4) Power Dynamics**

Cultures have different attitudes toward power relationships, and these attitudes mirror organizational structures in certain ways. Does the organization for which you currently work (or in which you currently study) have a vertical (hierarchical) or horizontal (egalitarian) structure, specifically as it relates to your experience? Is this structure in sync with your home culture's views on power? With the views of the culture in which this organization is based?

#### **5) The Individual within the Culture**

Cultural differences generally describe the "average" member of a given culture, yet people vary widely within cultures. Where do you fall in the distribution for certain key cultural attributes/assumptions? If you see yourself as extreme in some way, has this helped or hurt your comfort and performance in your current position?

#### **6) The Cultural Iceberg**

If, as we will discuss, behaviors and institutions constitute the observable effects of a given culture, how are the behaviors that you have observed affected by underlying values, beliefs, and norms? By underlying assumptions? Is this more the product of the national culture or the particular organization in which you are working/studying?

#### **7) Self-awareness and Culture**

As part of the core Leadership course, you were given a 360-degree feedback report. Many of you met with an external leadership coach to discuss action steps to address issues described in that report. Do you think the data in that report were influenced by your "home" culture or the culture of your raters? Perhaps the interaction of the two? How might your action plan change as a function of the culture in which you are working or studying?

#### **8) Changing Cultural Lenses**

How has your perspective on your host culture changed as a function of working or studying in that culture? Which preconceptions have changed? Have you gained any new insights with respect to your native culture as a result of this experience?

#### **9) Managing Culturally Diverse Teams**

Diversity, including cultural diversity, can affect the way teams work together. Think about a team you might be part of currently (e.g., in your internship, your CBS learning team) and describe whether or not you think it is culturally diverse. Is this a good or bad thing (or more to the point, when is this a good thing and when might it be a bad thing)? If you had the ability to create teams in the workplace (both teams that you would manage and teams on which you would work), would you want culturally diverse teams? Why or why not?