



- Course:** COM492, Section 001, 3.0 credit hours  
German Culture and Communication [SPTP: Dir St: German Culture & Comm]
- Semester:** Summer 2012, June 11 to July 6
- Instructors:** Prof. Dr. Nicholas David Bowman  
Eberly College of Arts and Sciences  
West Virginia University  
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- Course Readings:** Materials in class will be made available in a variety of online and offline formats. Be sure to have access to
- Course Facebook account (URL TBA) and Twitter feed (follow #SPICE12 and @bowmanspartan)
  - Course document download URL (TBA)
  - Journal assignments and site visit preparations, TBA
- Course Format:** As an Independent Study course, the majority of this course will be paced by the student under the supervision of the Instructor. Students will meet with their Instructor on a weekly basis for informal dinner discussions, which will serve as “working lectures” as well as administrative meetings. Otherwise, students will be engaged in site visits and cultural encounters on their own time. Thus, it is imperative that students come to each weekly dinner meeting prepared to reflect on past experiences and discuss the direction for their future projects. This course is flexible but can be overwhelming for students who are not well-organized.

**Tentative Course Schedule:**

As an independent study course, we will not have a static schedule of deadlines for assignments. Rather, your primary interaction in this course will take the form of site preparations and reflections – kept as journal entries. At a minimum, students will have a weekly group dinner with the Instructor of the course and SPICE coordinator to reflect on the week’s cultural experiences and plan for the next week’s activities. All students will be expected to attend the Berlin mid-semester trip from July 9 to July 13 and have the first portion of their journal completed before this trip. Beyond this, students will be expected to complete journal entries on their own time based on their own interests.

A tentative schedule of discussion topics for the Instructor/SPICE dinners:

- *Week One – Culture shock.* Discussion will include an open-ended observation of salient cultural differences and experiences. Communication Accommodation Theory will be introduced and discussed.
- *Week Two – Managing cultural conflicts.* Students will be asked to discuss any particular conflicts they might have had to this point, using precepts of Face Negotiation Theory.
- *Week Three – Catch-up.* Dinner discussion will be centered around making sure that students are on task in completing course objectives. Open-ended conversation.
- *Week Four – Berlin.* As we prepare for Berlin CAT will be revisited
- *Week Five – Return to Thuringia.* As we return from Berlin, students will consider the role of cultural convergence in understanding norms and communication patterns experienced in the city.
- *Week Six – Catch-up.* Dinner discussion will be centered around making sure that students are on task in completing course objectives. Open-ended conversation.
- *Week Seven – Are we feeling it?* Students will debate and discuss intercultural adaption, understanding how they use their dual cultural identity strategically to meet different communicative goals.
- *Week Eight – Intercultural Communicative Competence.* Students will reflect on their own felt sense of ICC based on the SPICE 12 experience. Expectations for the final paper will also be discussed.
- *Week Nine – Preparing to go home.* Discussion will include a general reflection of SPICE 12 as well as a short discussion of re-assimilation back into US culture, having been gone for over 1/6 of a year!

### Major assignments:

Students' proficiency in understanding of course concepts will be evaluated based on:

- *Interpersonal interaction (20%).* Students will be asked to reflect on their initial interactions with German SPICE students (10%) and German residents of Erfurt (10%). These reflections will be “raw” in that students will be asked merely to note their own impressions of cultural similarities and differences between what they are familiar with and what they are experiencing in Erfurt. A framework for these journal entries will be provided, but the total assignment will be around three to five pages in length. **NOTE: This portion of the course must be completely prior to the Berlin trip**
- *Berlin reflections, week of July 9 to July 13 (30%).* As part of SPICE '12, we will take a week-long excursion to Berlin. Students will be asked to complete a number of tasks in their journal reflections, including:
  - Compare and contrast the communication styles of eastern and western Germany, using a framework similar to what will be provided for the “Interpersonal interactions” assignment. This divide might be noticed by comparing Erfurt to Berlin as well as eastern and western Berlin (as well as a combination of these two comparisons).
  - Understand the international significance of Berlin, and how this has influenced the people living in the city and the culture of Berlin as unique from that of greater Germany.

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- Reflect on the increased diversity of Berlin from a historical and contemporary standpoint, and discussion how this diversity is similar to and different from representative areas in the United States.
- **[other discussion questions to be added later]**

**NOTE:** This portion of the course must be completed within **14 days** of our return from Berlin.

- *Site meetings (30%).* Students will be asked to visit at least five sites of cultural significance to Germany of their own choosing, and provide two to three pages of original writing discussing the roots of each site's cultural significance. These papers should contain equal parts history, sociology, and communication to explain how each has influenced the Germany way of life. Each paper is worth 6% of the student's final grade. Notably, these sites do not need to be necessarily (a) historical or (b) tourists sites – students are in fact encouraged to find less contrived or obvious locales with which to more intimately understand the culture of eastern Germany.  
**NOTE:** One of these site meetings can be selected from the pre-scheduled Berlin trip.
- *A final reflection paper of the SPICE 12 experience (20%).* In this final paper – five to seven pages in length – students will summarize and reflect on their SPICE experience paying careful attention to the relevant theoretical concepts of intercultural communication. This project will incorporate journal entries, personal stories and any other reference materials in order to provide the reader with a thoughtful and accurate summary of the intercultural experience. This paper will be graded with a focus on (a) students honest reflections of their experience, (b) students' ability to discuss relevant communication theory within their reflections, and (c) students demonstration of the relevance of this experience to their individual development.

### Grading scale:

Grades will be assigned using a 4.0 scale, with the following breakdown:

4.0 = 93% of all course points and greater

3.0 = 80% to 92% of all course points

2.0 = 70% to 79% of all course points

1.0 = 60% to 69% of all course points

0.0 = 59% of all course points and less

### Communication Studies core objectives:

This course is designed to satisfy the following core objectives as set by the WVU Department of Communication Studies:

- Understand the major theories of human communication and apply them to various contexts.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the process of critical analysis of communication messages from a social science perspective.
- Understand the impact of communication on human behavior in interpersonal and/or organizational contexts.
- Understand and evaluate the role of media in society.
- Understand the role of verbal and nonverbal messages in the human communication process.
- Understand the influence of communication on culture (including the impact of membership within diverse groups) and culture on communication.
- Design and evaluate appropriate strategies for social influence.
- Understand the importance of ethical issues involved in various communication contexts.

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- Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate social science criteria to evaluate communication research.
- Understand the role of communication in conflict and conflict management.

**Disability Services:**

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

**Social Justice:**

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. Cheating on exams is a form of academic dishonesty and will be punished. Any student found cheating on an exam will receive a 0 for that exam. Any violation of these policies or the general WVU policies will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permitted by this university, up to and including expulsion from WVU.

**Drop Policy:**

If you choose to withdraw from this course, you must do so yourself through the STAR system. You are not automatically withdrawn from this course if you stop attending class and I am unable to administratively withdraw you for nonattendance.

***Note: The course syllabus is a contract of policies. If you do not withdraw from the class, it is assumed that you have read through this entire document and agree to these policies.***