

Syllabus: Abilene Christian University

INTS 241.S1/S2 Intro to Global Studies

Saturday May 3, 2003; 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.
and Sunday Aug 24, '03 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Fall 2003

Ted Presley

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Objective:

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to "educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world." The latter phrase requires greater curricular emphasis on global studies and international issues. To become international leaders, students need to acquire new perspectives about other peoples and the world we all share in a global village. All nations today enjoy relationships of mutual dependency. To be successful in business, diplomacy or any other field, students need to be able to relate sensitively, as well as effectively, to people from other cultures who have different worldviews and cultural assumptions about life and the physical world.

The purpose of this course is to improve your "cultural competence" in order that you may have a more effective learning experience during study abroad. The focus of "Intro to Global Studies" is on experiential learning in a natural context. While minimal reading and lectures are required, you are responsible for your own learning through intentional engagement of a particular culture group.

Required Text: Hess, J. Daniel. STUDYING ABROAD/LEARNING ABROAD. Intercultural Press, Inc., 1997. (You must read the entire text BEFORE the final exam.)

Course content:

- a. Introduction to the course, requirements, and epistemology/assumptions about study abroad vs. tourism; a new way of thinking.
- b. Self-assessment; cultural values inventory; cultural baggage; salient characteristics of U.S. culture.
- c. Studies of culture(s); definitions; participant observation; cross cultural comparison; holistic, integrative approaches to learning/knowing.
- d. Practical issues: stereotypes, etc.
- e. Cross-cultural communication and the study abroad experience.
- f. The global village of today: Overview of world geography and interconnectedness of world regions; theories regarding underdevelopment, etc.
- g. "The World Says Welcome"

Determination of grades:

- a. 25% - attendance and class participation
- b. 25% - evaluation/response to international film (on your own) and Personal Inventory (in class)
- c. 25% - final exam (over Hess' book and knowledge of the world map)
- d. 25% - a 5 page reflection paper dealing with the culture of a particular people you came to grips with during your study abroad experience.

A = 92 to 100 / B = 84 to 91 / C = 76 to 83 / D = 68 to 75

Plagiarism, or any form of cheating, will also result in a grade of "F" for the semester. Students are expected to abide by ACU guidelines for dress and behavior.

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Fall 2003: International Film Review/Analysis

Students going to Montevideo should see “Mission” with Robert de Niro.

Students going to Oxford should see “Ghandi.”

Your assignment is to view the movie assigned and then to write a 300 word essay about the movie. As a minimum you should provide the following:

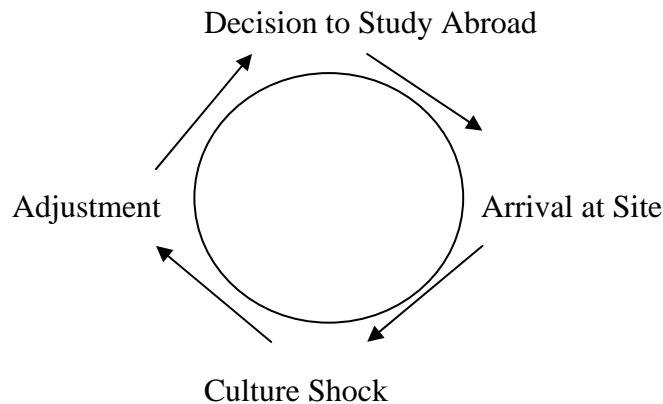
- 1) 50 word summary of the main them of the movie
- 2) 100 word summary of the historical/social/cultural context in which it takes place
- 3) 100 word summary of what you have learned about the culture of the people portrayed in the movie – of course, from an anthropological perspective, as if you were a “participant observer” as the story is “played out.”

This assignment is due August 25, 2003 at 9:00 a.m.

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Reflection Paper (To be written no sooner than January 10, 2004 and not later than January 25, 2004)

During the seminar class, we discussed the fact that a semester of Study Abroad can be represented as a complete circle: at some point in time you decide to study in another country. The decision is made, you arrive at the site/place, you feel initial excitement, you experience culture shock (to some degree), you learn to adjust to the new society/culture, you begin to enjoy being where you are, you begin to plan to return home, you travel back to the U.S., you experience reverse culture shock, and, once again, you finally learn to “fit” into your home society/culture.



So, now the circle is complete. You are back in the U.S. and you have visited with family, friends and classmates. You have told your stories about your experiences to everyone who would listen. Now, they quickly change the subject when you remember a new story about one of your trips. You realize that you are a different person. You realize that your family, friends and classmates have NOT experienced what you did; they have NOT changed in the ways you have. You have become more of a world citizen, a global traveler who engages cultures as a learner – not as a tourist who merely takes pictures of old buildings, funny sculptures and pretty children. You have learned to ask questions; you have learned to compare and contrast the assumptions of your own culture; you have learned to critique ideas and analyze situations.

Write a five page reflection paper which considers the following elements (as a minimum). On your paper, number each question with your answer immediately following the question:

- 1) your experiences during your study abroad semester
- 2) mention your own culture shock and what you did to overcome it
- 3) what you have learned about living in a “tight” community
- 4) what you have learned about living in England/Uruguay
- 5) what you have learned about yourself
- 6) what you have learned about God

Your paper should be typed with Times New Roman 12 font, double-spaced, on Microsoft Word, and e-mailed to me (presleyt@acu.edu) as an attachment by January 25, 2004 at the latest.

Make sure you have completed all your written assignments:

- 1) international film/movie analysis/evaluation plus self assessment
- 2) final exam over the text Studying Abroad/Learning Abroad

Culture Shock: you can't escape it

Every person who leaves his or her own culture to live in a foreign culture at first experiences disorientation, confusion, loneliness, and anxiety; you don't know how to interpret the "cultural cues" that are used in daily communication with locals. These feelings are part of what is known as culture shock. For most people, adjustment to a new culture takes place in three stages:

1. Honeymoon Stage

Many people experience feelings of excitement, anticipation, curiosity and confidence as they prepare to leave their country as well as when they first arrive. Upon arrival, they feel excited when they meet new people, when they visit their new surroundings and when they anticipate many pleasurable activities.

2. Disillusionment Stage

Culture shock is caused by the feeling(s) you experience in another country which results from your inability to interpret the cultural cues of the host society. For example, how can you tell that someone is ready to end a telephone conversation with you? Many people feel confused or disoriented when confronted with so much that is new and unfamiliar. A few even feel that they are losing their sense of identity. Physical illness may even result from the emotional stress, including headaches, stomach upset, etc. Culture shock is, occasionally, so severe that some students return home before the end of the semester abroad.

But culture shock is not all bad. It may serve as a great motivator to get you out among the local people in your community in order to learn about your new social environment. In fact, during this stage, you will be more alert to differences than later when you become accustomed to the local culture, so take advantage of this stage in order to learn more about local culture.

During this stage, you will realize that not only are local customs different from your own society's, but the people's values are different also. This realization often causes greater feelings of rejection of you as an American, disorientation, loss of self-confidence, irritation and even depression. Some people become very critical of their host country and perhaps question their decision to leave the U.S., oftentimes spending too much time alone, thinking about family and friends back home which just makes the situation worse. Some students spend far too much time on e-mail and instant messaging with friends and family back in the U.S.

In the U.S., the following values are often in conflict with values of other cultures:

Importance of the individual: This value leads to a strong sense of privacy, both in space and time. Remember that you have become a "foreign student" and you have learned this sense of individualism back home which can leave you feeling confused and closed out from the lives of locals who may have a "group focused" cultural value. The U.S. academic system reflects our individualism in that students are expected to compete among themselves. This pride in independence and individualism can lead to behavior that is viewed as quite egotistical and insensitive by people from societies that value community higher than the individual.

Friendship: North American society is very mobile: few people are born, live and die in the same place. Making friends quickly (but superficially) is a survival skill in the U.S. while in most countries, long-term friendships (even life-long friendships) is more the norm.

Time: North Americans lead very hectic, structured lives. Even our leisure time is scheduled and filled with activities. Punctuality is highly valued. This is not universally true.

Lack of knowledge about other countries: Many North Americans feel that the U.S. is a superpower and therefore they have no need to learn about the rest of the world while students in other countries typically know quite a lot about geography, international politics and popular culture in the U.S.

Acceptable behavior in public: North Americans' hectic schedule "requires" them to do things considered ill-mannered in other, more traditional societies. For example, many people in the U.S. eat while walking or driving in a car. Public displays of affection, particularly between young people, are common even though not always considered appropriate by others. Observe the local customs where you are studying abroad and be sensitive to their way of life.

3. Bi-cultural Stage

After a few weeks or even a few months, you will begin to feel more comfortable among the local people where you are living and studying. You will feel more relaxed, more self-confident and happy. You will be able to view the local culture more objectively and not feel threatened by the conflicting values.

To get to that point as quickly as possible, the following are some strategies for survival:
Strategies for survival in a foreign country (What should I do?)

A. Personal: Work on building self-esteem; obtain communication training, especially interpersonal skills; be conscious of the need to build positive relationships, especially with at least two local students of your sex and age who are moral and ethical; don't take yourself too seriously, learn to laugh at yourself; keep a journal; set the goal of becoming bi-cultural; from the local cultural perspective, look for logical reasons behind the people's behavior and verbal expressions; perhaps it is most essential that you be aware of what is happening to you so that you not panic and/or return home. Avoid the trap of ethnocentrism - practice cultural relativism. Don't try to "become British or become Uruguayan, etc.;" be yourself but in a culturally appropriate manner. Read carefully the Apostle Paul's insights in I Cor. 9:19-23.

B. Social: Join a social network (band, theater, etc.), attend a church, play on a sports team, stay in contact with family and friends back home by letters, e-mail, etc. (but not excessively). Be direct with people and don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Take the initiative in making friends.

Thought questions:

- A. What is meant by the terms "culture shock" and "reverse culture shock"?
- B. What are the main causes of culture shock?
- C. What are the main manifestations of culture shock?
- D. What are the adaptive advantages and/or disadvantages of culture shock?

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Guidelines for Ethnographic Journal

As a study abroad student, you have the same problems and difficulties as every international student who comes to the U.S. for college. You have to become flexible and learn to adapt to a new socio-cultural environment. In order to feel comfortable in your host country, you need to learn to interpret the behavior of locals and learn to predict the responses they will make to specific behaviors of yours.

Purposes for writing a journal: In western societies, including the U.S., learning to think critically and analytically is an essential part of a university education. The purpose of keeping an ethnographic journal is:

1. to examine what is happening in your daily life in the context of your host society (rather than just reacting without thinking);
2. to overcome your natural tendency to think ethnocentrically (every human being has this same tendency), and to learn to reflect on your experiences as they occur;
3. to learn to think analytically; to see relationships among concepts you deal with there in their social context, to see the ramifications of the cultural elements you discover in their society, to see how these cultural elements fit together into a meaningful whole.

Directions: The journal should be kept in a spiral notebook (with your name on it) and each entry should be one page in length, containing three parts. At the top of the page (part one), write the date and place. The second line, part two, should contain a brief description of the event or situation that seems significant to you - perhaps because it is something that would not happen back in the U.S. Part three should contain your analysis of the event or situation. Here, you should answer the question, "What does this teach me about my host culture"? or "Why do these people do/say this"? Try to discover the relationship between cultural values, such as your own cultural value of individualism, and your own observations of specific behaviors of your hosts' behaviors that serve as an example of that cultural characteristic.

Possible topics: Through your observations and interviews with various people etc., describe dealings with neighbors, your feelings about the elderly in your host society, feelings about school, TV commercials, language differences, religious practices/beliefs of the local people, differences seen in family life, treatment of pets, cars, care of handicapped, bathrooms, demonstrations of affection, leisure habits, abortion/divorce, medical practices in your host society, social clubs, etc.

What is the basis for your moral/ethical decisions?

	Your values	American values	Host country values
1. Financial security			
2. Freedom of speech			
3. Equality of opportunity			
4. Self-reliance			
5. Loyalty to country (U.S.)			
6. Tolerance of others (different)			
7. Freedom of religion			
8. Individual initiative			
9. Right to private property			
10. Government by law			
11. Concern for the underdog			
12. Fair play			
13. Justice			
14. Social order and stability			

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Initial considerations for the study of our global village:

Epistemology from a globalist's perspective

How do we know what we know? The question of epistemology is always unsettling. Even the very discussion of ideas we have held as true, as common knowledge, seems to be sacrilegious. However, all living human beings, all social groups have their own set of assumptions about the world around them, about reality. These assumptions are acquired during the process of enculturation (growing up within a particular social group). Some assumptions reflect the findings of scientific investigation; others reflect superstition or a "common knowledge" approach to learning. Everyone grows up in a specific society and receives that society's own conceptual framework with which one is supposed to interpret other people's behaviors and judge other people's beliefs.

A university course should provide us with the opportunity to openly and dispassionately discuss ideas, opinions, beliefs, cultural value systems and whatever else we have learned as members of a social group. If we all learn to contribute our understandings of the world about us in an appropriately considerate manner, we all stand to learn new insights and thereby to profit from the course.

Please remember that the major goal in global studies is to gain insight into the rest of the world as well as the relationships that bind nations and peoples together. The discussions we engage in are not designed to justify a particular social group or a particular belief system. The central purpose is to understand other societies and the development of transnational relationships. No statements or concepts should be taken by the student as an effort to justify behaviors or beliefs.

As other social scientists, anthropologists attempt, primarily, to describe accurately what already exists in a society or cultural system of beliefs (and behaviors) and then they also attempt to give rational explanations regarding the origins and development of specific beliefs and/or behaviors of a social group. Again, the purpose is not to justify (or condemn) any single item within the society in question but rather to explain or interpret some specific item within a broader socio-cultural context. In other words, we seek to locate the belief or behavior in question in its social, cultural, historical context.

For example, most Americans are "up in arms" concerning the events of September 11, 2001. Some would advocate heavier military strikes than what is currently being done. Others would go further and advocate for the invasion of several Middle Eastern countries. A non-Muslim Argentine intellectual recently wrote something like: "I do not celebrate September 11 or any act of terrorism. But, America, you had it coming." Why would a non-Muslim make such a statement? What is the historical context out of which this person is writing? You may have someone ask you: "How many times has the U.S. invaded a Latin American country or sent the C.I.A. to a Latin American country to intervene in that country's internal affairs"? Knowledge of your own country's history as well as world history will be essential.

Armed with a broader understanding of the world and the existing system of transnational networks, students will become more effective among the peoples of the world - whether as visiting students, as business people, as social change agents, as missionaries, as diplomats or in any other capacity. As we begin this class and your semester abroad, decide now to try to become as integrated as possible into the global village of the 21st century.

Justification for globalism from a Biblical perspective

Since the world has become a global village, there is a great need for all of us to learn to live together. We need to learn each other's languages, each other's cultures. World geography should become as familiar to us as the area where we grew up. Each of us is a citizen of some city, of some state, of some nation. We must learn that we are also citizens of the world.

I live in Abilene, Texas, and want to see Abilene prosper and be a place where people can live together in harmony, at peace with themselves and with one another. I was born and grew up in Texas and want to see Texas prosper and develop new means to provide for all the needs of its citizens. I am an American citizen and want to see the U.S. prosper and focus on finding ways to use technology which are more humane as well as more compatible with the environment. I am also a global citizen and want all nations to come together and insure that all peoples everywhere have economic opportunities to develop social systems that are just and fair to everyone.

Following the principles found in Revelation 7:9f, as well as many other passages (cf. Lev. 24:22, Ezek. 22:29, etc.), I want to see the entire world prosper and enjoy God's blessings: Japan, Germany, Mexico, the People's Republic of China, etc. God loves all peoples - no exceptions. God knows the entire world and its geography better than you know your hometown or neighborhood. God knows every society and its cultural value system from A to Z. Shouldn't we become more like the God we worship? Learn geography; learn about God's world and the peoples who inhabit it.

Remember:

During the summer, read Daniel Hess' Studying Abroad / Learning Abroad and be prepared for the final exam based on this book, class discussions, and your ability to identify specific countries located on the world map (you will have to identify 25 different countries). We will have the exam Sunday afternoon August 24, 2003.