

Multimedia Storytelling and Intercultural Communication COMM-3010 (3 credits)

Portugal: Multimedia Storytelling and Intercultural Communication

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

The lines between art and commerce, producer and consumer, content creator and audience are increasingly blurred in today's media landscape. In the private sector, private corporations rely on user-generated content campaigns and consumer communities to create new products and market them in increasingly powerful ways. Within the sphere of media journalism, many of the old models of publishing have become outdated, and news media publishers have quickly adopted exciting new forms of digital and multimedia storytelling to survive.

Additionally, citizens and activists are using smartphones and inexpensive digital tools to quickly capture and produce media content to push grassroots narratives through social media. Amidst this digital landscape, the emerging tools of artificial intelligence and virtual reality are creating new possibilities and frontiers, even as they threaten to push us further into a 'post-truth' era.

In this course, students learn fundamental theories of intercultural communication and consider how to apply these in a range of multimedia storytelling projects. Media artists, journalists, designers, and content creators are increasingly called to work across mediums, platforms, and cultures to share stories and build campaigns. This course gives students the relevant background to consider how messages and discourses can be amplified and refracted across cultures. Students develop the critical tools to evaluate media campaigns, understand their own biases and cultural upbringings, and consider how to create content that aligns with their ethics, values, and interests in a variety of professional settings.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe fundamental theories of intercultural communication;
- Analyze how media narratives respond to, reproduce, and reinvent socio-cultural ideas about critical global issues;
- Assess impacts of intercultural multimedia storytelling in strategic communications such as building a brand across multiple platforms and industries;

- Describe basic multimedia editorial and production skills and tools used in journalistic, artistic, and professional content creation settings.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts

Gitner, S. (2023). *Multimedia Storytelling for Digital Communicators in a Multiplatform World* (2nd edition). Routledge.

Sorrells, K. (2016). *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice* (2nd edition). Sage.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Cultural Autobiography (20%)

In this assignment, students are asked to write a personal and contemplative cultural autobiography. Students may approach this assignment in any format they choose (i.e. visual, multimedia, narrative, academic, etc.) and creative approaches are highly encouraged. Despite the choice of medium, students should demonstrate a keen and critical understanding of the discussions and readings on intercultural communication. The Cultural Autobiography should be 2-3 pages in length or equivalent if choosing another format.

2) Media Analysis of Critical Global Issue (35%)

Students choose a critical global issue actively being discussed in Portuguese media and use at least three popular media or academic sources (which can include articles, online videos, tv news stories, radio stories, podcasts, social media, songs, art, etc.) to analyze the issue. The issue can be local to Lisbon or Portugal, or an international issue, but the sources used must be from, or related to, Portugal or Portuguese media in some way. The Media Analysis should be 3-4 pages in length or equivalent if choosing another format (such as visual, audio, etc.).

3) Opinion Documentary (Op-Doc) (35%)

Individually, in pairs, or in small groups, students create a short (no longer than three minutes) op-doc (or opinion documentary) on a topic of their choosing. The op-doc should utilize both visual and audio elements and focus on personal views, thoughts, and ideas about the topic of choice which can be a continuation of the themes focused on in the media analysis, or a new topic. Students are encouraged to keep this project simple given the time constraints and are encouraged to explore production techniques and emerging ideas about potential Independent Study Projects. Groups or pairs will be constructed based on topics of interest as well as the editorial and production skills of each student. Examples will be shown in class and groups will be formed early in the semester to allow content and production ideas to percolate and take shape.

4) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

Cultural Autobiography - 20%
Media Analysis of Critical Global Issue – 35%
Opinion Documentary – 35%
Participation - 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components

and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the

course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to you despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- **Personal Technology Use:** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

Module 1: Introduction to Intercultural Communication

In this introductory module, students learn about the origins and foundational theories of the field of intercultural communication. The focus is on multiple meanings of “culture,” raising critical questions about the field’s historical ties to anthropology and colonialism, as well as its applicability in an increasingly hybridized and globalized world. This module also asks students to reflect on their own cultures, and the challenges and potential of working in multicultural teams and communities, particularly for creative media or artistic work.

Sessions may include:

- Theorizing intercultural communication
- Personal history storytelling exercise
- What is culture? What defines Portuguese culture(s)?
- Globalization, hybridization, and culture

Required Readings:

Sorrells, K. (2016). *Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice (2nd edition)*. Sage. (Chapter 1: Opening the conversation: Studying intercultural communication; and chapter 2: Understanding the context of globalization; pp. 26-90).

Tirmizi, A. (2008). The impact of culture on multicultural teams (pp 21-42). In *Effective multicultural teams: Theory and practice*. Springer.

Assignment due: Cultural Autobiography

Module 2: Perception, Affect, Language, and Visuality in Intercultural Communication

This module delves into the nuances of intercultural communication through an investigation of cultural and personal ways of sensing, perceiving, speaking, behaving, and other forms of non-verbal communication. This module is centered on giving students an introduction to the critical tools needed to interrogate cultural ways of artmaking, media critique, and narrative creation, as well as the relationship between content creator and audience.

Sessions may include:

- Interrogating the Western concept of the “five senses”
- What is visual storytelling?
- Non-verbal communication in visual storytelling
- Portuguese media: television, radio, print, and more

Required Readings:

Jandt, F. (2020). *An introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in a Global Community (10th edition)*. Sage. (Chapter 3: Culture’s influence on perception; pp. 58-76).

- Gitner, S. (2023). *Multimedia storytelling for digital communicators in a multiplatform world (2nd edition)*. Routledge. (Chapter 1: Visual storytelling: In what ways do we think about visual storytelling every day? pp. 1-31).
- Lewinski, M., Hample, D., Saagua, J., & Mohammed, D. (2018). Arguing in Portugal: A cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 11(3), 233-253.

Recommended reading:

- Sorrells, K. (2016). *Intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice (2nd edition)*. Sage. (Chapter 3: Globalizing body politics: Embodied verbal and nonverbal communication; pp. 92-124).

Module 3: Technology, Media, and Digital Cultures

Social media, the Internet, and the expansion of digital tools (smart phones in particular) have given rise to crowdsourced journalism and the possibility for citizens and entrepreneurial content creators to quickly shape cultural and media narratives. This new digital landscape has also served to subvert dominant narratives and create connections across cultures in exciting new ways, contributing to a pluriversality of truths and narratives. This module, which includes a visit to Braga, a hub of digital media and experimental art in the north of Portugal, focuses on how digital media and other forms of technology constitute emerging forms of what might be considered a globalizing digital culture, which further complicates ideas of intercultural communication. Through site visits to multidisciplinary art spaces and performances, students interrogate narrative and abstract forms of digital creativity, as well as the challenges inherent in critically navigating various forms of digital multimedia landscapes and digital community building.

Sessions may include:

- Citizen journalism: possibilities and challenges
- Visit to GNRator space in Braga
- Experiment art and digital media
- Building intercultural communities through media arts

Required readings:

- Coelho, P. (2023). New frontiers of investigative journalism: From the lone wolf to the pack. *Comunicacao y Sociedade* 44, 1-18
- Lopes, F. A. S. (2017). Media, art, and technology: A contemporary reflection. *Comunicacao y Sociedade* 31, pp. 299-310.

Recommended Readings:

- Gitner, S. (2023). *Multimedia storytelling for digital communicators in a multiplatform world (2nd edition)*. Routledge. (Chapter 4: The internet and social media: How are the internet and social media affecting visual storytelling? pp. 120-67).
- Sorrells, K. (2016). *Intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice (2nd edition)*.

Sage. (Chapter 4: (Dis)placing culture and cultural space: Locations of verbal and non-verbal communication; pp. 125-157).

Assignment due: Media Analysis of Critical Global Issue

Module 4: Remixing and Reimagining Cultural Heritage

Building on earlier discussions of culture and hybridization, this module, which includes an excursion to Seville, Spain, considers the colonial histories of Spain and Portugal, and the ways in which these countries have, for hundreds of years, woven global and diasporic artistic and cultural influences into the fabric of their societies. Within this history, this module thinks about digital media as an extension of this long history, rather than a new trend, and how cultural institutions are blending the digital with the analog to not only represent, but remix and reimagine what constitutes Spanish or Portuguese culture.

Sessions may include:

- Cultural heritage in the age of digital culture
- Digitizing culture versus digital culture
- Colonialism, neocolonialism, and decoloniality
- Media narratives of refugee migration and cultural transformation

Required readings:

de Sousa, V., Khan, S., & Pereira, P. S. (2022). Cultural restitution as a duty of memory. *Comunicacao y Sociedade* 41, 11-22.

da Silva, A. M. D., & Borges, L. C. (2020). How bits and bytes widen cultural heritage boundaries. *Journal of Digital Media & Interaction* 3: 7, 10-19

Velhinho, A., & Almeida, P. (2023). The legacy of collective memory in digital culture: Digitalisation, cultural mapping and co-creation. *Comunicacao y Sociedade* 43, 1-19.

Recommended Reading:

Sorrells, K. (2016). *Intercultural communication: Globalization and social justice (2nd edition)*. Sage. (Chapter 7: Jamming media and popular culture: Analyzing messages about diverse cultures; pp. 226-256).

Module 5: Multimedia Storytelling, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Futures

In this final module, we focus on the emergence of new digital tools such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, and the ways in which corporations, Internet tricksters and trolls, journalists, artists, and politicians are using and manipulating these tools. The module raises questions about the role of the nation-state in mediating online spaces, as well as the ethics of marketing, audience targeting, and the corporate mining and sharing of personal information. The module also considers the ways in which artists, activists, and journalists are using these tools to create powerful digital media content that pushes for awareness of critical global issues and social change.

Sessions may include:

- Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and the future of media technology
- Advertising, data, and transmedia marketing campaigns
- The role of the nation-state in guiding media in a global, digital world
- Social media and digital communities

Required Readings:

Karnouskos, S. (2020). Artificial intelligence in digital media: The era of deepfakes. *IEEE Transactions on Technology and Society*, 1(3), 138-147.

Storycenter. (2023, August 7). AI and digital storytelling – Storycenter’s Joe Lambert interviews Brian Alexander, Georgetown University. <https://www.storycenter.org/storycenter-blog//ai-and-digital-storytelling>

Recommended Readings:

Sales, R. K. L., Amaro, A. C., & Baldi, V. (2021). Building trust in digital platforms for sharing collaborative lifestyles in sustainable contexts. *Comunicacao y Sociedad* 39, 223-247.

Assignment due: Op-Doc