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American Ways: A Course in Contemporary U.S. Culture for International Students

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AMERICAN WAYS:

A COURSE IN CONTEMPORARY U.S. CULTURE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

International student populations are increasing in large proportions at universities across the United States. The onset of culture shock and difficulty communicating and relating with their new peers compounds an already difficult situation. Universities and colleges need a method to accommodate these students and help facilitate their transitions into a completely new academic and social environment.

"*American Ways*: A course on Contemporary American Culture for International Students" is a semester-long university level course designed to give knowledge and understanding of "American" culture to international students attending U.S. higher education institutions. It will cover topics surrounding U.S. culture that include: basic knowledge and skills, American *doxa* (taken-for-granted understanding of American culture), and American diversity. The course will be coupled with accompanying international student focused social programming to reinforce what they have learned in the classroom. The students will be required to participate in social programming to give them the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real-world situations. Through this course, international students will gain crucial knowledge about U.S. culture to both better understand the new environment in which they are living and studying as well as to improve their social interaction with their domestic counterparts. "*American Ways"* will allow international students to better adapt to social situations in the United States, as well as relieve common misconceptions of U.S. culture they may have.

Lessons from the course will contribute to the literature and practices for remedies to international student integration and assimilation to U.S. universities and colleges. The replicable and adaptable model will better equip U.S. higher education institutions to alleviate international student adjustment issues.

INTRODUCTION

The large numbers of international students attending colleges and universities is increasing across the United States. International student attendance at U.S. higher education institutions increased five percent in 2011; setting a record high of 723,227 in the United States (*Open Doors*, 2011). These students arrive with an often-insufficient understanding of U.S. culture, traditions or norms. This added cultural adjustment period for international students leads to increased stress and social isolation (Chen, 1999; Hull, 1978; Schräm & Lauver, 1988). Thus, as a practical approach to this problem, the establishment of an "American" contemporary culture course for international students can be implemented at colleges and universities in the United States. A course in contemporary U.S. culture for international students would address the issues of adjustment, isolation, culture shock, and general misunderstanding attributed to maladjusted preconceptions of U.S. culture and lack of general knowledge about the United States and its people.

While U.S. universities and colleges are actively recruiting abroad, many are not and yet are still experiencing increasing international student enrollment (*Open Doors, 2011)*. Students coming to the United States from a broad range of countries have a variety of reasons for wishing to attend U.S. institutions. Regardless of their

reasons, all of these institutions are becoming inundated with international student populations that they have never before experienced (*Open Doors,* 2011). While most domestic students are raised in an environment that prepares them for a life away from home at a university or college, international students have a completely different perspective on university life. Stemming from this perspective as well as hailing from different cultures/traditions coupled with culture shock and homesickness, the struggles of international students are compounded often resulting in academic failure, and drug/alcohol abuse (B. Lancaster, personal communication, November 2011).

There are institutions that have implemented rudimentary support systems to try to combat the growing concerns over international students, but the underlying root cause is being overlooked. International student populations experience a variety of struggles, but one major cause for concern, exclusively experienced by international student populations, is that of acculturation and integration into the U.S. university system. This environment makes it extremely difficult for international students to develop friendships and social connections in and outside the classroom, connect with domestic roommates in dormitory style living conditions, progress academically, and develop their English language abilities. These conditions often result in international students becoming isolated, and withdrawn (Chen, 1999; Hull, 1978; Schräm & Lauver, 1988). As a result, international students will flock to communities that hail from their same country or region resulting in very little progression in language ability and further isolation

from the university community and student body as a whole (Chen, 1999; Hull, 1978; Schräm & Lauver, 1988).

This dilemma is being experienced across the country and though this is a multipronged problem, I propose the design of a course with a curriculum focus on American culture, and the design of out-of-class programming support. This course will focus on the most pertinent information and be up-to-date with popular culture references as well as culture references that most every domestic university student is also familiar with. The academic in-class curriculum will also be coupled with programming that includes international support groups, domestic and international student integration activity programming, and programming linked to an International Student Association development and collaboration.

Contextual Information

From August 15, 2011 to June 12, 2012 I worked as the Graduate Intern for the International Student and Scholar Services office (ISSS) in the Center for Global Education at the University of San Francisco. The University of San Francisco (USF) is located in the heart of the Richmond district in San Francisco, California. USF has a rich heritage and over 150 years of achieving academic excellence (About USF, 2012). Originally founded by the Jesuit order of the Catholic Church in 1855, USF's roots are in St. Ignatius church where the original founding monks began their mission to build a University based on Jesuit values. When USF opened its doors in 1855, the inaugural class was comprised of only three students (About USF, 2012).

St. Ignatius church is now at the center of the campus that sprawls over roughly ten city blocks.

The total student population is now over eight thousand whose students hail from every corner of the globe. Students from all across the United States and the world flock to USF to obtain a world-class education deeply rooted in Jesuit tradition and core academic values that emphasize social justice and community involvement, as the mission states, "*Educating Minds and Hearts to Change the World (*Mission, 2012).*"

The student body at USF is as diverse as the city in which it is located with students representing almost every state in the Union as well as an international student population that hails from 77 different nations (International Student Population, 2012). USF is unique in the aspect that though it is a relatively small school compared to its University of California counterparts; it still has quite a sizeable international student population. Currently, there are over 1,200 international students attending USF, comprising twelve percent of the undergraduate student population and roughly twenty percent of the graduate student body (International Student Population, 2012). Though the larger public institutions have more of an incentive to recruit international students as they pay higher tuition rates than domestic students, USF recruits for non-monetary reasons. Rather USF's rationale for attracting international students is to culturally enrich its campus, diversify its student body, and to send out students to all parts of the world with the values instilled in them at USF.

The increase in the international student population at USF is an excellent achievement in student recruitment abroad. However, there was also an unexpected byproduct of the steady increase in the international student population. As the numbers steadily rose, so did the number of incidences in cultural adjustment, academic failure, and social disparity (B. Lancaster, personal communication, October, 2011). The administration thought that the domestic student body would be more than willing to openly accept all the international students and they all assumed the programs and procedures that were already in place were more than adequate (L. Kosiewicz, personal communication, October, 2012). Unfortunately, the majority of the international students still have little to no interaction with the domestic students, are becoming more and more isolated, have not been able to improve their critical English language skills, are having more confrontations with domestic student roommates in the residence halls, and are becoming more and more detached from the rest of the campus (L. Kosiewicz, personal communication, October, 2012).

My position at USF in the ISSS office was to assist and implement a number of social programming initiatives to facilitate the transition and integration of the international student population into the university and greater San Francisco community. My position gave me the rare opportunity to experience the realities of the international students at USF and allowed me the chance to see how universities can better integrate their international student populations to avoid the previous stated problems as well as address international student retention issues.

It came to my attention while running social programs and during interactions with the international students, that very few of them had little, if any, solid understanding of U.S. culture and social norms. This is not to say that there is one homogeneous culture and set of values in the United States, but there are certain similarities and manners of social interaction that can better help facilitate that transition process of international students into the "college" environment of the United States. Having been placed in the didactic role numerous times in explaining basic "American" culture norms, i.e. restaurant tipping culture, it dawned on me that there are very few institutions that offer any sort of course, credit bearing or otherwise, that address the needs of international student understanding of U.S. culture. There are courses offered that explore cultures from around the world or even specific cultures within the United States, but few that are geared toward the integration of international students onto U.S. college and university campuses.

Research Question

In addressing the question of how to better facilitate the transition and integration of international students into U.S. college and university campuses, we must first look at the difficulties and realities that international student populations across the United States face. For the purposes of this paper, I am going to focus on the acculturation aspects of international student populations, the lack of basic knowledge of "American" contemporary culture, and how to construct a base

platform for establishing a credit bearing course at the university level to address the acculturation needs of international students.

First, is the question of what do most international students fundamentally lack in terms of their knowledge of contemporary "American" culture? In order to tackle this question, we must first define contemporary "American" culture. John Storey (2006) defines culture in a way that is the most applicable given the context of teaching a semester to a yearlong course on contemporary "American" culture for international students. Storey (2006) states, "...We must first confront the difficulty in the term itself. That is, depending on how it is used, quite different areas of inquiry and forms of theoretical definition and analytical analysis are suggested...culture is in effect an *empty* conceptual category, one which can be filled in a variety of often conflicting ways, depending on the context of the use (p. 1)" Using Storey's definition and work on popular culture, a framework can be laid to address the needs of the international students in terms of acculturation and integration. A large basis for the curriculum on what aspects and dimensions of culture should be incorporated into the course will be on my observations and interactions with the international student body at USF.

Second, is how to approach the design and implementation of a course without the curriculum being seen as exploiting international students as a vehicle for expansionist policies for cultural indoctrination. To properly address this issue the course must focus on addressing both the diversity and homogeneity of "American" culture. With the homogeneity aspect of the course, there must be a concentration on the "take-for-granted" aspect of "American" culture to avoid the

pitfall of having a Euro-American focus with discourse being dominated by arguing the influence of European ways of thinking in the United States (Strauss, 2004). Though the influence of European ways of thought on the culture(s) in the United States is undeniable and debatable as far as its dominance in "American" culture. For the purposes of the course, the taken-for-granted aspect of contemporary U.S. culture will be the primary focus in addressing homogeneity in "American" culture. This aspect is better defined in the sense that "taken-for-granted" cultural understandings shape the way people interpret their realities regardless of their ideological disagreements (Strauss, 2004, p. 5) and move into what Pierre Bourdieu calls "*doxa* (Bourdieu, 1972, p. 168)." *Doxa* tends to be unspoken and in contrast to the heterodox and orthodox dogmas battling at the level of explicit discourses (Strauss, 2004, p. 5). *Doxa,* in the context of culture, is the unspoken aspects that those born and raised in the culture subconsciously know and understand. Examples of cultural *doxa* is knowing what to immediately do when you walk into a bar/restaurant/department store with zero hesitation, and understanding common mentalities around social interaction. Of course what is and is not taken-for-granted *doxa* is up to interpretation by each instructor of the course and by no means are there binding cultural traditions or traits that indefinitely define American *doxa*. Culture, and especially in one as diverse and changing as the United States, is ever evolving and thus the platform for such a course must also take this into account and evolve along side of the culture it is teaching. For the purpose of this course as an example platform for universities and colleges to emulate, the topics for addressing "American" *doxa* are to focus on:

- Senses of individuality and self-achievement/improvement
- Material acquisition,
- Sense of success

The diversity aspect of the course is, by all means, the most difficult issue to address when designing such a course. Anthropologists will argue that because of the United States' diversity it is hard to generalize any uniform culture and that it does not exist (Wolf, 1991), but there in lies a crucial aspect to highlight and explore. Yes, cultures are constructed and invented, but in terms of the United States; we must also acknowledge the many different entities that comprise "American" culture such as regional, religious, class, and affiliation and conviction (Strauss, 2004, p. 5). Thus the course must focus and highlight not only racial and ethnic diversity, but also "red" and "blue" state differences, class issues between suburban middle class households and that of urban and rural America as well as gender and sexual orientation and identity issues in the United States (Strauss, 2004, p. 6).

This approach is by no means the cure all to incorporating international students onto U.S. university and college campuses and does not attempt to define all of U.S. culture into one homogeneous internalized culture. Rather, its purpose is to give international students a "tool kit" to have a broader knowledge base to better understand and relate to their American student counterparts both in the classroom and in social settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Having international students present at U.S. colleges and universities is not a new phenomenon. Universities and colleges are scrambling to find solutions to

deal with their ever growing international student populations and are not only looking to organizations of authority such as NAFSA but also to each other. International student and scholar services (ISSS) offices at universities and colleges around the United States are now taking on additional roles, besides immigration advising and documentation, to accommodate and integrate their international student populations.

NAFSA currently has a variety of resources available for advising; including the "Advisors Manual," but it is also building a database for social programming models that are being implemented at various institutions across the United States. The NAFSA Knowledge Community for International Student and Scholar Services (2012) now offers a variety of online articles, quantitative studies, and programming models that are available to assist ISSS offices in coping with the increased demand for international student support. Along side its resource library for advisors, NAFSA has also established an online network of topics related to social programming and community involvement focused around international students. There are also discussion forums as well as an events calendar with events and topics focused on student programming (NAFSA Campus & Community Programming Network, 2012). International student offices are networking through NAFSA national and regional conferences to find effective solutions to student programming to better serve their growing international student populations.

Open Doors Data

The data provided by the Institute of International Education in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs can properly conceptualize the breadth and scope of international students attending US higher education institutions. In 2011, the number of international students attending colleges and universities in the United States has increased five percent from the previous year to a total of 723,227 (*Open Doors*, 2011). The increase has set an all-time high in international student enrollment and set a record-breaking year for overall increase in international students attending higher education institutions in the United States. This is a thirty-two percent increase in international student enrollment compared with just a decade ago (*Open Doors*, 2011). The record increase is largely due to increased numbers of students from China at the undergraduate level. Students coming from China have increased by twenty-three percent and forty-three percent of that was at the undergraduate level (*Open Doors,* 2011).

The impact of the increase in international students has also had a significant economic impact in the United States, as international students have contributed more than $21 billion dollars to the U.S. economy through their tuition and living expenditures (*Open Doors,* 2011). Higher Education has become one of the largest service sector exports in the United States and the revenue from international students does not just impact the host campus but also the local economies where the host institution is located. International students living expenses such as books, transportation, room and board, and support for accompanying family members

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account for the majority of their contribution to local economies. Seventy percent of international students receive funding from outside of the United States, including personal and family sources, as well as home country or university assistance, adding even more to the overall economic impact (*Open Doors,* 2011).

Articles/Qualitative Studies

Motivations

To better understand the increase in the number of international students attending U.S. higher education institutions, we must also take a look at the motivations, and criteria for choosing U.S. institutions. The exhaustive study undertaken by Obst and Forster (2005) at the Institute of International Education (IIE) as well as the study conducted by Dr. Altbach (2004) looked into these factors and each found that international students choose to study in the United States over their home country institutions or other countries for a number of factors; of these the most prominent ones are: job security, reputation, political and social pulls, and specific degrees offered.

Enhancing career opportunities and gaining experience for future employment, whether at home of internationally, is one of the major contributing factors for students choosing to study in the United States (Obst & Forster, 2005). The United States is a major attractor of foreign students due in large part to its diverse economy and willingness to hire well-qualified foreigners at higher salaries in their fields of study over that of their home countries (Altbach, 2004). The study conducted by Obst and Forster (2005) found that seventy-eight percent of their 420

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students surveyed listed that an education in the United States would greatly enhance their chances of securing employment after graduation, either at home or abroad. It is also worth noting that among the students surveyed, it was students originating from Africa, Latin America, and Asia that were most likely to list career enhancement as a large contributing factor in choosing to study in the United States (Obst & Forster, 2005, p. 1 & 16).

Another motivating factor for international students choosing to study in the United States is the prestige that comes with earning a degree from an institution in the United States. Most students see the United States educational system as the "best" in the world and desire the value and prestige that comes with a degree from the United States, often times regardless of the actual standing of the institution in international academic rankings (Altbach, 2004, p. 4). Many international students will often choose an institution in the United States with less selectivity than that of one in their home country purely for this reason. There are also many students choosing to attend these less selective institutions, including community colleges, with hopes to transfer to an institution with a higher standing and at the same time saving in tuition costs (Altbach, 2004, p. 4). Among the students surveyed by Obst and Forster (2005), eighty-three percent responded that reputation and prestige of the degree was a large contributing factor into choosing to come to the United States (p. 19).

Political and social issues in the students' home countries were also a very large component in choosing to study in the United States. In some countries, such as in Malaysia, discriminatory admissions policies affect students' choices to study

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outside of their home nations (Altbach, 2004, p. 3). Political and social strife also

affect a student's decision to study abroad with the main desire not only being to get

a world class education but also to escape political or other forms of repression.

These students wish to experience academic freedom in an environment that is not

available in their home nation due to political reasons or even social reasons i.e.

family issues with females studying or social obligations to the family and or

tribe/village/community (Altbach, 2004, p. 3).

The ability to choose from a variety of degrees offered and in specific degree

tracks is also another large contributing factor for students to study in the United

States (Obst & Forster, 2005). With the large variety of degrees offered at U.S.

institutions in very specific degree tracks, many international students feel

compelled to choose schools in the United States. Degree programs in many liberal

arts schools with more "rare" majors as well as traditional STEM (science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics) students with specific concentrations

such as medicinal chemistry, attract large numbers of students to the United States

especially at the graduate level (Altbach, 2004, p. 20).

Perceptions

Creation of a course in "American" contemporary culture also requires a look

into what are international students' perceptions and preconceptions of what the

United States is and who its' people are. This gives a greater understanding of what

a majority of students perceive the United States to be and thus gives a basis for

what the topics and areas to cover should be when designing the curriculum.

Lyuobov Kichigina in 2004 for NAFSA conducted a survey of international students' perception of the United States and Americans, via overseas advisors, through a series of essays and compiled the findings. The questions students were asked to write essays on were as follows:

How do I see the United States?
Where do we get our information?
What are our stereotypes of the United States and Americans?
What is the American Dream?
What do we think about Americans?
Americans taught me…

 The opinions of those who have been to the United States and those that have not as well as a tally of the countries that participated in the survey were also taken into account (Kichigina, 2004). The findings were grouped according to the question and the most common answers for each question were recorded in the report. There were a large number of responses for each question and for the purposes of designing a course for international students in "American" contemporary culture. It is best to highlight the misconceptions rather than other sweeping generalizations.

In the "How do I see the United States?" grouping of responses, one common response was, "There is no difference between black and white people (Kichigina, 2004)." This is of course a major cultural issue that will need to be addressed in the diversity component of teaching the course. While it is understood that this topic in and alone can be a college level course by itself, interracial relations, both past and present should be incorporated into the curriculum albeit taking brevity into account.

In the "What are our stereotypes of the United States and Americans?" grouping of responses, a common misconception that was raised was, "Americans kill some people who wear head scarves (Kichigina, 2004)." This perception touches on massive geopolitical politics and can be argued in either direction. The point in addressing this issue would be to state the United States official stance on the "War on Terror" and also refer, if not encourage, students to explore the topic more with thorough political science courses.

The biggest misconceptions came through the "What is the American Dream?" grouping of responses. Common responses included "white snow, "first day of Christmas," and "lights of the fireworks on the fourth of July (Kichigina, 2004)." Though not entirely incorrect, these responses are surface and thus the issue of defining (if one can) the "American Dream" as an idea or way of life would be the most appropriate approach in tackling these common misconceptions.

The study also highlights positive conceptions of the United States, but the purpose of the course is not to reinforce positive (pre) conceptions of the United States. It is rather to act as a knowledge base for international students to gain a greater understanding of their environment, colleagues, and peers.

The opinions of those that have been in the United States compared to those that have never been to the United States varied greatly. The opinions of those who have been to the United States, though duration of stay was not documented, were by in large more perceptive and based on experience. Their opinions reflected direct contact with Americans and immersion in the country. The responses of those who have not been to the United States were to be as expected where a majority of their

conceptions of the United States were based on television, movies, and popular culture-magazines. Their responses made very wide generalizations and very common misconceptions such as, "All Americans eat McDonalds (Kichigina, 2004)." Though the study reflects common conceptions and misconceptions that international students have of the United States and Americans, the pool of students hailed from mainly former Soviet Republics and South Asia. The students who participated in the study were from:

Armenia	Bangladesh
Georgia	India
Kyrgyzstan	Kuwait
Moldova	Nepal
Russia	Turkmenistan (Kichigina, 2004)

Institutional Examples of International Student Oriented Courses

The large increase in international student populations in higher education institutions across the United States has prompted many institutions to develop more programming for their international student populations. Most programs are individual social programs with little or no didactic role in directly teaching "American" culture to international students. This is a direction that colleges and universities are exploring and a few institutions have been experimenting with course work for international students in U.S. culture. The University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley) and The University of Southern California (USC) are among the few that are exploring this route to better integrate their large international student populations to their campuses and to the United States.

UC Berkeley has developed a semester long course offered in the Fall to better acclimate international students to both the UC Berkeley campus, the rigors of academic life, as well as adjusting to living and studying in the United States. The course is entitled "*The International Student Experience: Pathways to Personal and Academic Success.*" It is a one credit-bearing course registered through the Sociology Department and given the course numbers 98 and 198 (The International Student Experience, 2011). The course is taught once a week for approximately one hour and was designed and coordinated through the Berkeley International Office (BIO). UC Berkeley's approach is unique in that it has a different professor teach each new topic. New topics are introduced every week and span a wide variety of issues from the U.S. political system to communicating in an academic environment (The International Student Experience, 2011). UC Berkeley's course also incorporates the history of the university and Berkeley's identity as a U.S. research university. The focus of their course is more of an extended orientation rather than a comprehensive overview of "American" contemporary culture. Their aim is to enhance their international students' success by giving a broad overview of a variety of topics.

USC has opted to offer a series of workshops for international students that focus on a variety of topics much as UC Berkeley's course does. The difference being USC's is not a credit-bearing course and the series is offered both Fall and Spring semesters. The series is entitled "*Living in the U.S. Series*" and the workshops are held over a five-week span from the beginning of September to mid November (Living in the U.S. Series, 2012). The series is offered through the Office of

International Services (OIS) at USC and is a social programming model rather than that of an established course at the university. The programming spans topics from earthquake preparedness to U.S. culture and values. USC's model is similar to that of UC Berkeley's in that it is more of an extension of orientation geared toward acclimating students rather than instructing them entirely on "American" contemporary culture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To establish a course for international students at the university level that not only instructs them on "American" culture but also on how to better integrate into campus life and the United States, the theoretical discussion must also center on social integration and learning. Both inside the classroom and outside with the social programming accompanying the course, the students are initially *observers* and thus the framework focuses on *learning by observing.* It must also be taken into account that the students participating in this course come from a variety of backgrounds, nations, ethnicities, and learning environments. To accommodate this in the classroom, multiple modes of learning must also be taken into account.

Social Learning Theory

The basis of the Social Learning Theory is that a person can learn new traits and behaviors through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1977). Bandura (1977) argues that:

"Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (p. 22)."

Though rooted in behavioral sciences and in psychology, Bandura's theory, if applied correctly, forms a foundation that can optimize learning culture and social integration. Applied in an appropriate manner for the course, Social Learning Theory can provide a foundation that allows students to learn a new culture as well as learn how to apply what they have observed in the classroom in different social environments. For the course, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) can provide structure for students to learn through observation and for teachers to expose and break down stereotypes. Teachers are not the only the instructors of the course, but also the domestic students that interact with international students. International students who are willing to, and more importantly motivated to, integrate will begin to model the behaviors and traits of their peers and colleagues (Bandura, 1977). This is not to be taken to a degree that will dull their own behaviors or traditions, but rather act as a vehicle for international students to better integrate and understand U.S. culture.

Multiple Intelligences Theory

To maximize the absorption of knowledge taught in the classroom, an approach is needed that incorporates a variety of learning styles. It is an inevitable assumption that since the core students participating in the course will hail from all corners of the globe, it is also appropriate to assume that there will be a mixture of

learning styles. Though it is impossible to cater to each student's specific learning

style, it is possible to incorporate a variety of methods that can convey information

in a way that is received by a majority of the students. Multiple Intelligence Theory

can accommodate the varied learning styles in its very approach to intelligence

itself. Dr. Gardner (1983) stated that traditional notions of intelligence are far too

limited and that accounting for different levels of intelligence can provide for a

broader range in human potential. Gardner (1983) proposed seven levels of

intelligence with the eighth being added later:

Linguistic Intelligence	Logical-Mathematical Intelligence
Spatial Intelligence	Body-Kinesthetic Intelligence
Musical Intelligence	Interpersonal Intelligence
Intrapersonal Intelligence	Naturalist Intelligence (1995)

Though Multiple Intelligences Theory acknowledges the existence of distinct

levels of human intelligence, it does not limit learners to one or the other. Rather, it

states that it is a combination of all with one usually being prevalent as Gardner

states:

> "Human beings are better thought of as possessing a number of relatively
> independent faculties, rather than as having a certain amount of intellectual
> horsepower (or IQ) that can be simply channeled in one or another direction
> (Gardner, 2011, p. 3)."

It is also worth noting that The Multiple Intelligences Theory is not saying that when

applied in the classroom, a teacher must apply and cater to every intelligence style.

This would not only be quite time consuming, but from a curricular perspective,

impossible. It is to be used rather as a tool to help facilitate the didactic role of the

teacher and the retention of knowledge in the students. As Gardner (2011) states:

> "MI theory is best thought of as a tool, rather than as an educational goal.
> Educators need to determine, in conjunction with their communities, the

goals that they are seeking. Once these goals have been articulated, then MI theory can provide powerful support. In my view, schools should seek to develop individuals of a certain sort—civic-minded, sensitive to the arts, deeply rooted in the disciplines. And schools should probe pivotal topics with sufficient depth so that students end up with a comprehensive understanding of these topics (p. 5)."

Applied correctly, the Multiple Intelligences Theory can provide the proper framework, but it must be applied in a manner that is not detrimental or undermining to the goals of the class. The application of the theory can be manifested in a creative way, depending on the instructor, that incorporates video, reading material (both in print and in the form of graphic novels), music, excursions through the coupled social programming, group and individual work, etc. into classroom activities.

NEEDS ASSESMENT

From my work at the University of San Francisco, developing programs and facilitating existing programs for international students, I observed a general lack of cultural awareness by many of the students. Insides of this include using "taboo" words in public, leaving a restaurant with out tipping, not flushing toilet paper but rather putting it in the garbage, general confusion on how to use public transportation, etc. I indicated this to my colleagues and they agreed that this was a major issue among the students and indicated that this is why the programs they have exist. After evaluating the effectiveness of the programs that existed at USF as far as giving international students the valuable cultural knowledge to adapt, as well as researching what programs exist at other universities; I pondered the idea of a university level course to address the issue. I posed the question to a group of

international students in one of my programs and they informed me that they would positively enroll in such a course and asked when it was going to be available. Thus, the need was established and I began to hypothesize how to establish a course on American culture for international students.

To determine the need for such a course, and its feasibility, I compiled information during my time as the Graduate Intern at the University of San Francisco that included my work with international students, meetings with fellow colleagues (both in the ISSS office and others I collaborated with), attending NAFSA conferences, and discussing the issue with the Director of the ISSS Office at the University of San Francisco, Lisa Kosiewicz.

The outcomes of the information I gathered through both my professional work and informative conversations, was that such a course would greatly improve international student integration into colleges and universities, and would also help with the social issues international students face when living and studying in the United States. It was also determined that if an institution had the available funding and faculty/staff resources, this would be a welcome addition to both internationalization efforts, in the sense of making a campus more accommodating and welcoming to international students, and improving international student retention.

The meetings I had with my colleagues and the Director of the ISSS office at USF informed me of a great need to provide more information on U.S. culture and transitioning to live in the United States. The possibility of eventually establishing such a course was proposed through an informal conversation with one of the ISSS

staff members, Brad Lancaster, but it was denoted that budgetary and scheduling limitations made it virtually impossible for the creation of such a course in the near future. I had also discussed this with the Director of ISSS at USF, and she stated it is a great idea, but a draw-back is that you would be almost "in the dark" when designing it as there are very few institutions that have a model on which to base the course. This was found true when I conducted my research and found only two institutions that had an established international student course or series of workshops dedicated to teaching U.S. culture and university life.

As a conclusion to the need to establish such a course; there is a definite need as institutions continue to increase their international student populations but fail to properly support them. ISSS offices are often under direct pressure from higher administration to improve programming or develop new programming, but are usually left to their own devices to figure out how to do so. Thus, the establishment of a U.S. culture course for international students that is credit bearing, accredited, approved, and funded by the institution would greatly improve the quality of the international student experience.

LIMITATIONS

Given the time limitations, staying with in the CLC parameters, lack of models to base the establishment of the course, and need to encompass and generalize some aspects of U.S. culture, there are constraints in designing such a course:

- ❖ Support and funding from administration
- ❖ Availability of qualified instructors

❖ Assumed student interest and participation

❖ Assumed participation of domestic students in international student
   mentoring programs

❖ Limited models on which to base course

❖ Curriculum can become over generalized to the degree of reinforcing already
   established stereotypes and/or create new ones

❖ Instructors may choose only to teach what they "feel" as important and make
   the course curriculum subjective rather than objective

❖ Ability of students to fit the course into their schedules either during their
   first or second semester

❖ The feasibility of actually making the course credit-bearing and having a
   department sponsor the course

❖ Assumed English language ability of students

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Course Goals and Objectives

From the needs assessment emerged the goals and objectives for the course.
The purpose of the course is to increase skills and knowledge of American culture
among international students and enhance their integration in the university
community. The course will address the symptoms associated with international
students that lack general knowledge of U.S. culture and struggle with integrating to
their new living / studying environment. The course is to be a platform that colleges
and universities in the United States can emulate and duplicate in order to integrate

their international student populations. The exact curriculum per institution is open

to interpretation and is at the discretion of the instructor or administration of what

to include/exclude. That being stated this course will:

- Provide a class size of approximately 30 international students per semester with adequate applicable knowledge on how to integrate into U.S. college and university environments

- Contingent on college / university size, raise the rate of "overall international student satisfaction and experience" at any institution using the platform

- Offer a replicable model for universities and colleges across the United States with a platform to better integrate and support their growing international student populations

- Add to increasing core intercultural competencies through coupling in class time and out of class social programming and workshops

- Give international students a "tool kit" of intercultural competencies measured and evaluated at the end of the course through feedback and questionnaires in the areas of:

  - High and Low culture
  - Common American Doxa
  - Diversity of, race, gender, class, region, conviction and affiliation
  - Social and behavioral interaction

- Reduce common misconceptions and perceptions of the United States and Americans that are held by international students.

This is designed to be a course and not a series of workshops in which the

institution can decide whether or not to make it credit bearing. Ideally, it would bear

credit as it adds incentive for international students to register for the course, can

count as an elective or humanity towards their degree requirements, and can take

full-advantage of qualified faculty to instruct the course over having staff members

instruct the course. Of course if funding or faculty availability is a concern, then qualified staff can suffice as well.

Participant Goals and Objectives

The goal of international students participating in the course is to not only integrate them into their new learning environments in the United States, but also to address the issues of social isolation due to lack of relative cultural knowledge, improve understanding of "American" attitudes and sentiments, and provide a knowledge base that can be used in a variety of scenarios. Contemporary U.S. culture competency will be demonstrated by student acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the following areas:

- U.S contemporary high and low culture

- Diversity in the United States

- American *Doxa*

- Social interaction both in classroom lessons and out of class social programming through:
    - Engaging in relevant in class activities
    - Using a variety of recourses to build a knowledge base including but not limited to:
        - Graphic novels
        - Viral videos
        - Relevant television programs and movies
        - Relevant Music and subculture knowledge
        - Social media outlets
        - Teaching of relevant American colloquial English
        - Current news and media outlets
        - Relevant texts relating to diversity issues in the United States

    - Required participation in out-of-class social programming such as:

        o   Buddy/Mentoring program connecting international and domestic students

        o   International student support/conversation/discussion groups

By the completion of the course, international students will:

- Have a strong understanding of U.S. contemporary culture

- Have the knowledge to navigate a variety of social scenarios

- Address and reduce common misconceptions and stereotypes of Americans and U.S. culture.

- Have an understanding of what it means to be "American" and understand the diversity that comes with this concept. Students will have a greater knowledge of and be able to engage in previously unknown territories of racial, class, gender and sexuality, regional, religious-convictions and affiliation issues.

- Be able to apply their knowledge to establish meaningful friendships to better integrate into the institution's campus, reduce isolation, and improve their abilities in colloquial American English through improved social interaction.

- Engage in an end of the year wrap-up session that will give vital feedback and allow for students to voice their opinions regarding the course and what helped and hindered their transition to the college or university.

The goal is that students who actively engage in the course will be able to navigate their life in the United States with greater ease than those who have had little exposure to U.S. culture and/or instruction in U.S. culture. Through the feedback sessions, adjustments and improvements can be made to successive courses.

COURSE DECRIPTION

"*American Ways*: *A course in Contemporary U.S. culture for International Students*" is a course for international students offered twice an academic year (once

in the Fall and Spring) that addresses a variety of U.S. culture-related topics. The

course would take place twice a week and each week would focus on a different

topic. The course also incorporates available social programming such as a peer-

mentoring program, excursion-based programs, international student

support/conversation program, and involvement in or establishing an International

Student Association. It is mandatory for each student enrolled in the course to

participate in at least one of the available social programming initiatives. The course

will be broken into three areas of study: Basics in the United States, American *Doxa*,

and Diversity issues, in which each will have specific topics. The first two sections

will take approximately three weeks each, with the last taking 4 weeks, as it is the

broadest and more intensive of the three. The last week will be reserved for wrap-

up, feedback, and evaluation (See Appendix 1 for proposed syllabus).

Curriculum

The need for international students to better integrate onto U.S. college and

university campuses through a more in-depth understanding of U.S. cultures and

attitudes will be the focus for designing the curriculum. The course will concentrate

on designing a curriculum that incorporates both Bandura's Social Learning Theory

(1977) and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (1983; 1998) Theory through in-class

work that is engaging and interactive as well as allowing for students to observe,

model, and implement behaviors and attitudes outside of the classroom through

accompanied social programming.

The curriculum of the course is broken into four components with the first three being implemented chronologically and the fourth being continuous throughout. They are as follows:

1. Basic Knowledge and Skills
2. American *Doxa*
3. American Diversity
4. Social Programming

Basic Knowledge and Skills

From my experience working with international students at USF through a variety of social programming and in causal settings, it was observed that international students, especially those from Asia, had little concrete knowledge of basic interactions and norms in the United States. Through this I discovered that graduate students exhibited the largest knowledge gap while undergraduate students initially had a larger gap, but made up for their lack of knowledge due to more social interaction and more time spent on campus around other students. Nonetheless, there was a very apparent lack of knowledge on basic issues that include:

- Restaurant and tipping culture in the United States
- Transportation in the United States
- Housing and landlord issues
- Roommates and living with Americans
- Friendship building
- Bar culture in the United States

The course will address these issues by having in-class sessions that focus on building core knowledge on each area. Each in-class session will have both engaging

material that includes videos on each topic, role playing activities, tangible useful

vocabulary, domestic student speakers, and appropriate handouts highlighting

available on-campus resources. For the topics of roommates and friendship

building, qualified and willing domestic students will be recruited to speak on what

they generalize it is to "have a roommate" and their general approaches to making

new friends, i.e., what they look for in a person, where they go to make friends, what

kind of activities are best for friendship building.

The out of class social programming will focus on site visits to restaurants as

well as taking public transportation (if the area has access). This will give the

students tangible real world experience utilizing the information given to them in

class. During this section of the course, social programming will also focus on the

mentorship program and maximizing international student / domestic student

interaction. Apart from the mentorship program, students in the course will be

taken to on-campus activities and events.

American Doxa

This portion of the course is to establish a cultural foundation and

framework for international students to navigate everyday interactions in the

United States. These *doxa*, as defined by Bourdieu (1972) and elaborated by Strauss

(2004), are the cultural aspects that every person born and raised in the United

States has a subconscious understanding of and are thus taken-for-granted

understandings of American culture. These areas are, but not limited to:

- Sense of Individuality and self-achievement/improvement
- Material acquisition

- Sense of success

 A majority of international students coming to the Untied States are from high context cultures. High context cultures are those that are deeply involved in each other and their community. As a result of close relationships with people, a social hierarchy exists, individual feelings are closely self-moderated, and information is shared through simple messages that hold a deep meaning (Hall, 1976). Therefore, much of American doxa is quite foreign in nature to high context cultures. Thus, the difficulties that international students experience in assimilating to university life in the United States (especially those from high context cultures) can be attributed to a misunderstanding of the most basic of American culture. The areas chosen were compiled during the programming and many interactions with both domestic and international students during my internship at the University of San Francisco. Through my interactions with both domestic students and international students and observing their frustrations with both adapting to university life and the United States as well as the domestic students expressing their desire to connect with international students but had no foundation on which to establish a relationship. After examining both groups, these areas of American doxa are both what is initially understood by all American born students and is what is exactly lacking in most international students, especially those from high context cultures.   Each highlighted topic above exemplifies inherently "American" traits that each person born and raised in the United States inherently exhibits (Strauss, 2004). The purpose here being not to dive entirely into how, or why these are the traits that most Americans exhibit, but rather these are the areas that either international

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students feel most confused over or domestic students wish their international counterparts had a better understanding of. For the purposes of brevity and applicability, these areas will not be examined in-depth, as this is an entirely new study on its own.

Sense of Individuality and Self-Achievement/Improvement

The United States, and western culture in general, is described as being individualistic (Hofstede, 1980) and focusing on individual achievement over collective accomplishments. Individualism, contributes to major differences between the United States and many high context cultures (Feeny & Wang, 2010). Individualists stress human independence and the importance of individual self-reliance and autonomy. They also promote the exercise of individual goals and desires (Feeny & Wang, 2010). Individualism is a personal agency that values personal uniqueness and status (Feeny & Wang, 2010). That being said, it is not beneficial to group all people into belonging to either individualism or collectivism, but rather to acknowledge that this is a predominate trait that exists within U.S. and Western Culture (Feeny & Wang, 2010).

An understanding of individualism and its social impact on the everyday decision making of the average American domestic student can provide international students a better grasp of:

- *Spatial Orientation*; as far as living in close quarters with U.S. students, what areas belong to who and what is considered communal space

- *Possession*; concerning ownership of items and what is shared and what is considered property of the individual

- *Professional and Academic Accomplishment*; demonstrating that first and foremost among all domestic students is a drive for accomplishment both academically and professionally.

Of course there are more attributes that can be explained and even the above mentioned are open to interpretation, but the purpose is to bring to the forefront the underlying miscommunications and misunderstanding due to different interpretations of the world around. If international students have a better understanding of how domestic students interpret and navigate the world, this can improve their relations with their domestic student peers.

Material Acquisition

Richins (2001) argues that American Materialism is a staple in every United States born individual. It is part of American's lives; the importance put on material acquisition is a staple in the context of social upbringing and indoctrination. For many people, the acquisition of goods is a central focus in their lives. They devote considerable time to planning important future purchases and imagining purchase outcomes, and they willingly make large sacrifices to acquire desired objects. In the United States, middle-class adults work increasingly more hours to pay for "the good life" (Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto, 2005), and they seem willing to endure other discomforts for this purpose as well (Richins, 2011). International students who disagree with this way of life will view their domestic counter parts, and American culture in general, as petty, shallow, and lacking any real meaning. This in turn, causes these international students to avoid contact or establishing meaningful

relationships with their domestic counterparts and results in only socializing with those from their "group" or in isolation (Chen, 1999; Hull, 1978; Schräm & Lauver, 1988). This is not to be interpreted that American Materialism is necessarily a positive or negative aspect of U.S. culture, but rather to approach the topic in a subjective manner. In this way, we can avoid polarizing the students in either one way or another, and leave them to make their own judgments. Some issues that may be interpreted by international students as petty or even greedy, can then be seen through the lens of "yes this may be petty or greedy, but this is how this student was raised and what their experience, thus far, with the world is."

Sense of Success

The American sense of success is an entrenched identity that is part of every American's life. Brink Lindsey (2008) states that "Everything we know about high performance in all fields of endeavor tells us that, while natural talent is a plus, there is no substitute for long hours of preparation and hard work." The idea that hard work, dedication and persistence will lead to success is a concept that is arguably one of the most defining cultural aspects of any person born in the United States (Lindsey, 2008). The so-called "American Dream" permeates U.S. culture and though this concept is known in many parts of the world, it can also be confusing and misleading at times. For international students, this concept is straightforward "work hard, gain success," while in the American mind this concept is not just a concept, it is an entire lifestyle. To teach this concept is extremely complex and is by no means supposed to "enlighten" international students on American mentalities, but to rather give the students a point of reference. Having this understanding of the

American sense of success can allow international students to be better apt in dealing with American competitiveness and individually focused achievement.

American Diversity

This subject, in particular, is to not only highlight the diversity that exists in the United States, but to demonstrate to international students the complex issues that exist on a societal level in the United States. From observations and interactions with the international students during the various programs I administered at the university of San Francisco, the students demonstrated a low understanding of diversity in the United States and the tensions and issues surrounding the topic. This topic in and of itself is complex and multidimensional; there are college level and graduate level courses offered on just this subject alone. Universities, including USF, require their undergraduate students to fulfill a "U.S. Diversity" requirement in which they must take courses related to or around diversity issues in the United States (UNC U.S. Diversity and Global Issues Requirement, 2012; Iowa State U.S. Diversity/International Perspectives, 2012). That being stated, U.S. diversity is an enormous topic but extremely valuable for international students to gain a better grasp of the underlying issues and previously unseen dimensions of U.S. culture and history. As Professor Edley (2001) of Harvard University Law School stated:

> "Racial caste in this land is more than twice as old as the nation itself. It began with the campaigns of displacement, killing, and subjugation of native peoples by European settlers, and then expanded to the chattel slavery of imported Africans. Because the roots of American prejudice and racism are some 250 years deeper

than the bedrock of our constitutional ideals, it would be yet another form of hubris to believe that the legacy can be undone in a mere generation or two, and the wounds healed. Nonetheless, healing with unflagging determination is precisely what we must be about. The first step must be a better understanding of our history and our present condition (As cited by Conklin, 2001, p. 38)."

The average international student's understanding of such complex issues is limited and can often result in the students interacting in manners that are deemed unacceptable in the United States, further isolating the student. To avoid this the course will teach international students condensed versions of race and ethnic tensions that exists in the Untied States and the continuing struggle of America's multi-racial/ethnic society. During this portion of the course, the various ethnically orientated student groups/clubs are invited to participate in the class and participate in discussion panels, role-playing exercises etc., to demonstrate not only the issues but how to properly communicate and interact in ways that are not deemed offensive. Having in-depth history of and current knowledge of racial and ethnic issues in the Untied States, international students will avoid making unacceptable gestures, remarks and other interactions that would otherwise socially inhibit the student from interacting with the domestic student population.

The area of the course is not only to highlight the many underlying racial and ethnic tensions that exist in the United States, but is also the opportunity to focus on the diverse heritage and influences that U.S. culture heralds from. In exhibiting the amount of cultures that influence the United States and what influences they have on different aspects of American Culture, international students can learn the depth of U.S. diversity. This can include the different regions of the United States, the different cities, foods, languages etc. This, of course is also an expansive topic in

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itself and thus it would need to be a very condensed version, but the main point is to teach the students about as many traditions as possible, and if location and time permits, to bring the students to social events and places of historical interest that highlight the diversity of the United States.

Social Programming

The corner stone of the course is applying what is learned during classroom sessions to real life situations. Learning is something a person does, not something that happens to him. Thus, no matter what process or experience is said to produce learning, what students have learned is what they can do afterwards that they could not do before (Boyce, 2011). In applying Bandura's social learning theory, they *must* be prepared to use their knowledge. Thus, the course will be coupled with social programming tailored to international students. The programs that need to either be developed, or partner with existing programs, are those that emphasize interaction with domestic students, the university and local community. As a whole, international students who spend time socially with American students are more satisfied academically and better adjusted culturally (Trice, 2004). At most universities in the United States, there are programs being offered for international students. The programs that must be coupled with the course are those that are maximizing contact with domestic students to not only provide a spring board for improving their social lives at the university, but also to apply their knowledge in the real world. Programs can include, but are not limited to:

- *International Student Mentoring/Pairing Program*: this program focuses on connecting international students with

domestic students either one-on-one pairs or in small groups. Both students fill out applications and are placed together in pairs or groups based on compatibility. Students, once paired, are encouraged to meet as much as possible and can decide on any broad range of activities or events to mutually share. This is also a great opportunity for language exchange.

- *International Student/Domestic Student Networking/Mixer Program:* This program provides excursions to different events and venues both on and off campus for both international and domestic students. This allows students to interact in a less structured environment, allows for students to interact organically, and provides a foundation for establishing a relationship through shared experiences.

- *Formation of or Participation in an International Student Association/Club:* Though the club/association is tailored for international students, it also allows for the executive board and members that can organize school wide events that highlight international students such as international student galas. These events attract large numbers of students from across the campus and community and thus increase the visibility of those in the club/association.

- *International House:* this is a fairly large project to take on if your school does not already have one established. In this program, students are housed in on-campus housing where the ratio is 50/50 international to domestic students. There is constant programming including cultural presentations, internationally themed events, etc. Ideally each international student has a domestic roommate as well.

There are more examples of the social programming; these are some of the programs that would maximize international and domestic student interaction. From the programs that are available, the international students who enroll in the course must choose from the available programs and participate in at least two of

the programs during the course of the semester. Those who are living in an international house are exempt, unless the international house does not organize any events on a regular basis. There are also regular status reports, facilitated by the instructor, to maintain the quality of the programs and ensure domestic and international student interaction as well as to confirm each student is participating in the programming.

STAFFING PLAN

The nucleus of the staff for the course will be the dedicated faculty member that will be the main facilitator throughout the duration of the class. There will be other guest lectures as well as student group/organization participation as well. The main faculty member/facilitator will be responsible for developing the curriculum to meet institutions standards and regulations. The faculty member teaching the course will also arrange what materials are to be used in the course; the selection of relevant texts, media, and all other relevant materials. The faculty member will also be the "cultural informant" for the international students in the class. This faculty member must be: fluent in *at least* one other language, culturally aware and competent as well as extremely adaptable, understanding and flexible.

The faculty facilitating the course will be responsible for holding regular office hours for students and will be expected to work irregular hours such as some weekends and nights.

In order to be a credit-bearing course, the course must be part of a *sponsoring* department. Which department the course will be registered under will

be decided by the institution and thus who the faculty member reports to will be dictated by this decision.

COURSE MARKETING/STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION

The majority of the marketing of the program will be done through the institutions available resources. A website will be built that will contain information about the instructor/professor, a course syllabus, detailed descriptions about topics, required texts, classroom location, social programming models and descriptions, and registration deadlines and limits. The course website will be advertised through links on the institution's international student services website, international admissions website, and international perspective student website. Flyers will also be placed around the institution's campus as well as included in international students' welcome packets. Flyers with information about the course will be available at the institution's international student services office.

At the institution's international student orientation, there will be a dedicated presentation given to specifically highlight the course and the benefits of taking the course. Handouts will be given to the students that will be included in their welcome orientation packet materials.

The international student services office can also nominate/suggest international students by their ability to look into their databases such as FSATLAS to query for international students that have not studied or lived in the United States before. These emails will be sent prior to or immediately after their arrival to the institution.

Students will be admitted to the course by registering for the course via the procedures for registering for any course at their institution. A cap for registration for the first section will be set at thirty students.

BUDGET & BUDGET NOTES

The cost for operating this course will be financed through the institution. This includes all costs for space, facilities, required faculty, materials, and equipment. See appendix 2 for details on the budget.

Course Costs

Fulltime/Adjunct Faculty: The primary cost of the course will be hiring a qualified faculty member to facilitate and instruct the course. This can either be a fulltime faculty position or instructed by adjunct faculty. The salary or per credit hour rate of pay is institutionally dictated. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 7, 2012) in its article entitled "Professors Seek to Reframe Salary Debate" surveyed 1,251 institutions on how much they pay their faculty. From this the average for a full-time professor was $82,556 and for full-time instructors it was $47, 847. Thus, depending on the institution, the cost for the faculty would be in this median range.

Space: the institution will provide classroom space, as well as adequate space for the instructor to meet with students as well as to prepare the curriculum and other materials necessary for the course.

Office Supplies and Other Materials: The institution will provide the instructor with all necessary supplies, materials, and equipment to conduct the course adequately.

Access to Facilities: The University will provide the students with access to all faculties.

Required Textbooks: The cost of texts for the student will be the burden of the student. The amount for each textbook will be dependent on the textbooks the instructor has chosen.

Time: The course will last for one hour to an hour and a half at least two times a week for a semester. The classroom will be reserved for these times. The instructor will also require at least five hours or more a day for class preparation, grading papers, and curriculum development. Thus the instructor's office or other accommodation must be available for at least this amount of time, if not more.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

The students enrolled in the course will also be fully matriculated students at the institution. Health insurance is included as part of their fees paid the institution. Students may waive the health insurance plan provided by the institution but must prove they have insurance of equal or greater coverage.

The institutions police/security forces will ensure the safety of the students. During their time on campus, the students will have access to all medical facilities and services, should an emergency or medical incident occur.

LOGISTICS

Students will be required to travel to the institution from their port of entry on their own accord. Students living on campus will live in the dormitories or apartments provided by the institution and the students will pay for all costs for these accommodations. Students not living on campus will have to make their own arrangements for accommodation.

For off-campus social programming, the students will meet at pre-arranged meeting area on-campus. From there, depending on the program, the students will depart for the programs destination.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In the event of a crisis in the classroom, the institutions police/security/ emergency responders will be contacted. In the event that a crisis should arise on one of the social programs, the faculty member/instructor will be the first point of contact and will be notified. Depending on the situation the instructor will notify the proper authorities and or departments. In the event of an extreme emergency during one of the social programs, the students and or participants of the program should contact emergency services by dialing 911.

Should the instructor notice and or have other students voice concern over the well being of another student, the instructor will notify the university's counseling and psychological services department. If the student is in a state that requires immediate attention, the instructor will escort the student directly to the counseling and services department.

EVALUATION PLAN

The evaluation of the course will be broken into three separate components: course evaluation, social programming evaluation and student leaning evaluation. In order to properly evaluate both the course structure and students' overall learning experience, a variation of methods will be employed. Critical feedback will be taken to the department chair and adjustments to the course will be made accordingly.

Course Evaluation

For the first initial run of the course, at the completion of each topic, the students will complete a question and answer a handout. The handout will be completed in class prior to starting a new topic. The questions for the handout will be simple and to the point as to not deter the students from giving feedback that is less valuable i.e. writing answers just for the sake of completing the handout. At the maximum, the hand out will include no more than ten questions. With the ideal handout being in-between five and seven questions.

At the end of the class the students will be asked to fill out an overall evaluation of the course. This will be handed out at the last class and be completed in class. After giving the students time to complete the evaluation, there will then be a feedback session with the class as a whole. Students will be encouraged to openly voice opinions of what helped, what didn't, what they would have liked to have seen

in the course, what topics they wished were discussed more in-depth, how much they learned etc.

All three forms of evaluation will be compiled by the instructor and taken back to the sponsoring department's chair. The department chair and the instructor will evaluate the feedback. Adjustments to the course will be made accordingly.

Social Programming Evaluation

The social programs that the students participate in will be evaluated in a manner that is dictated by the type of program the students participated in. If the social program was a mentorship program, then the students will be asked to fill out evaluations, give feed back during a feed back session at one of the last meetings. Finally students who have the available time will be asked to participate in a focus group. If the program was a larger group program, i.e. a domestic/international student networking program in which students go on excursions and take part in various activities together as a large group, then evaluations will be handed out and also a focus group will be organized.

Student Learning Evaluation

During the course the instructor will administer quizzes as well as a final presentation. This will provide a valuable qualitative evaluation as to how much knowledge the students are retaining. The students will also be required to journal their experiences.

The journal will catalogue their experiences about how much they felt they have learned about American culture, how they are adapting, and any challenges

they are experiencing. The journals will be handed in at the end of each week and evaluated by the instructor. The instructor will give valuable feedback and suggestions, and hand the journals back at the beginning of the week.

The students will also fill out an evaluation at the end of the course, rating their overall learning experience. They will hand this in and then they will have the rest of class to voice their opinions on how they feel the course helped them learn about American culture. The instructor will take notes on reoccurring issues and take this feedback back to the department chair to make adjustments.

CONCLUSIONS

With the ever-increasing amount of international students attending colleges and universities in the Untied States, it is important to recognize that there is little being done in a concerted effort to ensure the academic and social success of these students. A majority of the international students have had little in the form of formal instruction in contemporary "American" culture. These students lack the knowledge and basic understanding of U.S. culture and thus find it extremely difficult to integrate into their new environment. This can often times lead to severe social isolation.

The American Ways course offers approximately 30 international students each semester the opportunity to learn, both in a structured classroom setting and in an organized social programming setting, aspects of U.S. culture that are practical and applicable in the real world that will assist them in integrating into their new environments. Thus the topics that are to be taught are *basic knowledge and skills,*

American doxa, and American diversity. Each topic area covers content that is useful to international students both in their everyday life as well as with their social interactions with their domestic counterparts. It also allows for international students to gain more insight into underlying social issues such as race, diversity, and ethnic tensions that are not always completely apparent.

The manner in which content will be delivered and how the curriculum is structured is also designed to ensure that maximum knowledge is absorbed. Through implementing the multiple intelligences theory in the classroom, the course can account for many different styles of learning as well as maximize interactivity and increase the total knowledge that students acquire at the end of each class.

Through the coupled social programming, the students will also be able to practice their newfound knowledge in the real world, enabling them to become more comfortable with the course material. Through Social Learning Theory, the course will reinforce the students' knowledge through practical application and thus retain what they have leaned whilst simultaneously becoming comfortable with skills they were not previously comfortable with.

At the end of the course the students should report a significant change in their attitudes and perceptions of the United States and Americans. International students will also be more confident and informed when forming friendships in the United States with Americans.

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Appendix 1, Course Syllabus

American Ways Syllabus

Course Overview

"*American Ways*: *A course in Contemporary U.S. culture for International Students*" is a course for international students that addresses a variety of U.S. culture-related topics.

Instructor

Christopher Fitch

Phone

555-555-5555

Email

fitch@sit.edu

Office Location

H.S.Thompson 301

Office Hours

2:00pm – 5:00pm
Monday – Friday

The course will cover the topics:
- Basic Knowledge and Skills of Everyday Life in the United States
- American *Doxa*
- American Diversity

This course is designed for international students that wish to gain a solid grasp of U.S. culture and learn how to apply the knowledge-learned in-class in the real world. Through this course students will gain a solid foundation in U.S. culture that is beneficial in understanding and adapting to the U.S. collegiate environment as well as being able to better relate to your American student colleagues.

As part of the requirements for the course, students will be required to participate in AT LEAST ONE international student focused social program. Of course, students are encouraged to participate in as many as their schedule permits.

Required Text

American Ways: A Cultural Guide to The United States, *Gary Althen, and Janet Bennett*

Course Materials

Along with the required text, students must also purchase the course pack and necessary software updates to view digital media assignments.

- American Ways Course Pack: Available at the university book store

- Software Upgrades: Available at the university IT department

Resources

Please make use of all resources available. For information on social programing initiatives for international students, English language resources, and on-campus student activities, please refer to the following:

- Social Programming Initiatives: The International Student Services Office (ISO)
- English Language Resources: The Writing Center, Conversation English Partner Program offered through the Linguistics Department.
- On-campus Student Activities: Student Association located in the Student Union

Course Schedule

Week 1	Subject: Course Overview, Basics introduction	Assignments
	Introductions, course goals and objectives, student expectations, course grading and attendance policy.	American Ways: Introduction
		Course Pack: Section 1
	Students will be asked to give their initial impressions of the United States thus far, and raise questions, concerns, and what they hope to gain from the course.	Journal: First impressions of the United States, What where you shocked about? What do you like? What are you having trouble understanding? What don't you like?
		Social Programming: Look for and sign up for AT LEAST one of the available programs through the ISO.
Week 2	Subject: Basic Knowledge and Skills	Assignments
	Restaurant and Tipping Culture	American Ways: Chapter 15
	How and when to tip, etiquette in a restaurant	Course Pack Section 2
	Simulation of being in a restaurant	Journal: What was your first experience in a restaurant in the United States? What was your impression? Do you think tipping is a good thing? Why or why not?
	Media clip of restaurant do's and don'ts	
	Other places/people to tip	

Week 3	**Subject: Basic Knowledge and Skills**	**Assignments**
	Transportation in the United States	**American Ways: Chapter 14**
	Overview of transportation systems in the United States.	**Course Pack: Section 3**
	How to access these forms of transportation	**Journal: Your experience thus far with transportation in the United States. Was it what you expected?**
	Security and proper behavior on public transportation.	
	Trip to local public transportation	
Week 4	**Subject: Basic Knowledge and Skills**	**Assignments**
	Housing and Landlord Issues	**American Ways: Chapter 17**
	How to find housing	**Course Pack: Section 4**
	Resources to assist you with signing leases	**Journal: Describe your experience in trying to find housing and dealing with your landlord, or if you live on-campus describe your first impressions of the dormitory.**
	Legal obligations	
	Guest speaker: Off-Campus Housing Coordinator	
	Difficulties international students encounter	
Week 5	**Subject: Basic Knowledge and Skills**	**Assignments**
	Roommates and Living with Americans	**American Ways: Chapter 4 & Chapter 18**
	Expectations of the common American student from their roommate(s)	**Social Programming: updates on your program, feedback, what is helping and hindering**
	Spatial Relations	**Journal: Do you have an American roommate? If not where is your roommate from? How is your relationship? Are your friends or is there some tension?**
	Guest Speakers: Panel of RAs, RDs, and Student Housing Office Representatives	
	How to avoid conflict	

Week 6	**Subject: Basic Knowledge and Skills**	**Assignments**
	Friendship Building	**American Ways: Chapter 10**
	Common ways to meet friends	**Course Pack: Section 5**
	Social etiquette	**Journal: Have you made any American friends yet? If yes, how? What did you do together to become friends? If not, what do you think you might to do to encourage making American friends? What type of activities will you engage in?**
	Guest Speakers: Panel Student Association (SA) ways to get involved	
	Media: Social awkwardness clips	
Week 7	**Subject: American *Doxa***	**Assignments**
	Quiz on Basics	**Course Pack: Section 6**
	Introduction	**Social Programming Check-In**
	Explanation of *Doxa*	**Journal: What do you feel you know about American behavior? How did you come to this conclusion?**
	Media clips exemplifying American taken-for-granted culture	
Week 8	**Subject: American *Doxa***	**Assignments**
	Sense of Individuality/ Sense of Success	**American Ways: Chapter 1 & 2**
	How Americans view their world, and why individuality is considered a virtue.	**Course Pack Section 7**
	Self-achievement and why this is important in American Culture	**Journal: Has American individuality shocked or seemed wrong to you? Why or why not? Is your culture similar? Is your culture very different? How do you adapt to this idea of "Individualism"? What is considered success in your culture? How does is differ from that in the United States?**
	Self-reliance	

Week 9	Subject: American *Doxa*	Assignments:
	Material Acquisition	**American Ways: Chapter 3**
	The emphasis on material acquisition in the United States	**Course Pack: Section 8**
	The good, bad and ugly of material acquisition	**Social Programming Check-In**
		Journal: Does your culture emphasize material acquisition? If so what does it signify? If not what does your culture emphasize? Do you think material acquisition is a good or bad thing? How do you view American materialism?
Week 10	**Subject: American Diversity**	**Assignments**
	Quiz on American *Doxa*	**American Ways: Chapter 11**
	Introduction to American Diversity	**Social Programming: Feedback due, helping and hindering.**
	Media exemplifying American diversity, both positive and negative aspects	**Course Pack: Section 9**
	Guest Speakers: Panel Minority Student club/organization	**Journal: What has your experience been thus far with diversity in America? Does your country have as much diversity as the United States?**
Week 11	**Subject: American Diversity**	**Assignments:**
	Race and Ethnicity Issues	**Course Pack: Section 10**
	History and context	**Journal: Reflect on what prejudices you may have? Why do you think you have them? Do you feel societies should have multiple ethnicities/ nationalities? Why or Why not?**
	Oppressed groups	
	How it affects U.S. society today	
	Guest Speaker: Professor of African American Studies	
	Taboo words and interactions	
Week 12	**Subject: American Diversity**	**Assignments:**
	Gender and Homosexuality	**American Ways: Chapter 12**
	Women's rights	**Course Pack: Section 11**
	Gender roles in the United States	**Journal: What was your biggest shock with the LGBT culture in the United States? Does your culture accept this community? Why or Why not? What are the roles of Women and Men in**
	LGBT, what it means and who identifies	
	Current struggles of the LGBT community and of women	

	Taboo words and interactions	your culture? What do you think of the position of women in U.S. society?
Week 13	**Subject: American Diversity** **Importance and Place in American Society** Why this is an important aspect of U.S. culture How it has enriched the United States Examples of the various cultural influences	**Assignments:** **Journal: Final Entry, what have you learned? What do you wish you learned? Has this course helped? What are you going to take away from this course?**
Week 14	**Final Presenation** **Feedback Session** The final exam, and feedback session on your impressions of the course.	**Journals Due** **Final Feedback from social programming due**

Assignment Policy

All Assignments will be completed and handed in a timely manner. All readings must be completed, as they are crucial to our topics and to your overall learning.

Grading Policy

A+   100-96%

A   95-90%

B+   89-85%

B   84-80%

C+   79-75%

C   74-70%

F   69% and below

Appendix 2, Budget Details

Costs of Course	
Faculty / Instructor	$47, 847 - $82,556 per diem Salary dependent on Institution
Space	Cost Institution Dependent Provided by Institution
Office Supplies / Materials	Cost Institution Dependent Provided by Institution
Facilities	Cost Institution Dependent Provided by Institution
Texts	Cost Covered by student
Health Insurance	Covered by the Institution