

## **SPEC 2623: Business & Professional Communication**

(cross-cultural perspectives)

Brooklyn College, *The City University of New York*  
Study Abroad in China Program

Instructor: Shuming Lu, Ph.D.

**E-mail for all submissions of the course:** [ChinaJournals@yahoo.com](mailto:ChinaJournals@yahoo.com)

### **Required Texts**

1. Adler, R. & Elmhorst, J. M. (2016). Communicating at work: Principles and practices for business and the professions, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
2. Juan Antonio Fernandez & Laurie Underwood. (2006) *China CEO: Voices of Experience from 20 International Business Leaders* (1st ed.). Publisher: Wiley. ISBN-10: 0470821922.

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to help students become more aware of how business communication processes work in inter-cultural and cross-cultural settings.

With this knowledge, each student will develop and refine fundamental communication skills in order to succeed in various cross-cultural professional situations. To meet this objective, several communication topics will be studied, discussed and evaluated: communication process, cultural diversity, verbal and nonverbal language, listening, interpersonal and group communication, leadership, conflict resolution and business presentation skills.

### **Course Outcomes**

- Students will be able to understand and apply major theoretical business communication theories in multiple cross-cultural professional settings.
- Students will be able to develop and refine fundamental communication and presentational skills, in order to effectively interact in varied corporate situations.
- Students will be able to do future research in areas of business, cross-cultural and organizational communication.
- Students will better understand how corporate structures and roles are developed in inter-cultural and cross-cultural settings, helping them become more effective decision-makers and leaders

### **Course Approach and Schedule**

This will be taught as a hybrid course, with Internet/WeChat APP-based activities mixed with class discussions and field trips to relevant cultural and business sites in the Chinese cities. Students may be placed into small groups to facilitate discussions in class and online.

The course will be conducted in two parts. The first part will combine readings of the textbook with online discussion assignments. *This portion of the course can be regarded as a structured learning experience.* The second portion of the course will be close observations of relevant sites in China, journal writing, and classroom discussions.

A lot of this course will be based on your observations while touring China. It will be a good idea to have a notebook with you all the time. Your notes will be useful when you are writing your journals, participating in class discussions, or completing the assignments.

It is in the nature of the study abroad program that it will be a little hard to anticipate the schedule of the class meetings in Nanjing. The specific schedule of visits and discussions probably won't be known until we arrive in Nanjing and may be subject to change, sometimes at short notice. Class sessions will probably vary in both day and time. The class may meet on weekend and evenings if necessary. The instructor reserves the right to make necessary

adjustments in the class schedule and evaluation in response to the changing circumstances during the course of the program in China.

### **Written Submissions**

All written submissions must be typed and documented in accordance with the APA style requirements. Written submissions will be evaluated by the instructor for responsiveness to the assignment, theoretical sophistication, rigor, coherence, and ingenuity of the position developed, organization, and correctness as well as clarity of expression. As regards evaluation of the mechanics of expressive correctness, students are advised that for every ten errors in spelling, grammar (including capitalization and punctuation), and documentation, the overall evaluation of a submission will be lowered by one grade. All submissions are due as specified in the syllabus and late submissions will be penalized with one grade lowered for each day late.

Non-Brooklyn College students are required to keep a course portfolio of all work and assignment submissions for this course, to be evaluated by the appropriate office and committee for equivalent credits at the home institution.

### **Evaluation & Assignments**

- |                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Participation | 30% (online, in-class & program) |
| 2. Short papers  | 40%                              |
| 3. Final exam    | 30%                              |

Participation includes meaningful contribution to the class discussions in class and online. Students may be asked to present on certain readings from the textbooks. A one-page outline is required from each speaker the day before presentation.

Students are required to complete the readings as soon as possible, no later than the day before our scheduled arrival in Nanjing. For class meetings in Nanjing, students may be asked to submit discussion questions and short reflection essays based on the assigned readings the day prior to the class meeting.

*As this course is part of the study abroad program, students are strongly advised that their behavior, attitude and journal submissions via email during the trip will affect their final grade for the course.*

### **Written Assignments:**

1. There will be two short papers (3-4 pages each) on assigned questions (see below). Each will count for 15% of your final grade. The first paper is due at 5:00 pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> day after our arrival in Nanjing and the second due at 5:00 pm on the 10<sup>th</sup> day after our arrival in Nanjing. The papers are to be submitted in both hard copy and electronic version at the blackboard Safe-Assign links.
2. At the end of the course, there will be a final exam with comprehensive questions covering the whole course. The final exam should be at least 5 pages in length and is due 10:00 pm the day before the group departs Nanjing (in both hard copy and electronic version at the blackboard Safe-Assign links).
3. Students are required to keep daily journals to document observations of phenomena related to the course topics.

### **Questions for Short Papers:**

#### Paper #1

As you observe on our tours to Beijing, Xi'an, Nanjing and Yangzhou, China is both homogeneous and diverse at the same time. Discuss how you interpret such facts and how they affect the culture and **business communication** among the Chinese.

#### Paper #2

During our stay in China, you sure will experience some moments of frustrations and communication difficulties in **various business interactions** because of differences between the host culture and yours. In

this paper, choose one such specific moment or case to describe and analyze. Discuss what it was, how it happened, how you look at it from the perspectives of both cultures, and how you believe ***intercultural communication competence*** can be developed in such cases. You are strongly advised to keep a journal of what you experience during the trip and this will help you complete this assignment.

Students are strongly advised to read the CUNY and Brooklyn College's policies regarding academic dishonesty, attendance and sexual harassment.

### **Major Topics of the Course**

1. Introduction
  - a. Ethnographic Research & Intercultural Understanding in Business and Professional Communication
  - b. Emic & etic; grounded theory
  - c. Evidence and interpretation; culture
2. Culture and Business Communication
  - a. Major Dimensions of Cultural Variability
  - b. Communication patterns; language and speech codes
  - c. Models of Business and Corporate Communication: U.S. & China
3. Religions and cross-cultural business communication:
  - a. Buddhism,
  - b. Daoism
  - c. Judaism
  - d. Islam
  - e. Christianity
4. Buddhism and Islamic culture in Western China
  - a. Field trip: The Wild Goose Pagoda and Xuanzang Buddhist Statue in Xi'an
  - b. Field trip: the Muslim Business Quarter in Xi'an
  - c. Field trip: The Silk Road Museum in Xi'an
5. Faith and Business & Professional Communication
  - a. Inter-cultural and inter-ethnic
  - b. Inter-faith
6. Issues in inter-cultural business exchanges
  - a. Verbal Communication and Intercultural Communication
  - b. Nonverbal Communication & Intercultural Communication
  - c. Intercultural Communication and Popular Culture
  - d. Intercultural Communication & Conflict Management
7. Issues of Multinational Corporations working in China
  - a. Communicating with Chinese employees
  - b. Negotiating with Chinese government
  - c. Working with business partners
  - d. Winning over Chinese customers
  - e. Living in China
8. Ethics and Intercultural Communication
  - a. Intercultural Business Competence
9. Additional site visits
  - a. Field trip: Nanjing Jiming Buddhist Temple
  - b. Field trip: Maxiangxing Muslim restaurant in Nanjing
  - c. Field trip: Yangzhou Museum of the Silk Road; Marco Polo Museum in Yangzhou
10. Summary & review
  - a. Rethinking the Silk Road in the age of globalization
11. Final examination

The instructor reserves the right to make any changes to this syllabus based on changing circumstances. Prepare to be

flexible.

### **Assignment of Keeping Journals**

An important goal of the program is to enable each student to explore and experience China in his or her own individual ways, such that you can obtain maximum academic benefits from this China trip. Keeping a journal during the trip will help serve that purpose well.

You will be keeping a journal during the trip and submit the journal entries as part of the trip and course participation to their course instructor (with a copy to Prof. Lu, the program director); see the instructors' email addresses below. Here are some guidelines:

#### **How to Write a Journal Entry**

1. Describe a **specific, very meaningful, phenomenon or incident** that you observe or experience during the 2-3 days in a city, something that caught your attention and has an impact on you personally, culturally or intellectually, or something that has touched you deeply. Do not just list what you have done during the days (which will give you no credit). Tell us the story, with descriptive details, of a meaningful **intercultural encounter/instance**. This should be the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph.
2. Then, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, analyze or reflect upon that. Write down your reflections and thoughts on that experience or observation from a cross-cultural or intercultural perspective. If you are in one of those non-language classes, try to tie that to what you have read in the textbook(s) or what we are discussing in class.
3. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, summarize or conclude this journal entry by making connections to a larger picture of what you have read, heard and studied previously in other classes, or even what you have experienced back in America and/or other contexts.
4. Each entry should be about 3 paragraphs in length. However, you are free to organize your ideas in what you believe to be creative ways; it is not a good idea to write one journal entry in only one paragraph.

#### **How and When to Submit**

1. Write an entry about every 3 days; a total of 5 (FIVE) journals are expected of you during the trip:
  - a. ONE entry for visit to Beijing  
-- To be submitted on the day when you arrive in 2<sup>nd</sup> city of Xi'an
  - b. ONE for visit to Xi'an  
-- To be submitted on the day when you arrive in Nanjing
  - c. TWO entries during stay in Nanjing (including side trips if any)  
-- To be submitted every 6 days
  - d. ONE final entry for visit to Suzhou and Shanghai  
-- To be submitted no later than 10 pm on the eve of departure from Shanghai  
-- This final journal entry should be a bit longer than the previous ones. You need have 2 additional paragraphs in which to reflect on the overall trip experience: your gains from the trip, the impact of the trip on you, your recommendations for the trip, etc.
2. Submit your journals via email to the instructor via email:
  - a. Email each entry to: [ChinaJournals@yahoo.com](mailto:ChinaJournals@yahoo.com)
  - b. And, if you are taking a class with another professor, also copy that professor.
3. At the beginning of each journal, please clearly indicate:
  - a. the course #(s),
  - b. course title(s), &
  - c. the professor(s) of the course(s), if you are taking more than one course

4. Name each journal entry clearly, by making the subject of the message as Journal #1 (#2, #3, #4, etc.) from XXXX (your full name).
5. In one email message, only send one journal entry by way of **copy & paste** (Do not send it as attachment, please). Send each journal entry separately; Do NOT attempt to include more than one journal entry in one message.

**Grade and Reward**

1. The professor will read your journals and respond if needed. If your journals are well written, professors may use them to replace some assignment(s) of the course, at the professors' discretion.
2. If you are taking more than one course, you still only write a total of FIVE journal entries; be sure you email each entry to both instructors if you are taking two courses from two professors.
3. The journals are part of the trip and course participation grade.
4. If you have been doing an exceptionally good job with the journals, the professors will give you extra credit (as much as 10% of the grade) for the course(s), at the professors' discretion.