

# Course Policies and Tentative Syllabus

English 4903 Social Media and Intercultural Practice, Spring 2013  
Southern Polytechnic State University

**Instructors:** Dr. Iraj Omidvar with Dr. Jeff Orr and in collaboration with Dr. Nadia Abdelmajid Abid

**Office:** J-305

**Office Phone:** 678-915-3722

**Office Hours:** W 1-5: PM tentative and by appointment

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**Class Location:** J-132

**Meeting Times:** TT 10:30-11:45 AM

## Required Texts and Materials

- Holliday, Adrian. *Intercultural Communication and Ideology*. Kindle Edition. Sage, Los Angeles, CA. 2011.  
**ASIN:** B009KZXGGQ. (about \$40)
- Other required texts and media will be made available online or in hard copies.

## Other Materials:

- Reliable access to a computer or computers that
  - Give(s) you reliable access to the Internet
  - Permit(s) you to view video and audio clips online using social media tools and services
  - Allow(s) you to create and post electronic presentations online using social media tools and services, such as WordPress and Google Drive (some services require you to sign up, and you need to pay close attention to the information you are being asked to provide these services).
- Reliable access to a printer
- Stationary as needed
- It would greatly help if you could bring in laptops to class

## Background

This is an experimental course that has been in the works for more than a year. Dr. Jeffery Orr, Director of ATTIC at SPSU and Dr. Nadia Abdelmajid Abid, coordinator of the English program at the Institut Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Sciences Humaines de Sbeitla, Tunisia, will be working closely with me. Dr. Orr is currently teaching COMM 1050 Holistic Communication for Non-Native English Speakers. The students in this course are all from China. Dr. Orr and I are also co-teaching HNRS 3301 City as Text, which will be taking a small group of students to Berlin later in the semester. We will take advantage of these two classes for practicing intercultural communication. Dr. Abdelmajid Abid is teaching a number of Reading and Writing for the Disciplines courses (business communication); we will be doing most of our interactions with between 7 and 14 of her third-year English-major students. A number of other faculty members and administrators have also expressed interest in being either involved in or informed about the teaching of the course, and so you may see them attending or presenting or leading discussion as the semester progresses. Two important issues to keep in mind: (A) Because of the large number of people and the international nature of the work, coordination is time consuming, and students should approach the course with a sense of adventure, flexibility, and patience. And (B) although we will be using social media extensively for the purposes of intercultural practice, ultimately we are interested in those tools for the interaction they permit, so the emphasis is on intercultural practice, and we are going to take advantage of both global as well as local opportunities to practice intercultural communication and to reflect on our practices.

## Description

In this course, we will use social media to communicate directly with college students abroad, primarily in Tunisia, which is in the formative stages of a social transformation as a result of its 2011 revolution. Through extensive intercultural

communication, we will not only learn about another culture but about the cultural values, assumptions, and practices that frame and influence how they approach and understand other cultures. The course will emphasize multimedia-rich genres of journalistic storytelling, for example, blogs and features (profiles, slice-of-life stories, etc.). Students will also produce reflective and analytic multimedia texts. Course assignments are often project based, usually involving collaboration with students here but also in Tunisia and requiring primary and other research about students' lives and experiences. Students signing up for the course should be interested in exploring and using various social media tools and environments.

### **Outcomes**

Students attending the course

- Will be introduced to and practice conceptual tools adopted from intercultural and crosscultural communication studies for understanding other cultures
- Will gain experience from interacting with people living in another cultural, political, economic, and linguistic environment
- Will have opportunities to develop intercultural communication, interaction, and collaboration skills
- Will learn about and have practice producing journalistic multimedia narratives adapted to social media

### **Assignments**

- Reflection posts and queries 20%
- Chapter summaries 15%
- Bi-weekly slice-of-life posts, weekly comments and discussions; Bi-weekly revisions of slice-of-life posts
- Term paper based on research on free online information on Tunisia in English (through social-bookmarking tools, using ratings, and doing rhetorical analyses): News media sites, encyclopedias, wikis, government web sites (embassies, tourism offices/ministries), companies (export/import, tourism, transportation, etc.), online popular culture artifacts, social media sites (hotel reviews, cruise reviews, travelogues, expatriate blogs, book reviews, news report comments, Facebook, etc.) 30%
- Working Annotated Bibliography (Online) 10%
- Intercultural Group Presentations involving analysis of business-communication artifacts (business web-sites, social-media marketing practices, press releases, etc.) 15%
- Class participation 10%

### **Some Course Activities**

- Guest Speakers from Tunisia and Elsewhere
- Tunisian and other foreign film, music, books, and other cultural artifacts
- Interactions with international and traveling students on campus
- Campus and Atlanta cross-cultural events

### **In-Class and Online Participation**

For in-class participation, I look for purposeful class discussion, engaged group work (including verbal and written responses to the texts of others), regular attendance, no or very few “lates,” and timely preparedness. For online participation, I look for engaged, timely participation in class discussions, timely and active collaboration within groups, and timely electronic submissions of assignments. Make sure that you do most of your collaborative work in such a way that creates a record of what you are doing. Needless to say, while you are in class, one or two instances of dozing off, being distracted (say, with electronic devices and otherwise), being inattentive to what others are saying, etc. will greatly affect your in-class participation grade.

## Attendance and Preparation

**Attendance**—This course is about interaction and process, so attendance and participation are very important. Each absence after the third will result in a 10% deduction from the course grade. More than six absences are grounds for failure. Notify me ahead of time if you plan to miss a class.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and make up the assignment no later than the following class period.

**Emergencies**—In case of family or medical emergencies, you will need to contact me—through your and my university e-mail accounts or my office phone—within 48 hours after the emergency so that we can make the necessary arrangements. Please keep in mind that I will ask for documentation for my records: an emergency-room admittance or release document, an accident report, etc. A previously scheduled doctor's (or other) appointment is not an emergency. From my perspective your job responsibilities do not take precedence over your responsibilities for this class. I also do not consider computer problems to be emergencies (please see below).

**Late work**—Submitting late work will negatively affect your overall grade. Attendance and submission of assignments are separate categories of responsibility. If you must miss a class period, e-mail me your assignment before the beginning of class to avoid a late-work penalty.

**Assignment Format and Other Requirements**—All out-of-class writings must be typed and documented, according to the MLA style, for in-text citations and the works cited page. Formatting of submissions is also according to the MLA style, with these exceptions: Single-space paragraphs but leave two spaces between paragraphs. On all papers you hand in, in the upper-left-hand corner of the first page, write your name, my name, the course number, the assignment title, and the date of the print-out (or of posting). Number each page at the top right hand corner and fasten the sheets together. Place a title (a title is not the same as the assignment title but part of the writing itself), without underlining it or placing quotation marks around it, on all papers and exploratory writings.

**Grammar and Mechanics**—This course assumes you have a standard competency in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. You will not pass this course unless I think you have such a competency. If you need to do some work in this area, we should get together early and make arrangements. The assignments you submit should be free from correctness errors.

**Readings:** In this class, all the readings (student and other) will be viewed as voices in our ongoing conversation. We will write and think about them in relation to our own ideas and connections. Every time you read for this class, read with a pen or pencil in hand. With each reading assignment you will be expected to annotate the selections by actively engaging in a written conversation with the author by marking off sections of text and responding in the margins. It is from these responses that your exploratory writings and our class and online discussions will grow.

**Note:** When you are reading out of the book, I expect you to write in the margins and isolate particular passages so they will be readily available for class discussion.

## Online Course Component

Much of the collaboration in this course takes place online or by using online tools. WordPress -- and to a lesser extent Desire2Learn -- is an integral part of the class. As part of attending this class, you commit yourself to checking your email and WordPress (as well as any other online media service we come to use) **once a day during the work week** for any announcements and e-mails from me.

## Communication with Me

My office hours are at the top of this document and will also be posted on the bulletin board by the door to my office. Although you should feel welcome to stop by during any of my office hours, it would be very helpful to me if you contact me ahead of time to set up a specific time.

The best way to receive answers to your queries about the course is to bring them up during class if the question applies also to other students or right afterwards. If doing so is not possible, the best way to contact me is by contacting me through your and my SPSU emails. In emergencies, you also have my office telephone number.

#### **My e-mail guidelines:**

- Any e-mail to me should be professional, with a clear subject line as well as a greeting and closing, which should include your full name and contact information. If you use SPSU email, please include the course number.
- Because of my heavy work load, please expect a response within two working days. I do not check my e-mail over the weekend and after 6 PM. So please do not wait till the last minute when an assignment is due to contact me.

#### **Other Important Information**

***THE ATTIC (Advising, Tutoring, Testing, International Student Center):*** The ATTIC (Location: J-253; Phone: 678-915-7244) provides opportunities for individualized tutorial assistance to all Southern Polytechnic students. This is a particularly useful service for ESOL and international students who need extra support since English is not their native language. Academic assistants help students through the processes of invention, organization, writing, revising, and editing of essays and research papers.

The ATTIC maintains student academic enrichment as its primary mission and students should expect to work to improve their grammar and mechanics. Students should not expect an editorial or proofreading service – but genuine help with their writing as a whole. The ATTIC encourages both student "drop-ins" and faculty referrals.

***Disability Statement:*** Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class should contact me or the counselor working with disabilities (678-915-7244) as soon as possible to ensure that necessary accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion

***Plagiarism:*** You are expected to understand what constitutes plagiarism, which is one of the worst academic offenses a student or scholar can commit, and may result in failing an assignment or the course or being expelled from the university. Issues related to plagiarism apply to ALL submitted work, not just essays and exam responses. Here is a very brief refresher on what is meant by plagiarism (from *The Open Handbook* by Ann Raimes, pages 363-364):

- . . . Presenting as your own work a whole essay bought from paper mills, "borrowed" from a friend, or intentionally copied and pasted from an online source . . . ;
- . . . Using passages from a book, article, or Web site that you intentionally insert in your paper without any attribution . . . ;
- . . . Using unattributed source material, making only a few word changes, and trusting that those changes are enough to avoid charges of plagiarism;
- . . . Using ideas written by others (even if you do use your own words) and neglecting to cite the source of the ideas;
- . . . Using the words or sentence structure of a source and citing the source—but following it too closely and not including actual words from the source within quotation marks;
- . . . Failing to indicate in your paper where ideas from a source end and your ideas take over.

***Changes to the Course Policies and the Tentative Syllabus:*** The course policies and the tentative syllabus are subject to change as I do my ongoing evaluation of your progress, needs, and interests during the semester. I will notify you in advance of any changes.

### Initial Tentative Syllabus

ICI = Intercultural Communication & Ideology

Weeks	Days	In-class Activities	Assignments Due before Class
1	Tu 1/8	Introductions Course Policies, Tentative Syllabus	
	Th1/10	Meet COMM 1050 Students	Sign up for the Blog, make sure all names appear correctly (i.e., full names), get a Kindle or other copy of the book
2	Tu1/15	Discuss Meeting with Chinese Students Introduce Concept of Inquiry Discuss Chapter Concepts	ICI "Chapter 1: Key Discussions": Essentialism, Neo-essentialism, Cosmopolitanism Post: Reflective account of meeting the Chinese students Post: Ideas for the blog, respond to prompt  Post: Preliminary Introduction
	Th1/17	(Possible interaction with COMM 1050 students) Discuss Chapter Concepts Discuss Reflective Posts  Discuss Blog Introductions  Discuss Blogs	ICI "Chapter 1: Key Discussions": Imagined Certainty versus Acknowledged Complexity, Summary Post: Reflect on specific concepts introduced in the course and passages from the textbook Post: Brief comments to classmate's and my thoughts
3	Tu1/22	Discuss Chapter Concepts	
	Th1/24	(Possible interaction with COMM 1050 students) Discuss Chapter Concepts	
4	Tu1/29		ICI "Chapter 2: Critical Cultural Awareness": A Reconstructed Narrative, Critical Interpretivism, A Decentred Reading Posts
	Th2/31	Discussion of Chapter 2 Concepts	ICI "Chapter 2: Critical Cultural Awareness": Opening up Cultural Possibilities, Summary, Investigation Posts
5	Tu2/5	First contact with students in Tunisia	ICI "Chapter 3 : Cultural Complexity": Informants, An Emergent Methodology, Statements of Cultural Identity, Competing Social Theories Posts