

ET908-15 Understanding Culture

26/27

Department

Applied Linguistics

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Duncan Lees

Credit value

15

Module duration

8 weeks

Assessment

100% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

While the idea of culture can seem relatively straightforward, how we understand it has become quite a contested area in the study of intercultural communication. This module will give you a better understanding of the idea of culture. In particular, you will be introduced to a range of conceptualisations of 'culture' that have been developed in different disciplinary areas. In this way, the module will enable you to gain a critical perspective on the views of culture so you can better understand your experience of communicating interculturally in everyday life and in the workplace.

The module will start by asking what culture is. It will go on to consider the idea of culture from three perspectives. First, the perspective of social psychology considers culture as a set of values, beliefs and behaviours held and practised by individuals. Secondly, sociological and anthropological perspectives consider culture more as a manifestation of groups, such as the nation state, community, or organisation. And finally, cultural studies and poststructuralist perspectives view culture as a set of representations produced by discourse and other semiotic resources. You will be exposed to these ideas through seminar presentations and selected readings. You will be also encouraged to explore your own position in relation to these different perspectives critically, and with reference to your own intercultural work, through seminar discussion and within the course assignment.

Module aims

The aims of this module are to:

Introduce students to a range of multidisciplinary conceptualisations of the idea of culture;

Enable students to understand the idea of culture as a key concept in intercultural communication;

Enable students to gain a critical perspective on the views of culture current within the discourse of cross- and intercultural interaction and assessment;

Enable students to understand their experiences of communicating interculturally in the workplace and in everyday life.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

- Introduction: What is culture?
- Cross-cultural (etic) perspectives on values, beliefs and behaviour: e.g., individualism/collectivism (Hofstede/Minkov), basic human values (S. Schwartz), social axioms (Kwok Leung), self-construals (Vignoles).
- Cultural (emic) perspectives on cultural groups:
 - the social imaginary and the idea of the nation state (E. Hall; Anderson);
 - organisational cultures (Hampden-Turner; Trompenaars etc.);
 - common sense as a cultural system (Geertz, anthropological and ethnomethodological approaches).
- Cultural representations:
 - the culture of everyday life (Williams, S. Hall and cultural studies);
 - beyond culture: postmodernism and culture (Said and postcolonial theory).

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of multidisciplinary conceptualisations of culture;
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural (etic) perspectives on values, beliefs and behaviour;
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of cultural (emic) perspectives on cultural groups;
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of representations of culture;
- Apply different conceptualizations of culture in order to understand and communicate with a variety of people in the workplace and in everyday life;
- Select and apply different, appropriate conceptualizations of culture in order to carry out research and project work in intercultural communication and interaction.

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

International

The module engages with culture on a conceptual level but also with different cultures and with perspectives on culture from around the world. As such it is international in regards to its subject matter, the authors we read and the students taking the module, who are encouraged to bring different examples and perspectives to the seminar discussions.

Subject specific skills

-Apply different conceptualisations of culture in order to understand and communicate with a variety of people in the workplace and in everyday life.

-Select and apply different, appropriate conceptualisations of culture in order to carry out research and project work in intercultural communication and interaction.

Transferable skills

- Communicate clearly and contribute effectively in discussions
 - Work collaboratively in teams
 - Read academic papers effectively
 - Communicate ideas effectively in writing, using appropriate wording and structure
 - Work independently
 - Plan and manage time and workload to meet deadlines
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	8 sessions of 2 hours (14%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Private study	87 hours (78%)
Total	111 hours

Private study description

Guided independent study, including: Independent reading as part of seminar and pre-lecture prep, and homework tasks, equivalent to around 87 hours, and exam preparation equivalent to 36 hours (for a 3-hour exam).

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group B

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Centrally-timetabled examination (On-campus)	100%	39 hours	No
The exam has two parts. Part 1 consists of 30 factual questions (1 hour). Part 2 consists of a 1500-word essay, with the topic chosen from a selection of questions (2 hours).			

- Answers provided on Question Paper.

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Feedback on a practice exam will be provided via online feedback in Tabula; students will be able to request additional feedback from the module tutor.

Feedback on the exam will not be given individually but for both parts of the exam, general feedback will be shared with students via email.

[Past exam papers for ET908](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- TETS-X9PJ Postgraduate Taught Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions

- Year 1 of X9PJ Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions
- Year 1 of X9PJ Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions
- Year 1 of TETS-X9PT Postgraduate Taught Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions (Part-time - 2 years)

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 1 of TETS-X9PL Postgraduate Diploma in Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions
- Year 1 of TETS-X9PM Postgraduate Diploma in Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions
- Year 1 of TETS-X9PJ Postgraduate Taught Intercultural Communication for Business and the Professions

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TIMA-L981 Postgraduate Social Science Research