SED 465.401 Seminar in Education: Cross-Cultural Learning in Costa Rica

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Instructor: Dr. Neill F. Armstrong  E-mail: armstronn@sfasu.edu
Office Address: 404D McKibben Bldg.  Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 10:00-12:00
Office Phone: (936) 468-1844  and by appointment

Prerequisites:

Prerequisites include: (1) enrollment in student teaching, (2) a strong desire to facilitate learning for culturally different students, (3) an intense intellectual and academic interest in learning about culture and communicating across cultures, and (4) a keen desire to participate in a transformative educational experience grounded in a cross-cultural constructivist sojourn.

I. Course Description:

This course will provide the context for an authentic cross-cultural experience. Participants will actively engage in the processes of culture learning and communicating across cultures. A particular focus of this constructivist process will be to provide each participant with a lived experience as the cultural “other”. Such a process entails a hands-on perspective in relation to denial of native language communication capability, a dearth of cultural insight and understanding, and a high level of ambiguity in day-to-day activities. A particular goal of this experience is that of effective cross-cultural adaptation.

This course will focus upon the preparation of students for enhanced functioning in diverse classrooms in the state of Texas. Students will gain a heightened understanding of culture’s impact in the learning environment, of culturally responsive classroom management techniques, second language acquisition and instructional strategies for English language learners, divergent learning, and how to mediate for cultural differences. Participants will also develop an appreciation for the facilitation of flexibility and creativity through experiential learning. Students will be encouraged to engage in divergent thinking in order to overcome the natural unwillingness to risk oneself, to take chances, and to become prepared for unexpected, possibly negative outcomes. Cross-cultural learning is “a tool for adapting to change, to a world in which pluralism and the needs to function effectively in different cultural environments will become important for an increasing number of people” (Hoopes, 1979).
In order to pursue the goals this course seeks to attain, students will embark upon a thirteen day field experience in Costa Rica. The course instructor and students will backpack through multiple social and natural environments, to include cities, towns, villages, rainforests, mountain regions, coastal areas and agricultural zones. Local transportation, specifically buses and on occasion, taxies or mini-vans, will constitute the preferred modes of transportation. An appreciation for environmental preservation and sustainable practices will be cultivated and integrated into the culture-learning process. An additional area of focus will be the observation and analysis of the effects of globalization in this small, “developing” nation. Students will investigate the influences of direct foreign investment, free trade zones, the recently passed Central American Free Trade Agreement, the impact of transnational corporate activity on the lives of ordinary Costa Ricans, and in general, the economic and financial effects associated with globalization, as well as cultural, educational, and political aspects.

II. Intended Learning Outcomes/Goals/Objectives:

Stephen F. Austin State University College of Education Mission Statement:

The mission of the College of Education is to prepare competent, successful, caring and enthusiastic professionals dedicated to responsible service, leadership and continued professional and intellectual development.

In the College of Education at Stephen F. Austin State University, we value and are committed to:

- Academic excellence through critical, reflective and creative thinking
- Life-long learning
- Collaboration and shared decision-making
- Openness to new ideas, to culturally diverse people and to innovation and change
- Integrity, responsibility, diligence and ethical behavior, and
- Service that enriches the community

Department of Secondary Education and Educational Leadership Objectives:

The Secondary Education Program seeks to prepare teachers as school leaders committed to youth, scholarship and lifelong learning through a scholar-practitioner learning community characterized by a learner-centered curriculum, field experience, mentoring, and practical inquiry.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The major objectives and student outcomes of this course include:

1. Preparation of students to function effectively in diverse classrooms.
2. Heighten student awareness and thus capacity for effective management of diverse learners in culturally responsive ways.
3. Strengthen student understanding of second language acquisition.
4. Facilitation of student flexibility and creativity through experiential learning.
5. Stimulation of student ability to tolerate ambiguity and develop the divergent mode of thinking.
6. Development of a clear awareness of and appreciation for the need for affective learning in cross-cultural education environments.

Rationale for the Course

This course focuses upon the experience and skills necessary for successful cross-cultural adaptation. As U.S. society grows increasingly diverse, it is imperative that professional teachers demonstrate a clear ability to understand and interact with culturally different individuals, groups, and communities. A heightened understanding of and appreciation for culture has become a prerequisite for educators in the 21st century learning environment. This course seeks to assist students in learning to learn another culture thereby facilitating their future adaptation to and interactions with culturally distinct children, families, and communities.

III. Course Assignments, Activities, Instructional Strategies, use of Technology:

Reading Assignments:

2. Collected Information from web pertaining to Costa Rica
3. Culture learning packet provided by course instructor (includes articles relating to globalization and critical issues)

Written Assignments:

1. Field Experience Journal
2. Lesson Plan (Costa Rica or Rainforest)
3. Summative Written Analysis of Course Experience
4. Final Exam
5. Clinical Experience Perspective
6. Course Survey

IV. Evaluation and Assessments (Grading):

Credit Requirements:
All students are required to attend 37.5 hours and five and one half weeks of course contact time. Credit requirements will be determined by the following criteria:

Undergraduate Credit Requirements/Student Assessment-3 hours:

1. Attendance at all on-campus sessions.................................(10%)
2. Participation, collaboration, and collegiality………………………………………(10%)
3. Field Experience Journal……………………………………..(10%)
4. Summative Written Analysis of Course Experience………..(10%)
5. Video Chronicle of the Sojourn Experience (grounded in cross-cultural theory)………………..(20%)
6. Lesson Plan…………………………………………………..(10%)
7. Clinical Experience Perspective…………………………………..(10%)
8. Final Exam……………………………………………………….(10%)
9. Course Survey…………………………………………………….(10%)

**Undergraduate Credit**

Undergraduate credit may be obtained by enrollment in SED 465 and meeting the requirements as specified in the student assessment component of this syllabus.

V. Tentative Course Outline/Calendar:

The following information will serve as the format for course content and schedule. The format and/or content may be amended and/or modified as necessary. Assignments are due as indicated or as negotiated with instructor.

Part I: All students must attend and participate in pre-departure on-campus meetings (3)
Part II: All students must actively engage in the full range of cross-cultural activities that occur in-country during the two week experiential learning adventure. See course Itinerary.
Part III: All students must participate fully and contribute in meaningful and appropriate fashion in all in-country class meetings (each evening of the two week experience).

VI. Readings:

The following materials and texts are required for the course:

Selected readings in the following text: (provided in Course packet).


Course Packet (culture learning packet) – prepared and disseminated by course Instructor.

1. Students will acquire a 2” 3 ring binder for the course packet
2. Students will be required to supply a serviceable, portable and functional backpack for the duration of the field experience component.
3. A valid passport is required.
4. Applicable vaccinations should be considered and acquired.

Knowledge Base

The design and content of this course are informed by selected works in cross-cultural learning, intercultural communication and anthropological discourse. The following works are additional useful resources for furthering understanding of culture, intercultural communications, and cross-cultural learning:


VII. Course Evaluations:

Near the conclusion of each semester, students in the College of Education electronically evaluate courses taken within the COE. Evaluation data is used for a variety of important purposes including: 1. Course and program improvement, planning, and accreditation; 2. Instruction evaluation purposes; and 3. Making decisions on faculty tenure, promotion, pay, and retention. As you evaluate this course, please be thoughtful, thorough, and accurate in completing the evaluation. Please know that the COE faculty is committed to excellence in teaching and continued improvement. Therefore, your response is critical!

In the College of Education, the course evaluation process has been simplified and is completed electronically through MySFA. Although the instructor will be able to view the names of students who complete the survey, all ratings and comments are confidential and anonymous, and will not be available to the instructor until after final grades are posted.

VIII. Student Ethics and Other Policy Information:

**Special Notice to Students with Special Needs**: “If any member of this class feels that he/she has a disability and needs special accommodations of any nature whatsoever, the instructor will work with you and the office of Disability Services, Stephen F. Austin State University, Wisely Hall 5, Rm. 104, P.O. Box 6130, Nacogdoches, TX 75962-6130, Telephone: (936) 468-3004, to ensure that you have a fair opportunity to perform in this class. Please advise the instructor of such disability and the desired accommodations at some point before, during, or immediately after the first scheduled class period.”

**Academic Dishonesty**: Academic dishonesty is behavior in which a deliberately fraudulent misrepresentation is employed in an attempt to gain undeserved intellectual credit, either for oneself or for another. It includes, but is not necessarily limited to the following types of cases: plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration on out-of-class projects, cheating on class exams, unauthorized advance access to an exam, fraudulent alterations of academic materials, or knowingly cooperating with another person in an academically dishonest undertaking. None of these behaviors are tolerated at Stephen F. Austin State University. Students who have been
determined to have committed any form of academic dishonesty shall be subject to the process outlined in university Policy A-9.1. (Academic Integrity – www.sfasu.edu/upp).

Student Appeals

A student who wishes to appeal decisions related to academic dishonesty should follow procedures outlined in Academic Appeals by Students (6.3).

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Withheld Grades: Policy 5.5

At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Student Code of Conduct: Policy 10.4

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the iCare: Early Alert Program at SFA. Information regarding the iCare program is found at https://www.sfasu.edu/judicial/earlyalert.asp or call the office at 936-468-2703.

To complete Certification/Licensing Requirements in Texas related to public education, you will be required to:

1. Undergo criminal background checks for field or clinical experiences on public school campuses; the public school campuses are responsible for the criminal background check; YOU are responsible for completing the information form requesting the criminal background check; the completed information form is due _______________________. If you have a history of criminal activity, you may not be allowed to complete field or clinical experiences on public school campuses. At that point, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.
2. Provide one of the following primary ID documents: passport, drivers license, state or providence ID cards, a national ID card, or military ID card to take the TExES exams (additional information available at www.texes.ets.org/registrationBulletin/). YOU must provide legal documentation to be allowed to take these mandated examinations that are related to certification/licensing requirements in Texas. If you do not have legal documentation, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.

3. Successfully complete state mandated a fingerprint background check. If you have a history of criminal activity, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.

IX. Other Relevant Course Information:

Mode/Style of Teaching

This class will be conducted primarily as a field-based, experiential learning seminar. The development of this course is grounded in the notion that knowledge is gained by doing and that learning of another culture is best attained through active rather than passive interaction with the target culture. Students will assume the role of full-time learners confronting a high degree of ambiguity in the learning situation and as they encounter and interact with that ambiguity they will create their own structure that will further serve as a framework for learning. As such, each student will be expected to actively participate in all areas of the learning process and in the sharing of information, ideas and experiences. Constant opportunity will be availed for independent and group work, for reflective thinking and, in particular, creative problem solving.

Failure Clause – Candidates can immediately earn an F in this experiential / study abroad course due to any of the following issues:

- Your course instructor insists that you return to the U.S.
- You choose not to participate in the course academic activities
- You have violated COE policy
- You have violated university policy
- You have violated the Texas Code of Ethics
- You have violated any state, federal or Costa Rican laws
- You have committed any other egregious acts of non-professional behavior