

Communication and Culture: Gateway to France, Europe, and Beyond

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Course prefix: LMC

Course number: 3206

Section: R

CRN (you may add up to five):

93849

Instructor First Name: Jennifer

Instructor Last Name: Orth-Veillon

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

"Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterizes a society or a group. It includes creative expressions, community practices and material or built forms."

—from *Our Creative Diversity: The UN World Commission on Culture and Development Report*

According to this UN report, understanding different cultures involves the exploration of its various modes of communicative practices. With Gallo-Roman ruins, art museums, sweeping cathedrals, winding waterways, mysterious passages, and the ghosts of three recent major wars haunting the streets, this course offers an interesting, dynamic conversation between culture and communication that may be compelling to diversity of artistic, historical, and scientific sensibilities. We will develop this conversation through travel in France and Europe, exploring different ways communication has functioned in cultures, languages, and historical periods. Studying culture via the lens of communication provides exciting reflection on travel by connecting with foreign places through both the collective consciousness and our unique, personal perspectives. We will learn that communication in all cultures is neither neutral nor objective. But this doesn't mean that

communication is fiction. It is the vital backbone to the way cultures operate throughout time. You will be asked to make comparisons between your cultural experiences and observations with ones made in France. We will come to understand, for example, that war destroys lives but also familiarity and tradition. However, in the wake of peace, creation abounds. It all depends on how this experience gets communicated. New landscapes, design, art, history, and ways of thinking reflect the shifts in consciousness after war.

This course takes advantage of the FYSA study abroad experience in the geographical location of Georgia Tech's campus in Europe to explore the concepts and practices of mindful learning and intercultural communication. Engaging in active and experiential learning will help students make the most of starting the college experience abroad. The course seeks to facilitate the development of intercultural sensitivity and sharpen critical thinking skills as a strong foundation for cross-cultural competence, collaboration amidst diversity and global leadership. In addition, it will help you sharpen your eye for cultural details, hone your intercultural communication competency, and cultivate your individual voice through creative and analytical assignments.

Course learning outcomes:

- Understand basic concepts of intercultural sensitivity, worldview structures and mindful learning to foster strong intercultural communication skills.
- Situate Metz, France and the Grand Est region and Europe in broad historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts to better understand intercultural communication at the local, regional, and national level.
- Develop and sharpen critical thinking skills and apply them to concepts and debates around identity, globalization, and notions of globalism and global citizenship to be better able to form informed stances.
- Attain confidence and skills for independent and mindful travel to put into practice intercultural communication concepts.
- Understand and analyze the ways socio-cultural/political developments and current societal debates are communicated in France and Europe and to be capable of considering these phenomena in cross-cultural, cross-regional and cross-national contexts.

Required course materials:

There is no required textbook for this course. Suggested background texts as well as mandatory readings (articles, excerpts from books, official documents) and short films and Ted Talks or podcasts will be posted on Canvas for each unit.

Grading policy:

COURSE ASSESSMENT:

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A 90-100% Excellent (4 quality points per credit hour)
- B 80-89% Good (3 quality points per credit hour)
- C 70-79% Satisfactory (2 quality points per credit hour)
- D 60-69% Passing (1 quality point per credit hour)
- F 0-59% Failure (0 quality points per credit hour)

Class Graded Components

-Hand-written travel journal: 20%

- Short travel quizzes : 10%
- Individual culture and multimedia communication assignment on class travel blog: 15%
- Group culture and multimedia film project: 35%
- Participation, behavior, travel etiquette, and attendance: 20%

= 100%

Grade Component Details

Students will keep a travel journal and will write regularly. These writings will serve as the basis for class discussion, workshops, and assignment. The journals will be checked and evaluated several times over the semester. They will be turned in along with the periodic essays that will be due. Recommended journal: MOLESKINE or another cheaper journal with hard cover. Travel journals can be purchased at Carrefour, bookstores, "librairies" and stationary stores "papeteries." You can also just use a regular notebook, but the travel journal is a place of portable free expression - take it everywhere and tape, glue, attach, or draw in it as you would like.

Students will complete one individual assignment, one group assignment/presentation, the cultural heritage days film project, and the class blog project. All assignments will involve travel experience and will reflect the themes and forms studied. Some of the journal entries serve as kind of a rough draft for these assignments.

The final project will culminate in a multimedia class travel blog that we will work on throughout the semester. Students will polish their travel journal entries to get them ready for publishing on the blog.

All assignments represent more than a mere recollection of visits and travels and are intended to encourage creativity, teamwork and mindful learning, capturing the experiences as well as providing an understanding and interpretation of the culture (s) engaged with throughout the semester. An emphasis for AI projects should be placed on the following elements related to culture and communication: (1) development and articulation of your worldview, (2) reflections on how the study abroad and FYSA experience enhanced your self-understanding, (3) concrete examples of how travel, study and learning abroad clarified your intellectual and career aspirations.

PARTICIPATION: Attendance in class and on weekend trips is mandatory unless otherwise specified, and roll will be taken. As this is primarily an active learning course with accompanying weekend site-visits and excursions, punctuality, engaged participation and attentiveness during the class and the trips are necessary to attain a good grade for the attendance portion of the final grade. Excused absences must be justified in writing to the instructor by the GTE administration.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

Good participation entails not only speaking and sharing your thoughts on a regular basis, but also being considerate and respecting the views of others. To earn high points in the participation part of the final grade, students will have demonstrated their awareness of the different functions of classroom comments by:

1. varying their discussion strategies,
2. considering what they say before they say it,
3. taking intellectual risks, and
4. always respecting the feelings of peers by not interrupting classmates while speaking and acknowledging interesting ideas.

RUBRICS AND DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS: For each assignment, you will receive a detailed assignment description well in advance of the deadline, which will include the grading rubric. I aim to return your assignments graded within one week of the due date. Delays may be longer with long travel weekends.

Collaboration & Group Work

Aside from group projects, all work must be your own. Work created by AI is not considered your work. If any portion of a group project is suspected of being completed by someone or something other than your group, all group members will be investigated and reported. Your written work will be checked with plagiarism software. Suspected cases of plagiarism/unacknowledged AI use will result in reporting to the Office of Student Integrity.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

All extensions must be pre-approved before the due date by the instructor and, if deemed necessary by the instructor, justified by the Gatech administration. Missing class does not automatically grant you an extension on an assignment due date.

Attendance policy:

Attendance Policy

Throughout the semester, you can miss a maximum of 2 in-classroom days, no questions asked. Each unexcused absence after 2 will result in 1 point deducted from your final grade. You may not miss mandatory travel (see below)

You must have approval and justification from the GTE administration in writing for an in-classroom absence to be excused. If you miss on a group workshop day, you will still be expected to do the work in your group.

You may not make up in-class quizzes, but I will drop the lowest quiz grade out of 8 at the end of the semester.

Travel plans like late trains or missed connections do not count as excused absences. When traveling, plan to arrive the day before your classes begin.

You must be on time to class. 3 regular, unexcused tardies/leaving class early will result in deduction of one point from the final grade. You may not arrive to class late or leave class early unless you request my permission beforehand. Catching a train or needing to get to the airport on time are not valid reasons. If you leave early for an unexcused reason, this will count the same as being late to class.

Policy on Missed Required Travel

You are required to attend ALL mandatory travel excursions. Missing a required travel excursion for an unexcused reason will result in being reported to the Office of Student Integrity for "failure to comply." You are not authorized to travel independently overnight until after the Paris trip. You may travel independently in small groups for day trips only until then after September 7th. You are not authorized to travel to Turkey or North Africa when you are able to travel independently. Not complying is serious and will remain on your Georgia Tech record for the remainder of your time at the institution. This means that this offense will show up whenever you apply for a fellowship, internship, or other opportunity at Gatech.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Arts, Humanities & Ethics area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy

Intercultural Competence