

LMC 3206 Syllabus

Communication and Culture, Section RMZ, 3.0 Credits
Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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General Course Information

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 its various modes of communicative practices. With Gallo-Roman ruins, art museums, sweeping cathedrals, winding water ways, 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, historical periods, and technological developments.

Studying culture via the lens of communication provides an exciting reflection on travel by connecting with foreign places through both the collective consciousness and our unique, personal perspectives. We will learn that communication is neither neutral nor objective. However, it does contain unique and necessary codes. These codes provide the vital backbone to the way cultures operate throughout time. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to make comparisons between your native 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.

These core goals of the class align well with GT's new strategic plan outlined here:

<https://strategicplan.gatech.edu/focus/global>

Context: Why Metz?

The city of Metz and the “Grand Est” region with its over two-thousand-year history provides a rich backdrop to examine the legacies of the Roman empire that dramatically shaped Europe’s development. In addition to its Gallo-Roman heritage, Metz was an independent republic before it became part of France and later would become the epicenter of the rivalry, power struggle and shifting borders between France and Germany. The area is steeped in the history of three major wars—the Franco-Prussian war and the First and Second World Wars that finally culminated in the peace and reconciliation that gave birth to the European project and continues to shape the European Union today. This historical framing introduces students to the meaning of ‘place’ for situating concepts of identity, nationalism, and borders—central for a critical and well-informed understanding of the processes of globalization shaping our world today.

In many ways, European integration presents a microcosm for understanding contemporary global politics, particularly the challenges of preserving cultural diversity and defending national interests while constructing the institutions and policies necessary for the globalizing, interdependent world we inhabit. The study of the three wars and the ways in which they influenced the creation of the European Union (EU) today serves as a model of society in general. It especially highlights the values one society defends within an international system and, as such, offers an intellectual laboratory for examining the societal debates and contested histories that are so resonant today.

The role that France has played in global history cannot be underestimated and will provide a broad frame of intellectual and comparative reference for activating mindful learning concepts. From its Gallo-Roman roots to the Enlightenment, its role in the war of American Independence, to the reverberations of the French revolution and the Napoleonic wars, from the Franco-Prussian War to the two world wars, up through her colonial past, and present leadership role in the EU, France has made a dramatic impact on the world! Moreover, France’s vast artistic and cultural heritage, intellectual and philosophical influences as well as major contributions to science and innovation mean that a focus on France and the French will provide for an endlessly rich springboard for inspired discussions, cross-cultural comparison and challenging debates throughout the semester!

Content: What to Expect in This Class

Through a mix of field trips and site visits, lectures, readings, and discussions, students will gain an understanding of the significance of the region and the centrality of France and French-

German relations to the construction of the post-war European project and to global politics today. The primary goal of the course is to situate the socio-cultural and political contexts within which students are living to enhance their intercultural communication as they travel throughout France and across Europe and to activate and apply mindful learning practices for personal growth and academic development. It's only one course, but it will whet the appetite for deeper exploration of French and European history and culture in the global context and set the stage for continuous, life-long mindful learning, successful intercultural communication, and mindful travel!

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- 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

- None

Grading Policy:

Course Assessment

- Handwritten Travel Journal: 20%
- Short travel quizzes : 10%
- Individual culture and multimedia communication photo posting on course padlet: 10%
- Group cultural and multimedia film with individual component: 35%
- Participation: 20%
- TOTAL: 100%

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)

See <http://registrar.gatech.edu/info/grading-system>Links to an external site. for more information about the grading system at Georgia Tech.

Description of Graded Components

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 all 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.

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 seven business days after the week of a due date. Delays may be longer with long travel weekends.

Travel Journal: Students will keep a travel journal and will write regularly by hand. Each journal entry should be no less than 450 words. I will give prompts for some journals and others will be subjects on travel of your choosing. These writings will serve as the basis for class discussion, workshops, and assignment. The journals will be checked and evaluated two times for completion over the course of the semester. Recommended journal: MOLESKINE or another less expensive journal with hard cover. Travel journals can be purchased at Carrefour, bookstores, “libraries” 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. So, it needs to be sturdy!

Short post-travel quizzes: You will take seven short multiple-choice Canvas quizzes, one for each travel weekend. These quizzes test for comprehension, asking basic information about the travel experience. I will brief you before the weekend on the elements from the weekend that will appear on the quiz for the following Thursday. If you are paying attention, the quiz should feel almost effortless. Each quiz contains 10 questions plus a bonus question. I drop the lowest grade at the end of the semester. The quizzes cannot be made up. Stuff to know for quiz will be on the Padlet following the weekend and during the visits, I will put blurbs on the Group Me about quiz questions about what we’re learning.

Individual culture and multimedia communication photo posting on course padlet: You will post a themed, critically-inspired photo and caption on the course padlet 2 times over the

course of the semester. You will receive your two dates at the beginning of the semester. You will be asked to give a very short, informal presentation for each posting to the class.

Group cultural and multimedia film with individual component: In small groups of 4-5, you will work throughout the semester to craft a film on different aspects of culture and communication based on your experience both as a temporary resident of Metz and a European traveler. We will begin work on this project the second week of the semester and it will finish with a film screening and festival open to the GTE public during the last week of classes. You will also be required to write an individual reflection essay on the experience.

Participation: Attending class and obligatory 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.

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.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

As a course based on discussion, collaborative projects, and experiential learning, your presence in class on Thursdays is essential for your success. This is why you are only permitted 2 “free” absences throughout the semester. This means you may miss class twice without official justification from the GTE administration. You are required to make up work for this class, especially if you are working in a group. The quizzes cannot be made up if you are absent.

As stated previously, I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

For each unexcused absence beyond these two times will result in one point off your final grade.

An excused absence—an absence that does not count towards your final grade—means that you have documentation and/or approval by Paul Voss. For example, if you are sick and see the nurse or doctor, please show a note to me from them excusing you. If you have a personal issue

that necessitates your absence, please see Paul Voss and ask him to write me an email to excuse you. Religious holidays are excused. Please let me know beforehand if you will be absent for this reason.

Late trains, missed planes, or any other problem caused by personal travel do not count as excused absences unless approved by Paul Voss in writing.

Late to Class/Leaving Class Early

Being on time to class and staying to the end are required. Being more than 5 minutes late for an unexcused reason three times will be the equivalent of one unexcused absence. If you are late for an excused reason, please provide justification. Personal travel issues like late trains do not count as excused reasons for being late to class.

Leaving class early for unexcused reasons is not permitted and will count as an absence unless you have excused justification. Leaving early for excused reasons must be approved by me beforehand. Personal travel issues are not excused.

In addition, you are not permitted to leave class temporarily to take a phone call, meet a professor, or deal with any non-class related issue unless approved by me beforehand. Non-compliance will result in points taken off your participation grade.

Policy on Missed Required Travel and Travel Restrictions

You are required to attend ALL required 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.” If this happens, you will be required to meet with the Dean’s Representative.

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.

Not complying with travel policy is serious and could 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 Georgia Tech. In addition, you are not authorized to travel to North Africa, Turkey, or anywhere outside of the Schengen zone. For urgent personal or familial reasons, if you need to travel to these places, you must obtain authorization from Paul Voss prior to departure.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech’s Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

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 in English or other languages, 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

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.