Texas A&M University  
Core Curriculum  
Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum  

Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences  

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture. 

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above? 

COMM 335-Intercultural Communication examines the identification, critique and transformation of intercultural communication behavior, which is at the heart of the social construction of human relationships and is an increasingly important part of our social and professional lives. In COMM 335-Intercultural Communication, a social science perspective is applied to the study of intercultural communication behavior in dyads, groups, institutions, society and culture. In this course, the goal is to gain the tools for the most important aspect of intercultural communication: self-reflexivity and social-reflexivity. This course explores issues related to the intercultural communication process. We consider the important role of context (social, cultural, and historical) in intercultural interactions. We examine the complex relationship between culture and communication from three conceptual perspectives: the social psychological perspective, the interpretive perspective, and the critical perspective. It is through these three conceptual perspectives that we strive towards a comprehensive picture of intercultural communication through empirical analysis of observable facts and behaviors. By applying these approaches to the study of intercultural communication, we identify and analyze the complexity and dialectical tensions involved in intercultural interactions. This learning process also enhances self-reflection, flexibility with social responsibility, and sensitivity in intercultural communication. 

Core Objectives  

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.  

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.  

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):  

A critical key to the study of Intercultural communication is the ability to reflect on one's own communication behavior and how that behavior is contributing to the development of intercultural relationships. Communication variables in intercultural contexts include culture and meaning, nonverbal styles across cultures, patterns of symbolic transfer, culture shock and communication, values in intercultural dialogue. An example would be a typical perspective-taking task, thinking about how the world looks from the perspective of the other and then adjusting one's response based on that inquiry and analysis. Creative thinking comes into play in the innovation required to weigh, evaluate and synthesize theoretical perspectives with practice. An example would be to generate and implement
ways to manage intercultural conflict in a constructive, mutually beneficial manner. The emphasis on civil dialogue in the classroom provides another example of a critical thinking task that involves evaluation of a communication situation and synthesis of that evaluation with principles and theories learned in the class. Creative thinking, innovation and self-monitoring are required in order to generate styles of communication that meet the criteria of the civil dialogue statement:

Civil dialogue: Learning takes place best when a safe environment is established in the classroom. To this end, I will seek to support a setting that nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engaged, honest discussions. I hope that together we create a safe place where everyone feels comfortable to share and explore ideas. I welcome disagreements in the spirit of public dialogue and critical academic exchange, but in so doing, it is essential that each of us remembers to be respectful of other points of view, whether you agree with them or not. In this class, derogatory or insensitive comments based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, or nationality will not be tolerated, nor is it permissible to state one’s opinion in a manner that silences the voices of others.

Critical thinking in the realm of intercultural communication is assessed by student response to standard examination items.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

The study of intercultural communication hinges on the concept of intercultural communication competence. (see, for example, RL Wiseman, MR Hammer, H Nishida; Spitzburg.) Intercultural Communication competence is the degree to which a communicator’s goals are achieved through effective, appropriate and satisfying communication interaction between two or more people from two or more cultures. Therefore, can that communicator maintain the ‘face’ and the ‘line’ of the communication while in interaction with another person from another culture. A student may display competent communication, write a communication plan for a person from another culture, explain competent communication or demonstrate it to show another appropriate verbal or non-verbal skills. Assessment of intercultural communication competence can occur through evaluation of written, oral and visual observation of non-verbal behavior. A student is able to become more self-reflective and perform more competent written, oral and visual intercultural communication. Communication in the realm of intercultural communication is assessed by student response to standard examination items.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

Empirical skills are employed to identify, through direct observation and through analysis of conversational transcripts, case studies, video examples of verbal interaction and of nonverbal interaction along the dimensions of effectiveness, appropriateness and satisfaction that characterize competent intercultural communication. Content analysis is employed to identify and code dialectic tensions evident in intercultural interactions. Dialectics include, for example, cultural-individual, personal-social/contextual, differences-similarities, static-dynamic, present/future-history/past and privilege/disadvantage. Students draw informed conclusions about the resolution of the dialectic to the satisfaction of the cross-cultural interactants. Additionally, students develop informed conclusions regarding appropriate conflict management strategies relevant to intercultural communication and contextual factors including power dimensions and cultural norms. Empirical methods in the realm of intercultural communication is assessed by student response to standard examination items.
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Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Key in the accurate descriptions, interpretation and evaluation of intercultural relationship status based on talk and non-verbal behavior is the synthesis of knowledge of intercultural norms, including but not limited to genderlects, as well as generational, ethnic, contextual, national and societal considerations. These cultures include, but are not limited to, geographic constructs. In order to use the social science involved in intercultural communication, each of these factors must be extrapolated across a variety of communication relationships including romantic relationships, friendships, employer-employee relationships, caregiver-patient relationships, and governmental-political relationships, to name a few. Bolstered with this knowledge and skill, communicators will be prepared to engage in communities both similar to and diverse from their own. Throughout the course students learn specific theories that provide the framework for analysis in the role of culture one's sense of self, values, behavior, and view of the world. In doing so, students learn how one's own positions are different from those of others, and expand the possibilities for understanding and participating in the global world in which we live. Social responsibility in the realm of intercultural communication is assessed by student response to standard examination items.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.