



Business

IBUS4900

***THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS***

Spring 2019

**PROFESSOR:** Anna Helm, PhD  
**OFFICE HOURS:** MO: 11AM-12PM, 6-7PM & by appt.  
**OFFICE:** Duques Hall 450C  
**EMAIL:** ahelm@gwu.edu

**CLASS MEETINGS:** Mondays 12:45-3:15PM

**LOCATION:** DUQUES 152

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Culture profoundly impacts firms operating internationally. It is essential to understand the deeply rooted cultural facets of any foreign market within which you operate in order to decrease risk, ensure strong performance by your multicultural workforce, and to optimize your marketing effectiveness. Working with different cultural contexts influences the business processes of multinational corporations in many different ways. A heightened understanding of these complexities will ultimately ensure the implementation of appropriate managerial strategies for the global marketplace.

***The Cultural Environment of International Business*** provides a platform for understanding how culture impacts international business interactions and operations. The course examines cross-cultural business issues and corresponding strategies and best practices that address not only challenges, but also culturally-derived business opportunities.

The course is organized into **six modules** (please note that these are not necessarily chronological but rather integrated throughout the course):

- I. Introduction to Business Cultures
- II. Cross-Cultural Leadership and Collaboration Strategies
- III. Cross-Cultural Communication & Negotiations
- IV. Liberal Arts Integration: A Language & Culture Perspective to IB
- V. Cross-Cultural HR: Motivation, Feedback Mechanisms & Behavioral Compensation Systems
- VI. Regional Focus Workshop: a) Europe, b) Latin America, or c) Asia

The goal of this course is to equip students with the requisite cross-cultural competence to function effectively in an international business context, enabling them to leverage their cross-cultural analysis skills on real business problems ranging from decisions relating to marketing and strategy, business negotiations, to managerial considerations around feedback, incentives, motivation, effective collaboration, and team development.

The course material will be presented through a combination of lectures, videos, case studies, role plays, simulations, interactive class discussions, and case analyses, and will use Blackboard for certain aspects of the course.

## LEARNING GOALS

Upon completion of this course learners will be able to

1. evaluate the complexities of **world cultures, business behaviors, attitudes and values** as they impact managerial strategies and interactions in international business;
2. actively engage in the learning process of studying **cross-cultural strategies and best practices** through hands-on, interactive simulations and role-plays;
3. demonstrate cross-cultural **communication, collaboration, and leadership** skills (e.g. problem-solving, negotiation, team-building);
4. assess the merit of strategies for **feedback mechanisms and compensation systems** as pertaining to firms with international operations;
5. develop and execute effective, culturally appropriate **negotiation strategies** in hands-on cross-cultural negotiation simulations;
6. **present ideas clearly and logically** in writing and orally during class activities.

## EXPECTED TIME COMMITMENT

Over 15 weeks, you will spend 2 ½ hours per week in the classroom (37.5 hours for the semester). You are also expected to devote around 5 hours per week outside of class to reading and completing assignments (75 hours for the semester).

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- ***International Management, Strategy, and Behavior***. (9<sup>th</sup> edition) by Luthans, Fred & Jonathan Doh. (2015)
- **Cases**
- ***The Culture Map: Breaking through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business***. Erin Meyer. (2014)

- **Negotiation Simulations** (Please await further instructions before making any purchases!)
- **Supplemental Readings** will be available in Blackboard.

## COURSE CONTENT

Module	Description	Readings/Assignments
I. <i>Introduction to Business Culture</i>	This module explores business-related theories on culture, such as Hofstede, Trompenaars, Hall & Hall, and GLOBE.	<b>Core Readings:</b> Luthans Chapter 4: <i>The Meanings and Dimensions of Culture</i>
II. <i>Cross-Cultural Leadership and Collaboration Strategies</i>	This module explores leadership strategies for diverse cultural contexts. It focuses on best practices for how to integrate culturally diverse teams by identifying cultural differences and analyzing how these differences impact organizational efficiency. It also offers insights into HR/managerial perspectives on managing cultural diversity in the global workplace.	<b>Core Readings:</b> Luthans Chapter 5: <i>Managing Across Cultures</i>  Luthans Chapter 6: <i>Organizational Cultures and Diversity</i>  Luthans Chapter 13: <i>Leadership Across Cultures</i>
III. <i>Cross-Cultural Communication &amp; Negotiations</i>	This module familiarizes students with cross-cultural applications in international business communications. It will also address the importance of incorporating cultural dynamics into negotiation strategies and techniques. Students will participate in cross-cultural business negotiations.	<b>Core Readings:</b> Luthans Chapter 7: <i>Cross-Cultural Communication and Negotiation</i>  Luthans Chapter 7: <i>Cross-Cultural Communication and Negotiation</i>
IV. <i>Liberal Arts Integration: A Language &amp; Culture Perspective to IB</i>	This module will explore language and the arts as a window to business culture and IB competency. A grant from the Teagle Foundation has allowed us to develop a module on the intersection of language and culture, spearheaded by three business language faculty in the Columbian College, who will also give a guest presentation on the topic.	<b>TBA:</b>
V. <i>Cross-Cultural HR: Motivation, Feedback</i>	This module addresses questions such as the impact of culture on	<b>Core Readings:</b>

<i>Mechanisms &amp; Behavioral Compensation Systems</i>	feedback functions and motivation. In addition, attention will be devoted to workforce recruitment and development in MNEs. It also proposes best practices in harnessing cross-cultural awareness to create compensation systems that drive the bottom line.	Luthans Chapter 11: <i>Managing Decision and Control</i>  Luthans Chapter 12: <i>Motivation Across Cultures</i>  Luthans Chapter 14: <i>Human Resource Selection and Development Across Cultures</i>
VI. <i>Regional Focus Workshop: Europe, Latin America, or Asia</i>	<b>Negotiation Simulations:</b> -Frost in France -AnnaMay in Mexico -Olin Life in China	Role Playing/Simulation Activities: Please note that there will be a selection process to establish the regional focus which will help us decide which negotiation/s to conduct as part of the course.

## GRADING CRITERIA

Blackboard will be used to post your grade in each assignment. Grades will fall into the following buckets:

Total Points	Grade
94-100	A
90-93.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
84-86.99	B
80-83.99	B-
77-79.99	C+
74-76.99	C
70-73.99	C-
60-69.99	D
0-59	F

## COURSE COMPONENTS:

1. Preparatory Quizzes	10%
2. 3 Case Write-Ups - completed as a team	30%
3. Expatriate Manager Interview - Blog	10%
4. Negotiation Simulation - completed as a team	10%
5. In-Class & Online Engagement	20%
6. Cultural Assessments	10%
7. Reflective Essay	10%

**TOTAL** **100%**

## OVERVIEW OF COURSE COMPONENTS

### 1. PREPARATORY QUIZZES (10%)

To ensure that you are building a strong foundation throughout the course, there will be regular low-stakes preparatory quizzes in this course (see Blackboard schedule for specific dates). You will take them on your own after having read the assignment of that day but prior to coming to class. The main purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that everyone comes prepared to engage in our class discussions. I typically don't rehash the textbook materials in class, but rather want to use that time to talk about examples and cases that illustrate the points made in the textbook. In other words, our class time will be spent mostly on practical applications of international business concepts and frameworks. All quizzes will be based on assigned readings from the textbook, articles, and cases, and are intended to gauge your basic understanding of these materials. The quizzes will consist of a mix of multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions.

### 2. CASE ANALYSES (30%)

As an individual, you are responsible for reading all assigned cases. Assignment-wise, your team must complete THREE write-ups. Before crafting your case write-ups, you should first carefully prepare all of the materials for that class meeting (read articles, view videos, listen to audio segments, etc.). Then, read the case and answer the assigned discussion questions for the case, which are available in Blackboard.

I use case studies to test your ability to apply course concepts to real-life business problems that managers face. Do not just repeat case facts. You should use frameworks discussed in class and in the assigned materials to analyze each case. It is usually advisable to acknowledge that there are alternative courses of action for the firm. Depending on the case, you may want to acknowledge weaknesses/risks of your recommendation and describe how these risks can be minimized.

In answering the questions, you should stay within the time frame of the case. That is, if the case narrative is set in 2015 you should stay in 2015 when you answer the case questions. You should not include information about what the company actually did in your case write-up.

Grades will be assigned based on:

1. Application of chapter and reading concepts and frameworks
2. Rigor of case analysis (quantitative and qualitative)
3. Specific recommendations supported by well thought-out arguments and financial evaluation
4. Quality, professionalism and clarity of writing and presentation

Read these guidelines carefully. Cases are used in different ways by different professors. Do not assume that the case write-up approach you followed in another course is appropriate for this one.

- Apply the theoretical concepts and frameworks from the readings associated with the case.
- Cases should be evaluated based on the information in the case. Do not do research

beyond the scope of the case! In particular, your assignment is to make recommendations at the time the case ends. In making recommendations, do not consider any events that occurred after the end of the case!

- These assignments are limited to three pages of discussion (essay style, double spaced, 12 pt font, 1" margin) and additional discussion will not be reviewed. In addition to the three pages of discussion, exhibits and tables are permitted. Consider using tables (for e.g. showing advantages and disadvantages) and number crunching (where applicable) to support your discussion. You may use as many exhibits and tables as necessary, but they should be referred to in your three-page discussion. The case commentary should not be a summary of the case or a list of issues.
- Do not repeat the facts of the case. The instructor has read the case. The little space you have available for the write-up should be dedicated to your analysis and recommendations. Include facts only as support for your claims and make sure to write analytically, not descriptively.
- It is usually advisable to acknowledge that there are alternative courses of action for the firm. Depending on the case, you may want to acknowledge weaknesses/risks of your recommendation and describe how these risks can be minimized.
- Provide strong support for your recommendations. Make sure that your logic is clear and that your recommendations address the issues raised by the questions. The purpose of cases is to understand issues. There are no right answers, only good arguments and weak arguments supporting recommendations.
- Write clearly. Grammar counts. Spelling counts. Writing style counts.
- All team members are expected to participate in the preparation of the analysis and will receive the same grade.
- Submit your case write ups to Blackboard (using the Assignments tab) in this format:  
Team#\_Casename.doc

### **3. EXPATRIATE MANAGER INTERVIEW BLOG (10%)**

Identify a professional who has worked outside his/her country of origin, interview this person and write a blog about it. The purpose of the assignment is to help you understand the difficulties and advantages of working abroad.

The blog post should be between 650-700 words (2 pages, 12 ft, double-spaced) and include at least one visual aid (logo, pictures etc.). The interviewee can be a relative or friend, but you can also use LinkedIn to initiate contact with an expatriate using LinkedIn via Prof. Helm.

Some questions you could ask the expatriate/interviewee:

- What is the country of origin and what are the differences in culture between the country of origin and the country where the person had an international assignment?
- What experiences/issues did the interviewee identify as most challenging, which ones were the most satisfying, and the most puzzling?
- What were the main lessons learned?
- What advice would the interviewee give to others who are facing an international assignment to ensure success?

Additional guidelines:

- Think of yourself as a representative of our class, the Business School, and the university. As the blog is meant to be published online (or within the class discussion board?), make sure you communicate with the person you will be interviewing about the purpose of the academic assignment, edit your work closely and employ appropriate language and content in your blog entry.
- Make sure you respect your contact's privacy and confidential information. Do not reveal anything that the person and his/her organization would not be comfortable with you revealing. Obtain the partner's permission ahead of time and run the blog post by him/her before submitting it for posting to our blog!
- Blog entries will be graded on quality – they must be substantive and demonstrate your ability to draw linkages between class concepts and real-world international business endeavors. Remember that you can always bring outside readings and/or experience.
- You need to submit the full name, affiliation and contact information of the expatriate ahead of time for approval. Your blog entry must be uploaded as a word document to Blackboard (under Assignments). Please name the file using the following format: "Lastname\_Firstname\_ExpatBlog\_IBUS4900.doc"

#### 4. NEGOTIATION SIMULATIONS (10%)

Students will participate in team negotiations relating to cross-cultural business scenarios, ranging from setting up overseas production, negotiate a merger, to resolving conflict in the international workplace. As part of the simulation assignments, students will need to write up and submit a **one-page strategy paper** about their character's individual strategy in anticipation of the negotiations.

In addition, following the negotiation simulation:

- If you are a **negotiator**, you and your team (3 members) will be responsible for a one-page memo explaining your communal strategy as decided in the first part of the negotiations. (1-2 pages)
- If you are an **observer**, you need to write a short **debrief** explaining the simulation and analyzing the parties' main arguments and negotiation outcomes. (1-2 pages)

#### 5. IN-CLASS & ONLINE ENGAGEMENT (20%)

Attendance and participation are essential to this course. You are expected to have studied in advance all assigned materials in order to participate fully in class discussions. Participation includes the quality of participation, attentiveness, preparation, and the timely completion of all work. Strong participation has the attributes of fueling engagement by other students, deepening the understanding of the materials, and challenging conventional wisdom and thereby propel our discussion into new and uncharted territory. While high frequency is important, redundant and superficial comments detract from the value of your participation.

Students are also expected to add commentary online to our expatriate manager course blog.

More than **ONE** unexcused absence will result in your course grade being lowered by one full letter grade. In order to be excused for an absence, a valid proof of the reason for the absence must be presented during the first class attended after being absent.

## 6. CULTURAL ASSESSMENTS (10%)

In order to better be able to relate to the complexities of communicating and negotiating cross-culturally, leading diverse teams, motivating colleagues with different priorities and values than your own, ensuring targeted and appropriate feedback and awards systems, it is critical that you thoroughly understand your own cultural “composition.” To this effect, we will use professional cultural assessment tools to allow everyone in our class to self-evaluate and analyze their cultural values. We will also use these findings to inform team-building in our class. Additional information will be shared in class about this course component.

## 7. REFLECTIVE ESSAY (10%)

As part of the new module, *Liberal Arts Integration: A Language & Culture Perspective to IB*, students will be asked to reflect on the unique cross-disciplinary liberal arts learning in that module and how it informs and synergizes with other course components. This reflective task will be a culminating exercise which students will complete on an individual basis upon conclusion of the course.

## PROFESSOR'S POLICIES

**Late Assignments.** **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** If you know you will be absent in class the day an assignment is due, you should plan on doing the work ahead of time and turning in the assignment early. Failure to turn in assignments before class will result in a zero for the assignment.

**Group Management.** You are expected to participate diligently and professionally in your assigned team. If there are issues with group dynamics, please make sure you approach me about them before they get out of hand!

**Final Grades.** Final grades will reflect the student’s total points earned in the course. You will be able to track your grades in the Blackboard gradebook. All grades are final.

**Laptop/Cell Phones/Electronic Gadgets.** I do not mind if you use your laptop to take notes or look up the Internet as it relates to in-class discussion. However, **I do mind** if you are (window) shopping online, checking email, sending text messages, or working on other class assignments. Please be respectful and use your laptops and other electronics judiciously. Please bear in mind that **cold-calling is fair game at any point during class**. If you are unable to respond, or provide a far less than satisfactory response, your participation grade will be seriously affected.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

- ✓ Do your best to attend all classes.
- ✓ Complete all of the readings, including book chapters, cases, articles, and other media excerpts **before** class.
- ✓ Try not to procrastinate -- reading materials pile up quickly in this course and can get intimidating FAST!
- ✓ Do not rely on the PowerPoint presentation slides as your only lecture note material! Take your own notes also.
- ✓ Study lecture notes and your own reading notes together, paying special attention to where they overlap and where they are different.

- ✓ Get started on your group assignments EARLY. Last minute composition will reveal itself in the final product and grade!
- ✓ Schedule regular meetings with your group; groups should set and accomplish specific goals each meeting.
- ✓ Set early deadlines for your group members.
- ✓ Prepare for the case discussions carefully. Do not just read the text of the case. Make sure to carefully study and dissect the tables, figures, and other material in the appendices. The type of information presented there is VERY IMPORTANT and will constitute the primary material upon which you will base decisions in your future "real" world career.
- ✓ Please take advantage of my office hours! I really enjoy getting to know my students! You can come during my scheduled office hours or you may also make an appointment with me during a mutually agreeable time outside of my office hours.

## CAMPUS RESOURCES AND POLICIES

**Academic Integrity.** The professor will strictly abide by the academic integrity policies as stated in the Code of Academic Integrity. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For additional information refer to the following website: <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu>.

**Disability Support Services.** Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Disability Support Services to establish eligibility and to coordinate appropriate accommodations.

Academic Center (Rome Hall) Suite 102, 801 22nd Street, NW

Phone: 202-994-8250, Email: [dss@gwu.edu](mailto:dss@gwu.edu), Website: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>

**University Mental Health Services.** The University Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referrals to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills issues. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals:  
Marvin Center Ground Floor, 800 21st Street, NW, Washington, DC 20052  
Phone: 202-994-5300, [counsel@gwu.edu](mailto:counsel@gwu.edu)

## UNDERGRADUATE OATH OF HONOR

*As a student of The George Washington University School of Business, I will lead with honor. I pledge always to uphold our community's high standards of integrity and civility. In my personal, academic, and professional life, I will strive for excellence, respect all people, and work with others to have a positive impact on my communities and the world.*