Intercultural Communication

**Course code:** COM 201

**Term and year:** Fall 2025

**Day and time:** Wednesday 11:15 – 14:00, Rm 3.12

**Instructor:** Dr. Karen Grunow-Hårsta, Ph.D.

**Instructor contact:** karen.grunow[@aauni.edu](mailto:%20eva.eckert@aauni.edu)

**Consultation hours:** Wednesday 14:00 – 15:00

and by appointment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Credits US/ECTS** | 3/6 | **Level** | **BA** |
| **Length** | 15 weeks | **Pre-requisite** |  |
| **Contact hours** | 42 hours | **Grading** | **Letter Grade** |

# Course Description

Intercultural Communication (ICC) is an intermediate course which examines the intersection of language, communication, community and culture. It presents differing perspectives on issues central to ICC and explores cultural and linguistic diversity and contact, and language endangerment. It examines the formation of identity, such as gender, status and ethnicity, and culture through language.

# Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of COM 201 the student will have:

* comprehended the concepts of communication, culture and language from diverse theoretical perspectives;
* studied their interconnection and application in various linguistic cultures;
* analyzed key readings on ICC;
* understood the implications and effects of language contact;
* explored, questioned and compared communicative strategies and language rituals across cultures;
* assessed factors complicating intercultural communication; i.e., ethnicity, privilege, social inclusion and exclusion, migration and globalization;
* collected and evaluated data in order to explore issues and topics in ICC first-hand;
* presented a research report which examines and explains an ICC issue;

# Reading Material

## Required Materials

Bergmann, A., Hall, K. C. & Ross, S. M. (Eds.) (2007). *Language files 10: Materials for an introduction to language and linguistics*. Ohio State University Press.

Boroditsky, L., & Schmidt, L. A. (2000). Sex, Syntax, and Semantics. Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 22. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0jt9w8zf>

Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death.* Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139106856

Fantini, A. E. (1997). Language: Its cultural and intercultural dimensions. *New ways in teaching culture*, *3*(5).

Griffin, E. M. (2006). *A first look at communication theory*. McGraw-hill.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole, & J. L. Morgan. (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3, Speech Acts*. pp. 41-58. Academic Press.

Kim, K. O. (1993). What is behind “face-saving” in cross-cultural communication.” *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *3*(1), 39-47.

McWhorter, J. (2016). What’s a Language, Anyway. *The Atlantic*, *158* (1).

McWhorter, J. (2016). *Talking back, talking Black: Truths about America's lingua franca*. Bellevue Literary Press.

Mooney, A., & Evans, B. (2018). *Language, society and power: An introduction*. Routledge.

Rowe, B. M., & Levine, D. P. (2018). *A concise introduction to linguistics*. Routledge.

Sperber, D. (1995). How do we communicate.  In J. Brockman & K. Matson (Eds.) *How things are: A science toolkit for the mind*. pp. 191-199. Morrow.

Thompson, M. *Five reasons people codeswitch*. NPR. April 13, 201312:26 PM ET

Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2021). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. John Wiley & Sons.

***Required materials: Videos:***

# Bourrelle, J. “How Culture Drives Behaviours” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-Yy6poJ2zs>

Crystal, D. “Pragmatics” <https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=david+crysta%3B+pragmatics+youtube#id=1&vid=7a3f1eccf967e0f971e9666f6b7a66d8&action=click>

Gavin, M. *“*Why cultural diversity matters” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48RoRi0ddRU>

Kanzi in the kitchen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxmvRpnVXJQ>

Kanzi’s first phone call <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJ_3l1z5r0s>

Labov and dialects [https://www.you tube.com/watch?v=aL0--f89Qds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL0--f89Qds)

Wired Accent Tour <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1KP4ztKK0A>

McWorther, J. “Talking Back, Talking Black” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoWGx060lyA>

Ricardi, P. “Cross Cultural Communication” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMyofREc5Jk>

Tannen, D. - You’re The Only One I Can Tell: Inside the Language of Women’s Friendships <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZ5rWGYboSs>

What are Creoles and Pidgins? And What`s the Difference? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqJI7SdS9Gg>

Why Did English Become the International Language? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqDFPU9YeQM>

## Recommended Materials

Allott, N. (2013). Relevance theory. In A. Capone, F. L Piparo,Carapezza, M. (Eds.). *Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics*. pp.57-98. Springer.

Cheng, W. (2012). Speech acts, facework and politeness: Relationship-building across cultures. In *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* pp. 164-179. Routledge.

Cutler, C. A. (1999). Yorkville crossing: White teens, hip hop and African American English. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, *3*(4), 428-442.

Fishman, J. A. (1989). *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective*. Multilingual Matters.

LaFrance, A. (2016). Teens Aren’t Ruining Language. *The Atlantic*.

Matsumoto, D., & Hwang, H. S. (2013). Non‐verbal Behavior. *The Encyclopedia of Cross‐Cultural Psychology*, *2*, 929-931.

McWhorter, J. (2013). *What Language is: And what it Isn't and what it Could be*. Penguin.

McWhorter, J. (2016). *Talking back, talking Black: Truths about America's lingua franca*. Bellevue Literary Press.

McWhorther, J. (2015)What the world will speak in 2115*. The Wall Street Journal.* Jan 2. 2015.

Ogiermann, E. (2009). Politeness and in-directness across cultures: A comparison of English, German, Polish and Russian requests. *Journal of Politeness Research* 5 (2), 189-216

Ogiermann, E. (2009). *On apologising in negative and positive politeness cultures* (Vol. 191). John Benjamins Publishing.

Osterhout, L., Bersick, M., & McLaughlin, J. (1997). Brain potentials reflect violations of gender stereotypes. *Memory & Cognition*, *25*(3), 273-285.

# Pillar, I. (2011) “English the non-language” in *Intercultural communication: A critical introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.

Speiser, M. “The Eleven Nations of the United States” https://www.businessinsider.com/the-11-nations-of-the-united-states-2015-7

Tannen, D. (1982). Ethnic style in male-female conversation. *Language and social identity*, *217*, 231.

Tannen, D. (1995). The power of talk: Who gets heard and why. *Harvard business review*, *73* (5), 138-148.

Tannen, D. (1984). The pragmatics of cross-cultural communication. *Applied linguistics*, *5*(3), 189-195. Thurman, J. (2015). Can Dying Languages Be Saved?. *The New Yorker*, *91*(6), 32-39.

White, K. R., Crites Jr, S. L., Taylor, J. H., & Corral, G. (2009). Wait, what? Assessing stereotype incongruities using the N400 ERP component. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, *4*(2), 191-198.

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2002). Relevance theory. In W. L. Horn (Ed*). Handbook of Pragmatics,* Blackwell.

***Recommended materials: Videos:***

# Bowden, M. “The Importance Of Being Inauthentic” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zpf8H_Dd40>

Chomsky on language change and dialects <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdUbIlwHRkY>

Fairbairn, B. & K. Eccleston “Putting on the Dish: Polari” <https://vimeo.com/125398425>

# MacDonald, Fiona ‘Polari’ <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170726-the-secret-language-that-broke-taboos>

Lingua Franca <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9ZdC6wZnks>

Speaking in Tongues: The History of Language - Episode # 1 Let There Be Words <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuUAPVFFCRQ>

# Teaching methodology

COM201 is taughtas a combination of lecture and seminar. Topics are introduced in class and in readings. Students are guided through research and analysis of these topics. Students engage extensively in collaborative group projects in which they investigate, collect, analyse, and present data on assigned topics.

# Course Schedule

Readings and assignments are posted on Neo**.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Lecture Topics and Assignments** |
| **Lecture**  **1**  Sept 3 | **Course Introduction**  **Language & Communication**   * **Human & Non-human communication** * **Verbal & Non-verbal communication & Cultural contrasts**   **Required material for this class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Rowe, B. & D. Levine “The Nature of Communication” & “Skepticism over Ape Language studies”  Sperber, D. “How do we communicate?”  Kanzi in the kitchen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxmvRpnVXJQ>  Kanzi’s first phone call <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJ_3l1z5r0s>  **Additional Recommended Material**  Speaking in Tongues: The History of Language - Episode # 1 Let There Be Words <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuUAPVFFCRQ>  Tannen, D. “The Pragmatics of Cross-cultural Communication”  Matsumoto D. & H. Hwang “Non-verbal Communication” Bowden, M. “The Importance Of Being Inauthentic” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zpf8H_Dd40> |
| **Lecture**  **2**  Sept. 10 | **Language & Culture**   * **Politeness & Face** * **Address & Greetings** * **Culture Clash**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Wardhaugh, R. “Address terms and politeness”  Griffin, E. “Face Negotiation Theory of Stella Ting-Toomey” Kim, K. “What is Behind "Face-Saving in Cross-Cultural Communication?”Bourrelle, J. “How Culture Drives Behaviours” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-Yy6poJ2zs> **Additional Recommended Material**  Ogiermann, E. “Politeness and in-directness across cultures: A comparison of English, German, Polish and Russian requests”  Cheng, W. “Speech acts, facework and politeness” |
| **Lecture**  **3**  Sept. 17 | **Data Presentation Assignment 1:** **Non-Verbal Communication or Politeness & Face Saving**  *(10 min. presentation + 5 min discussion & questions) See Neo for date of submission of written report)*  **Language & the Mind**   * **Linguistic Determinism** * **Linguistic Relativity**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Bergmann, A., K. Hall & S. Ross“Language and Thought” 13.3  Wardhaugh, R. “Words and Culture”  Keith Chen: Could your language affect your ability to save money. TED Global 2012  <http://www.ted.com/talks/keith_chen_could_your_language_affect_your_ability_to_save_money>  Stephen Pinker: Language and Consciousness, Part 1 Complete: Thinking Allowed with J. Mishlove <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZDeYe93rFg> |
| **Lecture**  **4**  Sept. 24 | **Conversation**   * **Grice’s Maxims** * **Relevance theory**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Bergmann, A., K. Hall & S. Ross “Rules of Conversation & Drawing Conclusions” 7.2 -7.3  [Pragmatics: Crash Course Linguistics #6 - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPwpk-YgvjQ)  Grice, P. “Logic and Conversation”  **Additional Recommended Material**  Wilson. D & D. Sperber “Relevance Theory”  Allott, N. “Relevance Theory” |
| **Lecture**  **5**  Oct 1 | **Test 1 *(Timed 2.5 hour open-book on-line test given and submitted on My Learning)*** |
| **Lecture**  **6**  Oct 3  Make-up Class | **Languages & Dialects:**   * **Dialect continuums** * **Regional & Standard Dialects** * **Prestige dialects** * **Prescriptivism vs. Descriptivism** * **Language as Symbolic Capital** * **Overt & Covert Prestige**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  McWhorther, J. “What’s a Language Anyway?”  Bergmann, A., K. Hall, & S. Ross, “Language Variation” 10.1- 10.4  Labov and dialects [https://www.you tube.com/watch?v=aL0--f89Qds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL0--f89Qds)  Wired Accent Tour <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1KP4ztKK0A>  **Additional Recommended Material:**  Speiser, M. “The Eleven Nations of the United States”  Chomsky on language change and dialects <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdUbIlwHRkY> |
| **Lecture**  **7**  Oct. 8 | **Linguistic Codes:**   * **Bilingualism** * **Multilingualism** * **Speech Communities** * **Codeswitching**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Wardhaugh, R. “Codes”  Thompson, M. “Five reasons people codeswitch”  John McWorther “Talking Back, Talking Black” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoWGx060lyA>  **Additional Recommended Material**  Griffin, E. “Communication Accommodation Theory of Howard Giles”  WHRO Codeswitching <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gO7cjyEYtGM&t=3005s> |
| **Lecture**  **8**  Oct 15 | **Data Presentation Assignment 2** **Conversational Analysis** or **Codeswitching**  *(10 min. presentation + 5 min discussion & questions. See Neo for date of submission of written report)*  **Language & Gender:**   * **Crosslinguistic gender codes** * **Language & gender theories** * **Grammatical gender**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Boroditsky, L & L. Schmidt, “Sex, Syntax and Semantics”  Griffin, E., “Genderlect styles of Deborah Tannen”  Mooney A. & B. Evans “Language and gender”  Deborah Tannen - You’re The Only One I Can Tell: Inside the Language of Women’s Friendships  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZ5rWGYboSs>  **Additional Recommended Material:**  Tannen, D. “Ethnic style in male-female conversation”  Tannen, D. “The Power of Talk”  White, K., Crites, S., Taylor, J. & Corral, G. “Wait, what? Assessing stereotype incongruities using the N400 ERP component”  Osterhout, L., M. Bersick & J. Mclaughlin “Brain potentials reflect violations of gender stereotypes”  Fairbairn, B. & K. Eccleston “Putting on the Dish: Polari” <https://vimeo.com/125398425>  MacDonald, Fiona ‘Polari’ <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20170726-the-secret-language-that-broke-taboos> |
| Oct 22 | **CLASS CANCELLED** |
| Oct 29 | **Spring Break** |
| **Lecture**  **9**  Nov. 5 | **Language & Identity:**   * **Speech Communities and networks** * **Common ground and memes** * **Ethnicity** * **Crossing** * **Reclaiming terms**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Bergmann, A., K. Hall & S. Ross “Identity” 13.1  Fantini, A. “Language: Its Cultural and Intercultural Dimensions”  Ricardi, P. “Cross Cultural Communication” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMyofREc5Jk>  **Additional Recommended Material:**  Cutler C. “Yorkville Crossing”  Fishman, J. “Language and Ethnicity”  **Research Project Proposals Due** (*See Neo for instructions)* |
| **Lecture**  **10**  Nov 12 | **Language Contact:**   * **Ethnolects** * **Multiethnolects** * **Lingua Francas** * **Pidgins and Creoles**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** (posted on Neo):  Bergmann, A., K. Hall, & S. Ross “Language Contact”  McWhorther, J. “How immigration changes languages”  What are Creoles and Pidgins? And What`s the Difference? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqJI7SdS9Gg>  **Additional Recommended Material:**  La France, A. “Teens Aren't Ruining Language”  Pillar, I. “English the non-language”  Lingua Franca <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9ZdC6wZnks>  **Assignment 3: Pidgins** *(This will be done in part in class. See Neo for instruction and due date)* |
| **Lecture**  **11**  Nov. 19 | **Language Change**   * **Language shift** * **Linguistic Imperialism** * **Language Endangerment**   **Required material for this class; read or view before class** *(posted on Neo)*:  Bryson, B. “The future of English”  Crystal, D. “Language death”  Gavin, M. *“*Why cultural diversity matters” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48RoRi0ddRU>  Why Did English Become the International Language?  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqDFPU9YeQM  **Additional Recommended Material:**  Thurman, J. “Can dying Languages be saved?”  McWhorther, J. “What the world will speak in 2115” |
| **Lecture**  **12**  Nov 26 | **Test 2 *(Timed 2.5 hour open-book on-line test given and submitted on Neo)*** |
| **Lecture**  **13**  Dec. 3 | **Student Presentations of Research Projects** (*See assignment on Neo)*  **( 20 min. + 10 min. discussion)** |
| **Lecture**  **14**  Dec. 10 | **Student Presentations of Research Projects** (*See assignment on Neo)*  **( 20 min. + 10 min. discussion)** |
| **Dec. 15** | **Submission of Written Research Projects** (*See assignment on Neo)*  **Submission of Peer evaluations** (*See assignment on Neo)* |

# 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Workload**  150 hours | **Weight in Final Grade** | **Student Learning Outcomes** | **Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes** |
| Participation | 42 hours | 10% | Students are expected to participate and be prepared to contribute positively to ALL discussions. Peer evaluations for assignments will impact this grade | (1, 2, 3) |
| Assignments and presentations  (2 x 9% + 1 x 2%) | 30 hours | 20% | Students are expected to collect, test and analyze data on assigned topics and to present findings in class in a cogent manner, as well as to submit a written report. | (1, 2, 3) |
| Tests  (2 x 15%) | 20 hours | 30% | Students are expected to demonstrate comprehension of course material as presented in lectures and readings. | (1 ,2) |
| Research proposal | 10 hours | 10% | Students are expected to research and write a well-organized research proposal on an issue relevant to ICC | (1,2,3) |
| Research presentation | 10 hours | 10% | Students are expected to research and present an issue relevant to ICC in a cogent oral presentation, and to pose and respond to questioning and feedback. | (1,2,3) |
| Research paper | 28 hours | 20% | Students are expected to write a research paper on an issue relevant to ICC. The paper should demonstrate evidence of original research, critical thought and analysis. Students will also submit a peer evaluation. | (1,2,3) |

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

# 7. Detailed description of the assignments

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area: Attendance and Participation** | **Percentage** |
| Preparedness; evidence that readings / viewing are done and understood  Active engagement | 50% |
| Positive, constructive contribution to discussions and presentations, the application of relevant course concepts | 50% |

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area: Data assignments** | **Percentage** |
| Oral presentation: content & relevance, structure & clarity, effective and communication, effective use of technology | 50% |
| Written submission: content & relevance, structure, clarity & accuracy, coherence & cohesiveness | 50% |

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area: Test 1 & 2** | **Percentage** |
| Comprehension, application and explanation of course material | 100% |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area: Research proposal** | **Percentage** |
| Organization: Structural clarity, logical development, cohesive and coherent | 30% |
| Content: salient, original, well-researched with evidence of development and critical thinking. | 40% |
| Style: appropriate register, word choice, concise & clear | 15% |
| Accuracy: spelling, grammar, punctuation, correct and complete citation and work cited. | 15% |

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area: Research presentation** | **Percentage** |
| Organization: structure & clarity, and logical development, coherence and cohesiveness | 25% |
| Content: relevant, original, well-researched with evidence of development and critical thinking. | 25% |
| Delivery: effectively communicated appropriate register, word choice, syntax, conciseness and clarity effective use of technology conciseness and clarity | 25% |
| Positive interaction with peers and response to feedback | 25% |

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area: Research Report** | **Percentage** |
| Structure: structure & clarity, and logical development, coherence and cohesiveness | 30% |
| Content: relevant, original, well-researched with evidence of development and critical thinking. | 50% |
| Style: appropriate register, word choice, syntax and conciseness and clarity | 10% |
| Accuracy: spelling, grammar, punctuation, correct citation format and work cited | 10% |

**Written Assignment Format:**

All submitted assignments should be typed in Times New Roman 12pt. and double-spaced. Assignments should have a cover page with a title, course name and code, student name(s), instructor’s name and date. Pages should be numbered and have one inch margins. Written assignments will be submitted electronically in a single file via TURNITIN on Neo. The assignment file name should be the students’ last and first name(s), assignment and class, e.g., Smith.Jan.Assignment 1.COM201.

# 8. General Requirements and School Policies

## General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xoNETY9yqNMwNP-06wDzM2VmgMIOire-?usp=sharing) regarding coursework.

## Course specific requirements

This course is not suitable for remote study.

This course requires extensive group work.

The submission of AI-generated writing is prohibited. Students who submissions show AI generation will be required to produce drafts of their texts and/or to reproduce the text orally or in hand-written form.

Electronic devices may be used in class only for note taking or class-related activities

Students who miss more than five minutes of class (by arriving late or leaving early)

will be considered absent

Students who are absent for more than 4 classes will be administratively withdrawn from the class and will receive FW on their transcript.