

Diversity Discussions

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Objectives

- To familiarize students in a basic communication course with the similarities and differences in interpersonal communication across cultures.
- To help students understand the factors that contribute to misunderstandings when people from different cultures communicate.

Approximate Time Required

20 minutes of class instruction while introducing assignment and entertaining questions; 10 minutes of class time while introducing second discussion guidelines; 2 half-hour meetings to be conducted, by students, outside of class; class time for student presentations.

Materials Needed

Paper and pen for note taking; Note cards if presenting a speech

Rationale

As the United States changes in terms of ethnic, cultural, and racial demographics, so too will our communication change. This assignment exposes students to both similarities and differences as they relate to intercultural communication while applying what they learned throughout the term.

Things To Do Before Class

Make copies of student handouts. Decide when first notes and final product will be due.

Determine requirements for student papers i.e. length and style. Create assessment tools for both paper and speech. Schedule public speaking element of basic course before assignment is due.

What To Do During Class

Provide students with first handout and both assessment tools. Explain all aspects of the assignment and entertain questions. If used, discuss the specific requirements for paper option.

What To Do After The Assignment

Allow for class discussion.

Alternative Uses Or Extensions

For a writing intensified basic course, students can be required to write a paper.

This assignment can be used as a required speech in the basic course.

The instructor can add a third discussion for use in an interpersonal communication class. Subjects may include; power, conflict management, friendships, arranged/not arranged marriages, divorce, and homosexuality.

Multicultural Assignment - Diversity Partner

Task: Get to know someone **you do not already know** who is from a country other than the United States of America. If you are from a country other than the United States, your partner must also be from a country other than your country of origin -- but not the United States. While it is true that communication between people from different domestic cultures is intercultural communication, this assignment requires you to speak to a person from another country. You will be responsible for providing yourself with a Diversity Partner. Take a good look around you. Such a person may be in one of your classes, at work, at church, or sitting next to you on the bus each day. Your Diversity Partner must be a person who will be in the area for the remainder of the semester. You must identify and meet with your Diversity Partner once in the next four weeks (at a semester school) or two weeks (at a quarter school). If you are unable to locate a willing Diversity Partner on your own, try the International Students Club or The ESL office on campus.

Goals: Upon successful completion of this assignment, you will:

- Recognize similarities and differences in interpersonal communication across cultures.
- Understand the factors that contribute to misunderstandings when people from different cultures communicate.
- Reduce personal uncertainty when communicating intercultural.
- Be motivated to communicate with people from other cultures/ethnic groups.
- Increase your sensitivity to other cultural/ethnic groups.
- Improve skills necessary to communicate more effectively.

Assignment: Face to face Diversity Discussions with your Diversity Partner must occur at least ONCE EVERY COUPLE OF WEEKS (minimum of 2 weeks in a quarter system; 4 weeks in a semester system). This objective can often be accomplished by having lunch with your Diversity Partner at least once a month. Some pairs may choose to meet more frequently. It is up to you and your Diversity Partner to decide when and where to meet.

You will be provided with specific guidelines for your Diversity Discussions. The second guidelines will be provided after you submit the notes from your first meeting. Shortly after you conclude each Diversity Discussion, you must record the results of the discussion and your thoughts as you reflect on the meeting.

Presentation: You may present the results of this assignment either verbally or in written form. You must report the results of each of your two Diversity Discussions along with the thoughts you recorded.

If you choose verbally, you need only to hand in a complete typed Reference page (personal interviews). Your presentation must follow the introduction, body, and conclusion guidelines (to be) discussed in class. You will have two main points in your body. Your main points will be Diversity Discussion I and Diversity Discussion II.

You may use notes but may not read your presentation to audience.

If you choose written, you must hand in two typed copies (one will be kept in instructors file) of a complete paper. You must follow the guidelines (to be) discussed in class. Your paper must also include a Reference page.

First meeting notes are due on _____.

Final assignment is due on _____.

Conversation guidelines for first meeting:

- Explain to your Diversity Partner that you are interested in knowing about their experiences and that you do not expect them to represent their entire culture.
- Make the assignment and its goals clear to your Diversity Partner.
- Discuss the expectations of both parties regarding this pairing.
- Exchanging extensive information about backgrounds, experiences, differences, and similarities. Take the time to get to know one another.
- Ask your Diversity Partner about some **intercultural communication** problems they have recently experienced. You may need to define intercultural communication.
- Offer solutions to the problems from your experiences.
- Exchange phone numbers, pager numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses, i-mail addresses, snail-mail addresses or any other means by which you can reach each other over the next four (two) weeks. Before leaving, set up next meeting.

Reflection (to be answered by you shortly after first meeting):

- If you had to do it again, what would you do differently during your first meeting?
- What similarities do you and your Diversity Partner share?
- What were the biggest differences between you and your Diversity Partner?
- Was the first meeting a success? Why or why not?
- What did you learn?
- Record anything you want to include in your presentation.

Multicultural Assignment - 2nd Meeting

Before meeting with your Diversity Partner again, you will need to read the following conversation guidelines. Consult your class notes to insure proper frame of reference. Bring your class notes with you to your meeting to ensure a low bypassing rate. You will need to practice active listening (see notes).

ALL BOLD ITEMS MUST BE DEFINED/EXPLAINED TO YOUR DIVERSITY PARTNER BEFORE DISCUSSING THEM.

Conversation guidelines for second meeting:

- Once again explain to your Diversity Partner that you are interested in knowing about their experiences and that you do not expect them to represent their entire culture.
- With whom do people **self-disclose** most often in your Diversity Partner's country of origin?
- Which gender self-discloses more often? Why? In what situations?
- In your Diversity Partner's country of origin, are people **assertive** or **nonassertive**? You will need examples to support your partner's response.
- What does direct eye contact from another person signal to your Diversity Partner (according to their country of origin)?
- Explain (**proxemics**) the **four distances** to your Diversity Partner. Be sure to make it clear that the distances represent American [United States citizen] communication patterns.
- Together, create a model that represents the use of space according to your Diversity Partner's cultural practices.
- Has your Diversity Partner ever fallen victim to **discrimination** in the USA? If so, you will need examples for support.

Reflection (to be answered by you shortly after meeting):

- What information obtained surprised you most during this interaction?
- How is the model you created similar to the American model discussed in class?
- How is the model you created different?
- What were the biggest differences between your experiences and those of your Diversity Partner?
- Was this meeting a success? Why or why not?
- What did you learn?
- Record anything you want to include in your presentation.