General Studies 1181: Understanding and Navigating American Culture and Academic Life

K. Jones
Fall 2017, MW 12:00-12:50

Office: Writing Center (LIB C305)
Phone Number: 325-486-6173
Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 10:30-1:00, and other times by appointment

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to increase skills and knowledge of American culture among international students and enhance their integration into the university community. Throughout the course, students will gain an understanding of both national and local culture. In addition, students will be introduced to campus resources and strategies that will help them to be academically successful and to enhance their study abroad experience. The course will provide opportunities in and out of class for students to navigate a variety of social scenarios and participate in conversation practice activities.

Core Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

- Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication
- Locate campus resources to solve problems/answer questions
- Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to American culture and academic life

Course Objectives

- Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing
- Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

Grading Policy

- 4 Journal Assignments (5% each) 20%
- 2 summaries (15% each) 30%
- Cultural Presentation 15%
- Service Learning Activity 20%
- Class Participation 15%

Grading Scale

90 – 100 A
80 – 89 B
70 – 79 C
60 – 69 D
59 and Below F

Late Work Policy

- Ten points will be deducted for each class day that a written assignment is late
- Class activities and quizzes cannot be made up in the event of an absence
Absence Policy

Excessive absences, (more than FOUR absences FOR ANY REASON) will automatically result in a failing grade in the course.

- Students are expected to attend all classes, conferences, and required Writing Center activities unless prevented from doing so by illness, bona fide emergencies, or circumstances beyond their control.
- Should a serious illness, emergency, or other crisis occur, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the Student Life Office immediately so that professors may be informed. It is also the student’s responsibility to stay in touch with instructors in order to keep up with the work.
- If a student misses class for any reason, it is that student’s responsibility to check with a classmate and Blackboard for the class assignment and handouts for that day.
- If a student is absent, it is the student’s responsibility to make up the work missed BEFORE the next class meeting so that the completed homework can be brought to the next class meeting.
- If a student is aware of an absence that will occur, it is that student’s responsibility to contact the professors in advance and to complete assigned work in advance of the absence.

Course Activities

- Summaries – Students will write TWO summaries of assigned articles throughout the course. The first summary will consist of multiple drafts and a required visit to the Writing Center. The second summary will be an in-class timed writing assignment.
- Reflections – Students will write four brief reflection pieces in which they describe and respond to the experience of FOUR required off-campus outings. These off-campus outings include eating at a sit-down restaurant, going to a large grocery store, going to see a movie at a cinema, and attending an ASU football game. Prior to each of these outings, the instructor will discuss with students appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.
- Conversation Sessions – Students will attend THREE conversation sessions, all of which will be held on Friday during the regular class time. The topics of these conversations will be based on course readings and students’ experiences during the outings.
- Service Learning Activity – Students will be required to participate in ONE service project on campus that lasts at least three hours. Students must provide documentation that they attended the project.

Required Materials

- Access to Ramport, Blackboard, and Microsoft Word
- In addition, you will be required to attend outings which may necessitate transportation off campus.

Course Readings

“25 Foods Texas Does Better Than Anywhere Else” from Buzzfeed.com
“101 Characteristics of Americans / American Culture”
“Adjusting to College Life” from the International Student Guide to the USA website
“American Culture: Traditions and Customs of the United States” by Kim Ann Zimmermann
“Cultural Immersion: Getting Involved in Your New Community” from the International Student Guide to the USA website
“Learning About U.S. American Culture and Values” by John Dickson
“Preserving the Mohair Trade” by Caitlin Richards
Videos
“American Culture Shock”
“The First Lady on the Importance of Studying Abroad” (Michelle Obama)
“Restaurant Etiquette – Glove and Boots”

Academic Integrity
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook.

American Disability Act
Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request and implement academic accommodations.

Religious Holy Day
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

Syllabus
DAY 1: Introduction to course
Campus scavenger hunt activity (map provided)

DAY 2: Video tour of San Angelo
Reflection – Tour of Your Hometown
Homework: Read “Adjusting to College Life” (handout)

DAY 3: PowerPoint presentation on main ideas of article
Discuss steps for critical reading (handout)
Practice critical reading as a class (article TBD)
Homework: Watch Video 6 of the Information Literacy module in Blackboard and answer the 5 quiz questions that follow the video; watch Video 7 and answer the 5 quiz questions that follow the video

DAY 4: Due – first journal (grocery store)
Guest speakers – tutors, multicultural center
Homework: Critically read “Learning About US Culture and Values” (handout)

FRIDAY CONVERSATION SESSION
DAY 5: Group conversation about reading assignment
Report to class on your group’s discussion
Video – “American Culture Shock” (YouTube)
Homework: Read website article “25 Foods Texas Does Better Than Anywhere Else” (BuzzFeed)
DAY 6: Discuss restaurant etiquette
Video – “Restaurant Etiquette – Glove and Boots”
Homework: Article about Texas music culture and history (TBD), music survey
Assignment

DAY 7: Group discussion about music survey
Report to class on your group’s discussion
Music sharing activity
Guest speaker: UCPC (discuss campus activities, programs, and service projects)
Homework: Critically read “Cultural Immersion: Getting Involved in Your Community” (handout)

DAY 8: Due – second journal (restaurant)
Community service project discussion
Assign service learning project (due at end of course)

FRIDAY CONVERSATION SESSION

DAY 9: In class, critically read “American Culture: Traditions and Customs of the United States” (handout)
Discuss steps for writing an effective summary (handout)
Homework: Compose first draft of summary

DAY 10: No class – conference with me or Writing Center tutor about summary draft

DAY 11: Due – final draft of summary
Assign American culture presentation
Homework: Meet with partners concerning presentation

DAY 12: Due – third journal (downtown)
Guest speakers – buddy / mentor program, intramural sports
Homework: Critically read “Preserving the Mohair Trade”

DAY 13: American Culture Presentations
Homework: Compose first draft of summary #2

DAY 14: American Culture Presentations

DAY 15: Video – “The First Lady on the Importance of Studying Abroad”

DAY 16: Due – fourth journal (football game); service learning project documentation
Course evaluation

FRIDAY CONVERSATION SESSION AND CLASS BAR-B-Q