Communication Strategy in International Business

Fall 2019

Professor & Contact Information
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Course Description
For success in business amid globalization, we must be able to approach complex issues with a global mindset and to communicate effectively across cultural and national boundaries.

In this course, you will learn 1) the dynamic functionality of the communication process in international business contexts and 2) the practice of analyzing data and then developing and expressing your ideas about international business issues in writing.

This course requires imagination, critical thinking, and research to make a compelling business argument. Your ability to marshal evidence and to deploy that evidence persuasively is paramount to your achievement in the course.

We will examine topics such as international business structure, industries, and functions; the role of ethics and corporate social responsibility in international business; and communication approaches during international mergers and acquisitions. We will also investigate the influence of culture on international business communication strategy, including perceptions, values, social norms, nonverbal behaviors, and other sociocultural factors that facilitate or impede relationship development in business.

Overall, this course will provide a learning experience that will expand and broaden your research skills and your knowledge of conducting international business.

Learning Objectives
- Explain various ways globalization has influenced business industries and functions as well as business communication strategy.
- Assess the implications of ethics and corporate social responsibility initiatives in international business.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies in various international business situations such as global marketing and mergers and acquisitions.
- Stimulate cultural intelligence about important factors that affect relationship development between multinational corporations and internal and external stakeholders.
- Research a business issue with a global mindset and produce a written report that analyzes the challenges and opportunities of doing business internationally.
Required Readings

The following chapters/articles are required readings (they will be provided electronically as .pdf files throughout the course):

- “Defining a Paradigm for Business Communication Across Cultures,” in *A Paradigm for Business Communication Across Cultures: Theoretical Highlights for Practice*, by Liu
- “Cultural Influences on Context: The Business Setting,” in *Communication Between Cultures*, by Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel

The following case studies are required readings (they will be provided electronically as .pdf files throughout the course):

- “Reib, A Global Retailer: Examining International Business Issues”
- “Future Generation Corporation (FGC): Ethics and International Business”
- “Corporate Social Responsibility: Working Conditions at Cynex Factory”

Optional Readings

The following online articles are optional readings to enhance course content:

- “A Quick Guide to Business Etiquette Around the World,” in *Business Insider*
- “10 Unusual Business Customs That Might Surprise You,” in *Business News Daily*
- “6 Secrets to Navigating Cross-Cultural Differences,” in *Entrepreneur*
- “How to Give and Receive Feedback Across Cultures,” in *Fast Company*
- “Being the Boss in Brussels, Boston, and Beijing,” in *Harvard Business Review*
- “International Dining Etiquette Tips,” in *Huffington Post*
- “Why Effective Cross-Cultural Communication Matters in Business,” in *Huffington Post*
- “10 International Business Customs You Must Remember When Traveling,” in *Huffington Post*
- “The Business Case for Building a Cross-Cultural Workforce,” in *Inc*
- “Presenting Around the World: Cross-Cultural Humour Guide,” in *Medium*
- “The Importance of Studying Another Culture,” in *New York Times*
- “One of the Most Common Questions in American Small-Talk Is Considered Rude in Much of the World,” in *World Economic Forum*

Assignments & Grading Procedures

**Professionalism and Participation:** Active participation in discussions, activities, and team work is an essential aspect of this course. You must be prepared to engage in each class and team meeting. Initiating discussions, asking thought-provoking questions, and responding to questions is expected.
**Individual Assignment:** You will read international business case studies and write a business memo based on your analysis. The purpose of the assignment is to practice supporting a claim through evidence and to increase your understanding of globalization’s influence on business industries and functions and the implications of ethics and corporate social responsibility in international business. Submit the memo to the professor as an email attachment in .pdf format.

**Team Assignment:** You will work with a team to write a business-related academic report based on empirical research. The purpose of the assignment is to expose you to the research and writing process, including forming a research question with consideration of extant literature, identifying and analyzing available data sources, developing an argument, and structuring a report with evidence to support the findings. Submit the report to the professor as an email attachment in .pdf format.

**Course Grade:** Your overall course grade will be based on the quality of your 1) individual professionalism and participation in class and team meetings, 2) individual analytical memo, and 3) contribution to the team research report. Your grade will also be determined by your aptitude for critical thinking and your ability to analyze complex business problems from various perspectives and to defend positions with confidence and rationale. Your course grade is not a reflection of your effort but rather of the quality of your work.

Each assignment you submit should be your original work. Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is an academic offense with serious consequences and may result in a 0 assignment grade and an F for the course.

**The components of the course grade will be computed according to this point distribution:**

- Professionalism and Participation in Weekly Class/Team Meetings – 100 points
- Individual Business Case Study Analysis and Written Memo – 200 points
- Team Academic Research Written Report – 300 points

**The final course grade will then be determined approximately according to these criteria:**

- **A** – Top 20 percent of the class
- **B** – Top 20-80 percent of the class
- **C** – Bottom 20 percent of the class
- **D** – Severe deficiency in one of the course components (professionalism, individual, and team performance)
- **F** – Severe deficiency in more than one of the course components (professionalism, individual, and team performance) or plagiarism
COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule is tentative and subject to minor changes per the professor’s discretion.

Week 1 – 9/14/19 – 8-10 a.m.
   Topics –
   Introduction to the Course
   Globalization: The Mix of Business, Culture, and Communication

Week 2 – 9/21/19 – 8-10 a.m.
   Topics –
   Effects of Globalization on Business Functions and Industries
   Forming a Business Research Question
   Reading Due Before Class –
   “Writing in Plain English”
   “Defining a Paradigm for Business Communication Across Cultures”

Week 3 – 9/28/19 – 8-10 a.m.
   Topics –
   Cultural Dimensions and Cultural Intelligence
   Analyzing Business Information Sources
   Reading Due Before Class –
   “Harnessing the Science of Persuasion”
   “One Reason Mergers Fail: The Two Cultures Aren’t Compatible”

Week 4 – 10/5/19 – 8-10 a.m.
   Case Study Analysis Memo Due Before Class – No Late Memos Accepted
   Topics –
   Ethics in International Business Communication
   Developing a Business Argument
   Readings Due Before Class –
   “Reib, A Global Retailer: Examining International Business Issues”
   “Future Generation Corporation (FGC): Ethics and International Business”
   “Corporate Social Responsibility: Working Conditions at Cynex Factory”

Week 5 – 10/12/19 – 8-10 a.m.
   Topics –
   Business Interactions in Multinational Corporations
   Structuring a Business Research Report
   Reading Due Before Class –
   “How to Build Trust When Working Across Borders”
   “Cultural Influences on Context: The Business Setting”

Week 6 – 10/19/19 – Meetings with Research Teams
   8-9 a.m. – Team 1 Meeting
   9-10 a.m. – Team 2 Meeting
10-11 a.m. – Team 3 Meeting

**Week 7** – 10/26/19 – Meetings with Research Teams
8-9 a.m. – Team 1 Meeting
9-10 a.m. – Team 2 Meeting
10-11 a.m. – Team 3 Meeting

**Week 8** – 11/2/19 – Meetings with Research Teams
8-9 a.m. – Team 1 Meeting
9-10 a.m. – Team 2 Meeting
10-11 a.m. – Team 3 Meeting

**Week 9** – 11/9/19 – Meetings with Research Teams
8-9 a.m. – Team 1 Meeting
9-10 a.m. – Team 2 Meeting
10-11 a.m. – Team 3 Meeting

**Week 10** – 11/16/19 – Meetings with Research Teams
8-9 a.m. – Team 1 Meeting
9-10 a.m. – Team 2 Meeting
10-11 a.m. – Team 3 Meeting

*RESEARCH REPORT DUE 11/23/19 BY NOON – NO LATE REPORTS ACCEPTED*
Example Research Proposal (Fundamental):
Business Negotiations

Research Description –
Many corporations transcend cultural and national boundaries. Making deals and building relationships through negotiations are critical aspects of international mergers, joint ventures, imports and exports, patent licensing agreements, and many other cross-cultural commercial activities. Thus, essential communication strategies in international business encompass identifying and benefitting from opportunities to realize mutually agreeable solutions while simultaneously curtailing cultural misunderstandings and conflicts.

Based on analytic thought and empirical research, this research project will lead toward your adoption of a global mindset in negotiations. Your research will focus on ways of evaluating success in negotiated outcomes in international business, including formal negotiations of deals and contracts as well as informal and personal negotiations. Your research will provide analysis of strategies for engaging persuasively with internal and external stakeholders and common mishaps that prevent negotiators from achieving successful negotiated outcomes. Finally, your research will provide a strategic plan for improving success at the bargaining table in the international business context.

This research project will culminate in a written academic report that analyzes 1) cultural differences in business negotiations and 2) strategies for creating win-win situations by communicating respect and cooperation while also remaining competitive.

Research Questions –
Pick a country and compare and contrast its national culture with China’s national culture. Address these questions in your research:
- What are some typical aspects of the Chinese negotiation style that might create misunderstandings in a negotiation session with a client from the other country?
- Which Chinese cultural values are the most important for the executive from the other country to know prior to a negotiation? Which cultural values from the other country are important for Chinese executives to know?
- Which Chinese business practices are the most important for the executive from the other country to know prior to a negotiation? Which business practices from the other country are important for Chinese executives to know?

Data Sources –
Data from The Hofstede Center –
to analyze data about national culture dimensions

Media articles about actual negotiations between corporations based in different countries –
to analyze variables presented within articles as to why the negotiation succeeded or failed

Expected Analysis of Topic and Sources –
Offer recommendations for eliminating or managing misunderstandings and conflicts during cross-cultural business deal and contract negotiations.
Example Research Proposal (Fundamental):
Intercultural Communication

Research Description –
Amid rapid globalization, many corporations transcend cultural and national boundaries. Engaging in a multicultural workforce and viewing intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts as opportunities for growth are critical to the success of international enterprises. Thus, essential communication strategies in business encompass enhancing cultural intelligence and designing key messages for internal and external stakeholders with differing cultural perceptions, values, and behaviors.

Based on analytic thought and empirical research, this research project will lead toward your adoption of a global mindset (rather than an ethnocentric worldview) in intercultural business communication. Your research will provide analysis of cross-cultural business paradigms (positivist, relativist, and constructivist) and of transculturalism, or business issues and practices that transcend cultural and national boundaries. Your research will focus on examining obstacles that professionals must overcome and strategies for communicating effectively to achieve business objectives in an intercultural context. Finally, your research will provide a strategic plan for improving success in intercultural business communication through application of concepts such as assimilation and acculturation, long-term versus short term adaptation, and problem versus learning/growing perspectives.

This research project will culminate in a written academic report that analyzes 1) cultural differences and similarities in intercultural business communication and 2) strategies for communicating key messages through various channels to diverse audiences.

Research Questions –
Address these questions in your research:
  o What is meant by the phrase “communication is rule governed”?
  o What are some of the established rules that govern Chinese business interactions? How might some of these protocols create misunderstandings when dealing with business professionals from other cultures?
  o Does the impact of electronic technology on global economies increase or decrease the need for people to be trained in intercultural communication?
  o How does business communication through electronic technology differ from face-to-face communication in terms of necessary training in intercultural communication?
  o How do the following conflict styles influence intercultural communication in the business setting: Avoiding, competing, compromising, accommodating, and collaborating?
  o Is business communication through electronic technology prone to certain conflict styles? Is communication through face-to-face business meetings prone to certain conflict styles?

Data Sources –
Data from The Hofstede Center –
to analyze data about national culture dimensions
Journal articles about theoretical approaches to cultural dislocation and cultural adaptation – to analyze and interpret prior research and theoretical models about adaptation and conflict in intercultural business contexts

**Expected Analysis of Topic and Sources** –
Offer recommendations for increasing cultural intelligence and managing conflict in intercultural communication in business situations, including application of assimilation and acculturation, long-term versus short term adaptation, and problem versus learning/growing perspectives.
Example Research Proposal (Advanced):
Global Marketing Strategy

Research Description –
Many corporations transcend cultural and national boundaries. Thus, designing marketing campaigns that transcend lingual, sociocultural, and economic differences between the corporate home country and foreign countries is critical for brand recognition and product/service demand in the international business landscape. For example, millions of consumers around the world are able to recognize immediately the Apple, Sony, McDonald’s, Nike, Starbucks, Mercedes-Benz, Google, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Coca-Cola brands. To ensure profit and growth in the global economy, corporations make business decisions about international distribution and logistics as well as decisions about how to communicate with consumers in a particular market.

Based on analytic thought and empirical research, this research project will lead toward your adoption of a global mindset in the marketing process, including communication tactics for planning, producing, placing, and promoting products and services through various channels. Your research will analyze multinational enterprises’ strategies for exploring new business expansion opportunities and then their capitalization on these opportunities through marketing products and services. Your research will examine unique approaches to international marketing that are predicated on communicating effectively with consumers of diverse demographic, sociocultural, and economic backgrounds in a particular market; you will investigate corporate trends and make predictions about where and how a corporation should market products and services. Finally, your research will provide a strategic marketing plan for entering a foreign market through cross-cultural innovation and value acceleration.

This research project will culminate in a written academic report that analyzes 1) factors that influence a global marketing campaign and 2) options for marketing new products or services in an emerging market. Specifically, the report will analyze strategies for engaging publics across cultures and anticipating responses based on cultural patterns.

Research Questions –
Address these questions in your research:
  o How do economic factors influence the strategies, including channels, used by corporations to introduce a brand, product, or service into a foreign market?
  o What strategies are effective for corporations seeking to introduce a brand, product, or service into a foreign market characterized by significant demographic and/or sociocultural differences?
  o Under what types of circumstances does a corporate marketing campaign benefit from eschewing the tools of mass communication?
  o When does a corporation benefit from employing a relational approach (rather than a mass communication approach) in a marketing campaign?

Data Sources –
Data from The Hofstede Center –
to analyze data about cultural factors in various markets
Data from World Wealth Reports and Goldman Sachs Economic Research Group Reports – to analyze data about socioeconomic factors in various markets

Articles about actual corporations introducing a brand, product, or service into a foreign market – to analyze variables presented within articles as to why the strategies used to promote the brand, product, or service succeeded or failed in a foreign market

**Expected Analysis of Topic and Sources** –
Offer recommendations for strategies to implement when introducing a brand, product, or service into a foreign market.