1 – DESCRIPTION
Human interactions are always wonderful, but complex, experiences. When you travel to a new place, or when you meet new people simply staying at home, they can be even more challenging. Why is that? What happens in these circumstances? Which factors come into play?
This course will introduce you to the study of intercultural communication from a social scientific perspective. We will explore how social and cultural variability influence intercultural encounters and communication; in particular, we will use your stay abroad and your interactions with people in Italy to understand the many factors that affect such relationships and experiences.
You will be encouraged to understand theory, while incorporating this knowledge into your own life and experience abroad. Italy, and Florence in particular, will be our site for exploring intercultural communication as it occurs in real life, and for testing the concepts we study.
You will learn about Italian society and culture, and understand how this knowledge is fundamental in order to have positive intercultural interactions. Through the “Creative Project” assignment, you will have the opportunity to make your own unique, personal experience the core of this course, exploring intercultural communication in everyday life, and achieving a deeper understanding of your own and your friends’ experience in Italy.

2 – OBJECTIVES, GOALS and OUTCOMES
The goal of this course is to introduce students to the basic concepts of intercultural communication while identifying the relevant factors that affect cross-cultural encounters, such as culture, values, beliefs, gender and age.
Students will learn:
✓ That in order to have positive intercultural interactions one must understand other cultures while also seeing one’s own with a critical perspective.
✓ Why a social scientific perspective is useful in order to understand intercultural communication processes; by which research methods such a perspective can be developed; which scientific terminology is used to communicate research findings.
✓ In which ways the theories we talk about in class are developed from experience and, conversely, that current events may be understood with the theoretical tools we talk about.
✓ How to deal with difficult situations they might be faced in everyday life, and with sensitive topics such as: identity, migration, “race”.
✓ How to use their own experience abroad as a basis for applying and testing the validity of the concepts developed in class.
✓ How to use Italy (and Florence in particular) as a research setting, developing their observational and interviewing skills.
✓ About Italian society and culture, and they will develop a critical understanding of the role that this information plays in their own intercultural interactions.
✓ To see “from outside” their own values and beliefs, and to use this knowledge in order to achieve positive intercultural encounters.
✓ That intercultural interactions change both parties.
Research is interesting, challenging, and gives space to personal creativity. Students will learn the basics of studying (mastering the topics and developing intelligent, critical thinking!), by taking notes in class, writing essays and developing a personal, creative project.
3 - PREREQUISITES
There are no specific pre-requisites for this course. Students should know that this is not a straight communications course: it applies an interdisciplinary perspective that focuses on the theoretical and methodological knowledge developed by social sciences – and anthropology in particular. Students will be required to apply such research methods by developing their observational skills, writing fieldnotes, interacting with people, selecting and interviewing informants. This will require time and personal (mental and emotional) involvement, and it should have the effect of making the experience abroad more intense and fulfilling. Specific guidelines will be provided; students are encouraged to ask questions and share their experience in class.

At the beginning of the course, students will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to provide some background information on their study plan and their expectations.

Regular attendance is very important: lessons are interactive and discussion-oriented, and you cannot find all of this in a book! Moreover, in class the professor will provide information on required readings, and occasionally handouts will be distributed. The same approach is valid for fieldtrips, which are an integral part of the course, and will help students with their assignments.

Studying the readings is mandatory.

Please consider strict guidelines regarding attendance and behavior during scheduled visits/fieldtrip (as described in pertinent paragraphs).

Classes will be taught in English.

4 - METHOD
Intercultural communication can be understood only through a combination of theory and practice, and it is this way that students will be encouraged to approach this course. Lessons will provide students with the foundations of theoretical knowledge and practice, and then challenge their own personal thoughts and beliefs with critical readings that will be discussed in class. The first sign of creativity is critical thinking: students will be encouraged to first master the topics, and then suggest critical perspectives.

Lessons are interdisciplinary: we will approach intercultural communication from a social scientific and critical perspective. As such, lectures are designed to supplement the readings (you can’t find in a book all the things we will talk about in class!!), and class meetings emphasize discussion and critique of the reading assignments.

You can’t learn intercultural communication simply studying a book! Communication is about people and human interaction, and it is precisely though human interaction and direct experience that this topic can be understood. For this reason, students will learn how cultural diversity affects communication and, most of all, they will *experience* it with fieldtrips and with the “Creative Project” assignment. Moreover, they will be encouraged to use their own intercultural experiences abroad in order to develop theoretical knowledge.

Social scientific knowledge is always developed in close relationship with practice: students will learn research methods by experimenting them in the context of their sojourn in Firenze. They will learn how to observe intercultural communication in diverse settings, exploring the city, observing people’s behaviour and interviewing informants. Intercultural Communication is also a multimedia discipline, and students will therefore be encouraged to experiment with media of their choice to document their observations and findings. All the knowledge that students accumulate throughout their stay in Italy will be the basis for their “Creative project”; this assignment gives students the opportunity to apply the theories developed in class to their own experiences in Florence by creating a personal written “Guide” to positive intercultural relations in Italy.

Students will always be given help in studying the subject and working on their projects; I will repeat important concepts, use the blackboard for key-terms, definitions and names, and make direct reference to my own research experience to help students understand how to practice research and approach informants.

5 – ASSESSMENT

✓ In class

Given the nature of the course, it is important for students to **participate actively** to class discussion. It is never a matter of “personal opinions”: class discussions are based on readings, theoretical concepts, and current events; for this reason, it is important for students to come to class **having studied their readings**. It is also important for them to learn and master appropriate **terminology**. The exams and the two
assignments must be written properly and carefully structured. Students will be graded on all the above.

✓ “Experience sheet” assignment
Throughout the course students will explore their own and their friends’ experience abroad, paying particular attention to those aspects that are most pertinent to intercultural communication studies, such as culture shock and interactions with Italians in many different settings. Intercultural experiences are rooted in everyday life, and it is precisely during very mundane activities such as shopping, walking around, buying breakfast or dinner, that we learn the most. During the first lesson students will receive a printed sheet (“Experience sheet” ) in which they will take note of their experiences, making reference to their ideas, feelings, emotions, with particular attention to their expectations, and whether they were met or not. Specific guidelines will be provided in class. They will hand it in and discuss it during Week 2-Lesson 2, on the 7th of July.

✓ “Creative project”
During the course students will learn to discern expectations and personal opinions from actual experience; they will accumulate a great deal of knowledge on Italian society and culture, and learn how to deal with intercultural interactions while staying in Florence. Students are required to take notes (“fieldnotes”) of all their experiences, observations, interactions throughout the course; they will also interview their friends and the Italian people that they interact with, in order to gain a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and the factors that influence it.
From the first lesson on, students will be encouraged to develop observational skills, a core research method. Following the methods developed in class, they will investigate intercultural communication carrying out “fieldwork” (real-life observations and interviews), and documenting their findings with fieldnotes and visual media.
These notes and interviews are the bulk of the “Creative project” assignment: students will create their own, personal “Guide” to studying and living in Florence, using the experience developed throughout the course. It consists of a printed booklet with text and images; students are encouraged to express their creativity and personality in the development of this project. More specific guidelines will be provided in class. The booklet must be presented in class in its final form (printed booklet with 7 page text plus images) on Week 3-Lesson 3, the 22nd July. Students must also hand in their fieldnotes.
The assignment is based on real-life exploration and therefore requires students to explore the city and interact with people. We will routinely discuss (and show!) the findings in class: the assignment is a work in progress and will be checked various times throughout the course.

✓ Midterm test and final exam
The mid-term test and the final exam are short-answer and essay questions; they will focus on both the theory discussed in class and its application with the “Creative Project”.

6- EXAMS
-Mid-term exam: questions and short essays based on the topics discussed in class, the assigned readings and the “Experience sheet” assignment.
-Final exam: questions and short essays based on the topics discussed in class, and their application through the Creative Project.
Should issues of academic dishonesty arise (plagiarism, etc.), the teacher will refer to the LdM written rules of conduct on such matters.
Note: remember that the dates of the exams can NOT be changed for any reason, so please organize your personal schedule accordingly.

7 - EVALUATION and GRADING SYSTEM
10% Participation
15% “Experience sheet” assignment
20% Mid-term test
10% Creative Project: Presentation in Class
20% Creative Project: Booklet
The following grading system will be observed:

8 - ATTENDANCE and BEHAVIOUR
A positive, interested attitude are fundamental for a good learning experience. Mandatory attendance is a primary requirement for a responsible learning experience at LdM. Please consider that:
✓ If the student misses 20% of the scheduled class hours during this course (generally at the 3rd absence), the Final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade.
✓ If more than 20% of the scheduled class hours is missed (generally at the 4th absence), the final grade will be "F" and NO credits will be given for this course.
Make-up classes are always mandatory since part of the course program.
If a class occasionally creates conflict with another class, the student is required to inform in advance both instructors. The instructors will then share a written excuse for the class going to be missed.
Given the nature of the course, it is important for students to participate actively to class discussion. It is never a matter of "personal opinions": class discussions are based on readings, theoretical concepts, and current events; for this reason, it is important for students to come to class having studied their readings.
Note that the use of laptops in class is restricted.
Lateness as well as leaving the class for long breaks without your instructor’s permission influence the evaluation of attendance and participation.
Students are required to hand in the entrance fee for museums and other visits the lesson before the fieldtrip. Each student is required to know exact meeting points and time for each scheduled visit/fieldtrip. Late arrivals or getting lost are considered absence.
Students with learning disabilities are required to contact their LdM Advisor or LdM Dean of students.
Students are required to behave properly within the school premises. Classrooms are to be left in order and clean. Students must take care of available equipment and materials and promptly report any damage and loss.
All computers, cell phones, and recording devices are to be turned off before class. Students talking, whispering and creating disturbance during class must leave the class and their attendance/participation will be lowered.
Academic dishonesty: should issues of academic dishonesty arise (plagiarism and so on), the teacher will refer to the LdM written policy on such matters.

9 - READINGS and SOURCES
This course relies on a reader that students can purchase at a local copisteria following instructions provided in class on the first lesson; it costs about 15 Euro. The readings are a selection from scholarly journals and from books, that can be found at the LdM library in via dell’Alloro (except for Ryall Nolan).
Note that information on readings will be communicated in class, so please always take notes!
Additional handouts might be provided in class.
Below is a list of the books from which the selection is developed; students are encouraged to use these resources for their “Creative Project”

Required Readings:
Reader and handouts (see above).
The readings are a selection from:
Kottak, C.P. Cultural Anthropology McGraw-Hill, NY, 2003 (MASS COM 64)
Suggested reading:

Please note that most of the mentioned books are available for reading at the LdM school library (see specific location code next to each title). Please check the library for new entries and other useful reading material. NOTE: your personal copy of the mandatory reader must be purchased at the copisteria following instructions provided in class. The Library does NOT SELL books.

10 - ADDITIONAL COSTS
Approx. 15 Euro for readings (see previous point)
Approx. 20 Euro for fieldwork visits (see next point):
-approx. 5 Euro for the “Italian coffee” fieldwork
-approx. 15 Euro for the “Tasting experience”
-approx. 5 euro to print and bind the creative project (each project is different, so expenses may vary)
Students are required to bring the money along with them for the fieldtrips.

11 - VISITS and TRIPS
This course is experience oriented (see points 4 and 5); for this reason the “Fieldwork visits” are an important part of the course. We will dedicate various lessons to experiencing together what “fieldwork” is like: we will learn about Italian society and culture and apply social science research methods in chosen Florentine contexts in which intercultural communication occurs.
We will pay particular attention to food and the multiple interactions that occur while eating or purchasing food. We will learn about Florentine culinary culture and test our level of cultural adaptation with the “Italian coffee” and “Tasting experience” fieldwork fieldtrips (approx. 20 Euro, see above).
We will experience first-hand Florence and Florentine society, with particular attention to arts and crafts (“Artisan visit”).

Unless otherwise specified, meeting point will be in class, at usual lesson-hour.
Make sure you know the exact meeting point each week and how to get there; be aware that there might be changes in the visit schedule!
If you have been absent please find out what to do and where to meet for the next lesson.
A late show will be treated as absence.
Please don't be late at the meeting point as the class cannot wait for you to enter the museum at the reserved time.
A visit to may be inserted into the schedule, within regular class time. In case it can't be done during regular class time, it will be planned on Friday and will substitute one of the scheduled classes. Students will be informed in advance.

12 - MATERIALS
The assignments require students to use a chosen media to develop their Creative Project, and thus they will need a camera, material to draw, notebooks, sketchpads... They will also have to print photos and create a bound booklet for their final project.
Students are required to always come to class with their readings. It is mandatory to take notes in class, and even during fieldtrips.
WEEK 1 – What do we mean by “intercultural communication”? How will we approach it?

1) 29th June: Introduction and course overview
   -What is intercultural communication?
   -When does intercultural interactions occur?
   -Why should we study it? (And why should you study it while living abroad?)
   -Italy is our research field; studying abroad is our context to experience and understand
     intercultural interactions
   -From culture shock to understanding (and enjoying!)
   -Presentation of the “Experience” essay, and of the “Creative project” assignment
   -Student information handout
   Fieldwork fieldtrip: Italian coffee

2) 30th June: The “armchair travellers”: what you learn staying at home
   -How does intercultural communication happen?
   -Is it “just” about language?
   -What do we bring with us when we interact with others?
   -Popular culture: a source of information (that we bring along with us)
   -Images and stereotypes from the media
   -Classwork: media analysis. Which ideas of Italy did you bring along with you?

   FOR THIS LESSON READ
   “Strangers in a strange land”, and “November and the devoted mother”, from Too Much Tuscan
   Sun, by Dario Castagno.
   “Folk culture, popular culture, and intercultural communication”, from Intercultural

3) 1st July: Culture and culture shock
   -What are all the ideas about ourselves and others that we bring along with us and that affect
     our relations?
   -What is culture? Why should we study it?
   -Levels of culture
   -Culture shock: does it always occur? How can we deal with it? And what happens when we go
     back home?
   -Study-abroad students: a perfect case-study.

   FOR THIS LESSON READ
   “Culture”, from Cultural Anthropology, by Conrad Phillip Kottak, McGraw and Hill, selection from
   pages 83-104.

4) 2nd July: Culture, identity and values
   -The complexity of human identity (gender, age, race, class, ethnicity, nationality)
   -The cultural aspects of human identity
   -How does your identity/positionality influence your interactions?
   -What are “values”? How do they affect our life and relationships?
   -How can we study effectively all these topics?
WEEK 2 – Who are “the others” that we interact with?

5) 6th July: Complexity I – Migration
- Who are “the others” that we interact with?
- “Others” are just as complex as us
- Does “Italian culture” exist?
- Ethnicity and identity
- Migration and ethnic belonging
- Cultural change and adaptation

FOR THIS LESSON READ

6) 7th July: Complexity II – Language and cultural identity
- Apart from current migratory patterns, Italy has an astonishing internal complexity
- Does “Italian language” exist?
- Linguistic variety and cultural variability
- From language, to culture, to food: cultural identity is everywhere
- HAND IN YOUR “EXPERIENCE SHEET”; CLASS DISCUSSION

FOR THIS LESSON READ
“Us versus them”, from Too Much Tuscan Sun, by Dario Castagno.
Hand in your “Experience sheet”. Class discussion.

7) 8th July: Food and values – and review for the midterm test
- The role food plays in the construction of regional and local identity in Italy
- Naming it: dialects survive in the kitchen!
- Values associated with food in everyday life, and in intercultural encounters
- “TASTING EXPERIENCE” visit. We will meet in class, usual time. Remember to bring 15 euro.

8) 9th July: MIDTERM TEST

WEEK 3 – Which factors come into play when we interact with others?

9) 13th July: Fashion and appearance in intercultural encounters
- What is the first thing we do when we meet someone?
- Which role does physical appearance play in intercultural encounters?
- “What should I pack??” – deciphering fashion in Italy, figuring out what to do

FOR THIS LESSON READ
10) 14th July: Arts, crafts and fashion in multicultural settings
   Guest lecture (and fieldtrip) by Professor Zachary Androus: Immigrants and Expats: Migration and Identity in Contemporary Florence
   Learn the complexities of the Florentine social and cultural environment from the research of a social scientist.
   **ARTISAN FIELDTRIP.** We will meet in class, usual time.

11) 15th July: Gender – does it have a role?
   -What is gender? Is it different from sex?
   -Does gender play a role in intercultural interactions?
   -Are men and women culturally different?

   FOR THIS LESSON READ

12) 16th July: “Race” in contemporary Italy
   -What is race?
   -Which role does “race” play in US culture? And in Italy?
   -How does “race” affect intercultural interactions?
   -What do anthropologists have to say?

   FOR THIS LESSON READ
   “Human diversity and ‘race’”, from Cultural Anthropology, by Conrad Phillip Kottak, McGraw and Hill, selection from pages 105-130.

WEEK 4 – Who are we now?

13) 20th July: Who are you now?
   -Which aspects of Italian culture and of your own have you become (more) aware of during your stay in Italy?
   -Can this awareness change your interactions?
   -Has your identity changed?
   -Do “study abroad students” have a culture of their own?

   FOR THIS LESSON READ

14) 21st July: Florence, tourism, and the search for authenticity (and review for the final)
   -In-class exercise: “Florence, an intercultural artefact?”
   -Tourism, space, and the search for authenticity
   **Bring your projects to class for review**

   FOR THIS LESSON READ
   Read: “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings”, by Dean MacCannell

15) 22nd July: PRESENTATION IN CLASS OF THE CREATIVE PROJECTS

16) 23rd July: FINAL EXAM
13B- ALTERNATIVE LESSON
Should the instructor be indisposed or otherwise unable to attend, a substitute teacher (whenever available) will conduct the scheduled lesson, at the regular class time. Students will watch and discuss the film *East is East* following teacher’s instructions.