

Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2026

Course Title	Language, Culture, and Communication
	语言、文化与交际
Teacher	Xuan ZHENG
First day of classes	July 6, 2026
Last day of classes	July 31, 2026
Course Credit	2 credits
Course Description	
Objective:	
<p>This course is an introductory course to major topics concerning language, culture, and communication: their theoretical debates and practical realizations, aiming to help you develop intercultural awareness and intercultural communication competence. By the end of the course, Students Will Be Able To (SWBAT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">notice and describe cross-cultural differences and similarities (“Culture” includes: geographic region, nation, linguistic community, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, profession, and etc.)interpret cross-cultural differences and similarities from multiple perspectivesidentify one’s own and other’s emotions, communicate messages and emotions effectively and appropriately, manage conflicts and emotions, and create connections with people of other culturesreflect on how his/her own beliefs, emotional reactions and behavioral patterns are formed, and demonstrate change in these aspects.	
Pre-requisites /Target audience	
<p>No pre-requisite. Both undergraduates and graduates are OK. It’s the best if you have had some intercultural experiences and speak more than one language. But believe me, we all do. If you are curious about your differences with others, your own cultural upbringings, and are willing to share them with others, and probably change yourself a bit sometimes, you will like the class more.</p>	
Proceeding of the Course	
<p>We will read first and discuss the readings in class, covering all the major theories and skills in intercultural communication. We will also have various activities to experiment with and reflect on these ideas. The main assignment of the course is to investigate a culture with your group mates. We will do this together in 5 steps. Hopefully by the end of the course you will experience changes from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism.</p>	

Assignments (essay or other forms)
A cultural learning project (essay)
Evaluation Details
<p>30% Class preparation and participation (100 points):</p> <p>Active participation in class is expected. That means:</p> <p>1) Come to the class ON TIME. Two lates count as one absence. If you have to be absent, let me know ahead of time, and bring an official Leave of Absence to me. You will be deducted 2 points for one absence. 3 absences will result in a 0 for your class grade and will be reported to your home department.</p> <p>2) Read all the assigned texts for the day beforehand; be prepared to discuss the readings in class. Speak up in class and participate in group work. Use English as much as possible.</p> <p>70% A cultural learning project (100 points)</p> <p>In this course, you will investigate a “culture” through several steps:</p> <p>Step 1: An intercultural experience. 20 points. 2-3 pages.</p> <p>Have a real intercultural experience and write up the experience. Detailed instructions later.</p> <p>Step 2: A brief investigation. 10 points. 1-2 pages. Group-work.</p> <p>You will work in groups of 4-5. From your experience in step 1, together identify a “culture” that seems strange, troubling, appealing, or simply different (either a foreign/home culture; be specific). Collect some information (from the library or the internet) to help you understand this culture. In this step, write about which “culture” interests you for an investigation, and why. Then report on the information you have found that helps you understand it.</p> <p>Step 3: A think description. 30 points. 2-3 pages. Group-work.</p> <p>Observe the place where your culture takes place. Take down detailed notes about the scene and people (how they look, communicate and behavior). Identify two cultural informants (someone who provides an insider’s perspective and is knowledgeable about this culture). Have an in-depth interview with each informant. Write-up a thick description about this culture.</p> <p>Step 4: A final report. 30 points. 2-3 pages. Group-work.</p> <p>Based on what you learned in step 2 and 3, analyze your data and form descriptions and hypothesis about different aspects of your culture. Present your report to class.</p> <p>Step 5: A self-reflection. 10 points. 1-2 pages.</p> <p>Compare this culture with your own. What did you learn about your own culture and yourself?</p>
Text Books and Reading Materials
<p>You can download the course pack from 教学网 (course.pku.edu.cn). Either print or bring the electronic version of the assigned readings for the day to the class. Print-out the course pack costs about 20 yuan.</p> <p>The course materials mostly come from three books:</p>

<p>许力生(Xu) 主编, 2013. 《新编跨文化交际英语教程》, 上海: 上海外语教育出版社。</p> <p>Jackson, Jane. 2014. <i>Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication</i>. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Snow, Don. 2014. <i>Encounters with Westerners: Improving Skills in English and Intercultural Communication</i>. 上海: 上海外语教育出版社。</p>	
Academic Integrity (If necessary)	
<p>If you use AI tools, make sure you mention how you used them in your assignments. Write one paragraph reflecting on this experience (e.g. how did it help you; whether it worked or not and why). DO NOT use AI tools to write the entire assignments for you.</p>	
CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to adjustment)	
Session 1: Introduction and cultural diversity	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction ● To have a general idea of the theories from the most influential early cultural theorists that explain the relationship between cultural values and social behaviors (i.e., communication). - To distinguish high-context and low-context cultures (Hall) - To distinguish different cultural dimensions that are used to classify culture (Hofstede) - To become more aware of our values (invisible) 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is directness and what is indirectness? ● How to communicate directly (e.g. what language to use?) ● How to communicate indirectly? ● What are the differences between high and low context cultures? Can you think of examples to explain the differences? ● What are our values? ● What do cultural dimensions mean? ● How does the dimensions help to explain the differences in people's communication styles? ● Act out a dialogue/situation to demonstrate the differences in your chosen dimension. 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 1 from the coursepack 教学网	

【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Case analysis	
Session 2: Language and culture	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To identify miscommunication due to differences in language at its different levels ● To have a general understanding of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on language and thought (what it is and what its value is) ● To become more sensitive of how language, thought and culture relate in our daily communication 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to Sapir and Whorf: What is language? What is the relationship between language and thought/ideas/worldviews? ● What do you think of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? Can you find some evidence to support or to dispute it? 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 2 from the coursepack 教学网 Movie: Arrival	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Reflection journal	
Session 3: Emotions in intercultural communication	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feel, name, and understand emotions of yourself and others (which itself is managing emotions) ● Recognize the importance of emotions in interpersonal and intercultural communication ● Cultivate affective competence 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are emotions? How are they different from thoughts and behaviors? ● What are their relationships? ● How do they feel like in our body? ● What are their meanings? ● How to manage them? ● Why is it important to have affective competence in intercultural communication? 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 4 from the coursepack 教学网	

Movie: Inside Out	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 An intercultural experience paper	
Session 4: Communication styles (verbal and non-verbal)	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To review (describe) how our communication styles differ, with more dimensions ● To learn how to interpret what different communication styles mean ● To become aware of our ethnocentric tendency in evaluating differences ● To increase sensitivity of the different components of non-verbal communication, their meanings and functions. ● To understand and practice detailed, “accurate” observation of a scene. 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why do people misunderstand each other? ● What are the different communication styles? ● What do these communicative styles mean? (How to interpret them?) ● What is Nonverbal Communication and why it is important? ● What are the functions of NVC? (Find an example to illustrate each function) ● What are the types of NVC? (Find an example to illustrate each type). How does culture play a role in NVC? ● What to do in intercultural communication in terms of NVC? (what do you find the most useful?) 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 5 and 6 from the coursepack 教学网	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 An observation exercise	
Session 5: Description, interpretation and evaluation	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To distinguish description, interpretation and evaluation ● To notice our ethnocentrism ● To learn how to observe objectively ● To understand why we don’t observe objectively 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is description, interpretation and evaluation? ● What is ethnocentrism? 	

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 7 from the coursepack Body Ritual of the Nacirema 教学网 Movie: Home	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Reflection journal	
Session 6: Language and identity	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To identify your own multiple identities ● To understand the characteristics of identity, and the relationship between identity, culture and language ● To understand language attitudes and how they are formed ● To know how to deal with identity conflict in intercultural communication 	
【Questions】 Who are you? List ten statements describing yourself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share the identity statements you are willing to share in your group. Discuss the following questions: Which identities are the most important to you? Why? In what context (time, location, with whom) do you identify yourself this way? ● How do these identities relate to the way you speak/communicate? ● What expectations do you think your culture shares about these different identities? Have you been in a situation where your preferred identities were not recognized or respected? Or, do any of them put conflicting pressures on you to act in different ways? How did you feel and resolve these conflicts? ● What are characteristics of identity? How is language and identity related? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are language attitudes? ● Has your native language/dialect and culture influenced (positive, negative) your learning of a foreign language/new dialect and its culture? How? ● Has learning another language/culture influenced (positive, negative) your native language/culture, and maybe even who you are and how you view the world? How? 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 8-9 from the coursepack 教学网 Match guise test	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】	
Session 7: Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination	Date:

<p>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To understand and distinguish concepts related to stereotype, such as bias, prejudice, discrimination, racism xenophobia ● To learn how to overcome these barriers 	
<p>【Questions】</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What do these terms mean: stereotype, bias, prejudice, discrimination, racism xenophobia? ● Why do we have them? ● What are the consequences? ● How to overcome these barriers in intercultural communication? 	
<p>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 10 from the coursepack 教学网 Movie: Green Book</p>	
<p>【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Reflection journal</p>	
Session 8: Workshop on intercultural experience	Date:
<p>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To understand what is empathy ● To practice empathetic listening 	
<p>【Questions】</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is empathy different from sympathy? ● How to do empathetic listening in a Chinese context? <p>After the workshop, reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What was it like being the speaker and hearing the listener make sentences for empathy? ● What was it like being the listener? What was the hardest part about it? ● What if in an intercultural communication, you can empathize with others very well but they do not seem to empathize with you, what will you do? 	
<p>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Students' intercultural experience paper Movie Inside Out</p>	
<p>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</p>	
Session 9: Conflict and negotiation	Date:

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To define conflict ● To understand different types of conflicts and different conflict management styles ● To manage conflict effectively and appropriately 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is a conflict? ● Different types of conflict ● What has led to conflict? How does culture play a role here? ● How to resolve conflicts? 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 11 from the coursepack 教学网	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Final project	
Session 10: Intercultural adaptation	Date:
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To understand the process of intercultural adaptation ● To understand and manage culture shock 	
【Questions】 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the different ways of adaptation? Which way do you prefer and why? ● Why are some people better at others in adaptation? ● What to prepare to live abroad? ● What is reverse culture shock and how to manage it? 	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Chapter 12 from the coursepack 教学网 Movie: English Vinglish	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Final project	

A CV of 250-300 words and a high-resolution personal photo should also be provided

Bio:

Zheng Xuan is an Associate Professor at Peking University's School of Foreign Languages. She holds a PhD in English Applied Linguistics and a Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) from the University of Washington, where she developed expertise in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and language pedagogy.

Her research focuses on the intersection of language, culture, and education, with a particular emphasis on intercultural language teaching, teacher education, emotion and identity development. Zheng's work often adopts qualitative research methods and explores innovative teaching methodologies in intercultural language learning, aiming to overcome stereotypes and cultivate students' intercultural awareness and competence. She has published her findings in reputable academic journals such as the *Modern Language Journal* and presented at international conferences, contributing to the global discourse on language education. She serves as a council member for China's Association For Intercultural Communication, leading various teacher training workshops on intercultural language teaching and research for hundreds of university language teachers in China.

At Peking University, Zheng teaches courses in language and culture, TESOL methodologies, theory and practice of foreign language education, inspiring students with her passion for transformative language teaching and learning. She also mentors graduate students and early-career researchers, guiding them in their academic and professional development.

Prior to joining Peking University, Zheng gained extensive teaching and research experience during her time at the University of Washington, where she worked as a graduate instructor of College Composition and conducted research on language teacher identity and classroom practices. Her dedication to advancing language education has earned her recognition and awards for both teaching and research excellence.