SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY

SLU 105: – Introduction to American Culture and University Life
3 credits

Instructor:
Office:
Phone:
E-mail:
Face-to-face Office Hours:

Saint Leo University’s Commitment to Academic Excellence Statement (abbreviated)

Academic excellence is an achievement of balance and growth in mind, body, and spirit that develops a more effective and creative culture for students, faculty, and staff. It promotes integrity, honesty, personal responsibility, fairness, and collaboration at all levels of the university. At the level of students, excellence means achieving mastery of the specific intellectual content, critical thinking, and practical skills that develop reflective, globally conscious, and informed citizens ready to meet the challenges of a complex world.

Course Description:

This course is intended for international students who are entering a U.S. college. It focuses on improving international students’ cross-cultural competence and granting opportunities for analyzing complex social, moral, and academic issues that students will have to face while in the U.S. In addition it provides tools and strategies for students to analyze their own culture and compare it with new ones. As students learn more about themselves and others, the risk of cultural conflict and culture shock are decreased.

Prerequisite
University admission through the Bridge Program. This is a first-semester Bridge course. This is a mixed-proficiency course (intermediate and high-intermediate learners).

Required Texts


Course Goals
(1) To help students raising cross-cultural awareness and lessen the effects of cultural shock and cultural conflict.

(2) To develop healthy behaviors and attitudes to adjust to the new culture while maintaining their own cultural identity.

(3) To provide students with a safe environment to learn to navigate the U.S. academic world.

**Teaching Objectives**

**STUDENTS WILL:**

I. Be introduced to academic presentation strategies and conventions.

II. Develop effective language skills and reading comprehension strategies to analyze and assess course contents.

III. Engage in class discussions to identify American culture values and beliefs while comparing them with values and beliefs of their own culture.

IV. Explore strategies that support reflective writing and engage in journal writing

V. Will attend University events and share their observations in class discussions.

VI. Engage in developing appropriate questions to conduct a cross-cultural interview with mainstream American students, conduct this interview, and share outcomes.

VII. Be introduced to proposal writing process: meaning, key aspects of this genre, text structure.

VIII. Write a proposal for a mini-project to be implemented in their country of origin.

IX. Be introduced to the meaning and purpose of alternative forms of assessment.

VII. Be guided in the process of preparing an electronic portfolio.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

**STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:**

1. Design and deliver effective academic presentations supported with PowerPoint.

2. Demonstrate reading comprehension of academic texts at minimum of 74% accuracy for regular track and 84% accuracy for fast-track.

3. Analyze and assess course readings and make intercultural connections in order to actively engage in meaningful class discussions and journal writing on topics related to culture.

4. Write reflective journals that evidence their understanding and critical thinking skills as they compare and contrast their home and U.S. cultures.

5. Talk about their observations of specific social and academic events.
6. Design and conduct an interview on an assigned topic and present its outcomes.

7. Conceptualize, design, write up, and present a proposal of a community project to be implemented in their country of origin.

8. Compose a paper-based and electronic portfolios to showcase their learning outcomes and achievement of course objectives.

**Assignment Descriptions**

Students are required to sign up for an appointment with the university tutors. They will attach all drafts and pages that provide evidence of working with tutors to the final version of their written assignments. There will be a 10% deduction of the grade if drafts and proof of working with tutors are not submitted.

- **Reading Comprehension Quizzes (Unannounced):**

  There will be 4 not announced reading comprehension quizzes. This quizzes will address course reading consistent with the reading assignment schedule. Students in the regular track must provide 74% accuracy while students in the fast track must provide 84% accuracy when responding these quizzes.

- **Attendance to University Events and Attendance Log:**

  Attendance to at least 4 university events are required. A complete attendance log for each event must be submitted.

  - **My Country: Presentation with Information Session:**

    Students will prepare a Power Point presentation to introduce their home countries to peers and faculty.

  - **Reflective Journal:**

    Students will write three reflective journal entries. Two of those entries (first and last submissions) will be on assigned topics. The second entry will focus on topics of student’s choice. When selecting the second topic, students will think about issues or concerns they are facing in their new life as an international students at Saint Leo.

  - **Cross-Cultural Interview, Self-Analysis, and Reflection:**

    There are two parts to this assignment.

    For part one: Cross-Cultural Interview, students will conduct a cultural interview of someone from a different cultural and linguistic background. Students will write at least five questions that intrigue them with regards to the other culture; these questions may include topics related to cultural aspects discussed in class and addressed in the course readings such as: time, personal space, dress code, rituals and ceremonies, work and leisure systems, medicine and health, religious beliefs and practices, roles and status, gender, dating, social class, age appropriate activities, occupations, food preferences, and humanities and arts.
Students will organize the outcomes of the interview in a written text which will include: the interview questions and answers as well as a brief reflection about what has been learned from conducting the interview.

**Part two: Cultural Self Analysis**, students will answer the same questions as they asked their interviewees about themselves and include a brief reflection of what they have learned while doing the **Cultural Self Analysis**.

- **Global Leaders Community Project Proposal:**

  For this project students will identify a need that could be addressed in their countries of origin and will design and write a realistic community project proposal that could be implemented in the community.

- **Paper-Based and E-Class Portfolio:**

  Paper-Based Class Portfolio includes and exhibits all the assignments completed in this course. The E-Class Portfolio includes and exhibits all the assignments completed for this course in an electronic format (either in a memory stick or disc PC compatible).

**Assessment Outcomes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension Quizzes (4 quizzes)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Country: Presentation with Information Session</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journal (3 entries 15% each)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Cultural Interview, Self-Analysis, and Reflection</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Leaders Community Project Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation and Presentation of Paper-Based and E-Class Portfolio</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Scale (descriptions and percentage):**

A (94-100) = Exceptional
A- (90-93) = Superior
B + (87-89) = Excellent
B (84-86) = Very Good
B- (80-83) = Good
C+ (77-79) = Above Average
C (74-76) = Average
C- (70-73) = Below Average (a grade below this line means the course must be retaken)

D+ (67-69) = Marginal
D (60-66) = Poor
F (0-65) = Failure

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Attendance and Participation: Attendance to class and participation are key components of this course. The attendance will affect final grade in the following manner: 3 unexcused absences in Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes and 2 – for Tuesday/Thursday classes will result in 10% grade drop; university excused absences will not affect the course grade only if all assignments are submitted and all tests are taken. Each following unexcused absence will further reduce the grade with 3.5% for Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes and 5% for Tuesday/Thursday classes.

Late arrivals: The student is marked as tardy if he arrives 5-9 minutes after the beginning of the class. After 15 minutes a student will be considered absent.

Refer to the Attendance Policy in its entirety in the Saint Leo University Catalog.

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The student is expected to:

- Keep up with the work and maintain the progress with the rest of the class.
- Attend every class session! Class participation is extremely important to the practice of speaking and listening skills, and, therefore, attendance is calculated as part of your grade for the course.
- Provide documentation for official, excused absences to the academic advisor. Excessive absences will result in a reduced grade.
- Late assignments will have 10% of the total grade deducted for each day beyond the due date. The instructor may not consider a late assignment for grading if the assignment is submitted more than six days after the due date.
- Find out about missed work from a classmate BEFORE THE NEXT CLASS or from the instructor during office hours BEFORE THE NEXT CLASS. If you do miss a class for an official, excused absence, it is your personal responsibility to make up the work BEFORE THE NEXT CLASS.
- Do their own work! Any student suspected of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Academic Standards Committee.
Saint Leo University Core Values

**Excellence**
Saint Leo University is an educational enterprise. All of us, individually and collectively, work hard to ensure that our students develop the character, learn the skills, and assimilate the knowledge essential to become morally responsible leaders. The success of our University depends upon a conscientious commitment to our mission, vision, and goals.

**Community**
Saint Leo University develops hospitable Christian learning communities everywhere we serve. We foster a spirit of belonging, unity, and interdependence based on mutual trust and respect to create socially responsible environments that challenge all of us to listen, to learn, to change, and to serve.

**Tentative Course Schedule**
The 4 reading comprehension quizzes are **unannounced**, therefore, expect them any day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>In Class</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | • Course introduction and description  
  • What is culture?  
  • The United States Today (Shiraev & Boyd chapter 1) | *Bring your own definition of culture.  
  *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
  *Binder check |
| 2    | • Newcomer’s Checklist (Shiraev & Boyd chapter 3)  
  • Who was Martin Luther King?  
  • Collective Class Expectations  
  • Time Management (Shulman chapter 4) | *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
  *Bring your “Newcomer’s Checklist.”  
  *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
  *Bring your class schedule |
| 3    | • Library Orientation Session  
  • Overcoming Stress (Shiraev & Boyd chapter 4)  
  • Communicating with Professors (Shiraev & Boyd chapter 5)  
  • Negotiating American Culture (Shiraev & Boyd chapter 7) | *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
  *Binder check  
  *Bring your laptop to class.  
  *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class. |
| 4    | • Academic Integrity & Plagiarism (Shulman chapter 2)  
  • Plagiarism: Guest Speaker TBA  
  • Presentations | *My Country: Presentation with Information Session |
| 5 | Presentations  
 Dating in the US: Guest Speaker TBA  
 Gender Issues and Roles (Shulman chapter 6 and Shiraev & Boyd chapter 8)  
 Tentative Special Guest: CLASP  
 Visit to LRC | *Bring your ideas for Global Leaders Community Project Proposal  
 *Draft Journal # 1  
 *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class. |
|---|---|
| 6 | Difficult Decisions and Interpersonal Conflict (Shulman chapter 5)  
 Brainstorming ideas for Global Leaders projects  
 Campus Living (Shulman chapter 3)  
 Peer Pressure: Binge Drinking (Shulman chapter 11) | *Reflective Journal: Entry # 1  
 *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
 *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class. |
| 7 | Understanding Ethnicity, Race, and Religion in the U.S. (Shulman chapter 7 and Shiraev & Boyd chapter 9)  
 Sexual Harassment (Shulman chapter 8)  
 Online Activities TBA | *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
 *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and email them to your professor. |
| 8 | Interview Workshop:  
 Selecting Appropriate Questions for Cultural Interview & Interviewing Protocol  
 More on Academic Integrity & Plagiarism (Shulman chapter 9)  
 Global Leaders Project: Writing a proposal | *Draft Questions for Cross-Cultural Interview, Self-Analysis, and Reflection  
 Bring your laptops  
 *Draft Journal # 2  
 Bring your laptops  
 *Submit a class list of topics to work |
| 9 | Peer review of Global Leaders Proposals-Presentation and peer/class feedback.  
 U.S. Traditions & Holidays: Religious Holidays | *Draft of Global Leaders Community Project Proposal  
 Bring your laptops  
 *Reflective Journal: Entry # 2  
 *Students give brief presentation about their home country holidays and more important traditions |
| 10 | [Semester Break] | |
| 11 | Online Activities TBA  
 Understanding American Media (Shiraev & Boyd chapter 10)  
 Guest Speaker TBA | *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class. |
| 12 | Cultural Interview: Overview and Presentation of Lessons Learned  
 Cont. Cultural Interview: Overview and Presentation of Lessons Learned | *Cultural Interview, Self-Analysis, and Reflection |
| 13 | Workshop: Articulating the Portfolio  
 Social Adjustment and the Continuous Process of Cultural Adjustment (Shulman chapter 12) | *Bring your laptops  
 *Last day to submit your LOG with Extra-Curricular Activities |
| 14 | • Presentation of Global Leaders Project Proposal  
• Portfolio preparation & online | *Write down 3 things that impacted you the most from the readings on a piece of paper and bring it to class.  
*Global Leaders Community Project Proposal  
*Draft Journal # 3  
*Paper-Based and E-Class Portfolio  
*Reflective Journal: Entry #3 |
| 15 | • Portfolios presentations  
• Course wrap-up & review of topics covered  
• Final reflection | *Bring any questions you may still have about American culture and university life in the US. |
| 16 | Finals |  |
SCHEDULE AND GRADE ORGANIZER

Fill in this organizer and keep it up-to-date. It will be of great help to monitor deadlines and grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>Grade Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension Quizzed (4 quizzes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>My Country: Presentation with Information Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective Journal (3 journals)</td>
<td>Entry #1:</td>
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<td>Entry #2:</td>
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APPENDIX 1

TEMPLATE FOR FIRST JOURNAL ENTRY

STUDENT NAME:  

DATE:  

JOURNAL ENTRY # 1

TITLE:  New Beginnings

TOPIC:  My first days at Saint Leo and in the U.S.

NOTE FROM THE INSTRUCTOR:

This is your first journal entry. There are two goals in the first entry. On one hand, the main goal is to give you an opportunity to reflect upon your expectations, forthcoming challenges, and proactive approaches you may take during your first semester at Saint Leo University. On the other hand, your honest and mindful responses will help me learn more about yourself and, therefore help you the most I possibly can.

Given that many of you may have not written a journal entry before, I would like to offer you some help and guidance by providing writing prompts. For this first entry, I would like for you to respond the following questions and prompts in a prosaic format. Write at least one paragraph per question. Please, when reflecting upon the items below and writing your answers, be honest, responsible, and thorough. Please, write one paragraph answers for each the following questions.

1) Tell about your reasons for coming to the U.S. and particularly choosing Saint Leo University.

2) What do you expect to get from this class?

3) What do you expect from your professor?

4) How do you think you can get the most out of this class (meaning learning the most)?

5) What challenges do you anticipate in making your best effort to learn the most out of this class?

6) What are the affirmative steps you intend to take to overcome these challenges?

7) What do you think will be helpful for you to learn the most? Please, list at least three items for your professor’s consideration.

YOU MUST ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO RECEIVE CREDIT.

TEMPLATE FOR LAST JOURNAL ENTRY

STUDENT NAME:  

DATE:  

10
JOURNAL ENTRY # 5

TITLE: Looking Back … Looking Forward

TOPIC: As I finish my first semester at Saint Leo and in the U.S. and get ready to begin my second semester, I take a reflective look at what I think worked really well and at what I think it could have worked better.

NOTE FROM THE INSTRUCTOR:

As your first semester at Saint Leo is approaching its end, you have the opportunity to look back and reflect upon your achievements, challenges, and overall experiences. This journal entry will focus on how you lived your first semester and plan your second semester. Take this opportunity to elaborate on your life experiences (academic and personal), your challenges (and how you overcame them), your opportunities to learn and to develop new skills, and your plan(s) to approach the next semester drawing from the lessons learned. As the semester progresses and I get to know all of you better, together we will construct a list of “cannot miss reflection items” that will guide the writing of your last reflective journal entry. See rubric.
APPENDIX 2

TEMPLATE FOR STUDENT-SELECTED TOPICS

STUDENT NAME: ___________________________ DATE: __________

JOURNAL ENTRY # 2

TITLE:

TOPIC:

REASON FOR CHOOSING THIS TOPIC:

OUTLINE: Fill in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write 2-3 Similarities, Differences, and/or Challenges</th>
<th>Lessons Learned (write one per similarity, difference, and/or challenge you wrote in the first column)</th>
<th>Future Actions, Implications (write one per similarity, difference, and/or challenge you wrote in the first and second columns)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
<td>Example:</td>
<td>Example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference: concept of time</td>
<td>In the U.S., people are very punctual. Lack of punctuality can be considered rude.</td>
<td>Given the importance of punctuality in the future I plan to arrive to meetings and classes at least 10 minutes earlier. Therefore, I will have to be mindful of this when planning my day.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NARRATIVE:

Using the information above (topic, reason(s) for choosing this topic, and outline) write the narrative section of your journal. You may use the information provided as your topic and reason(s) for its selection to write your introduction. The information you provided in your table can be used to write the body of your journal. Don’t forget to finalize with a conclusion.
SAMPLE of Department Activities: Spring 2015 Events: The Department of Language Studies and the Arts

1/28  Literature for Lunch, Larry Baker, 12:30pm, TECO Hall
1/31  SASS at Kumquat Festival, 9:30am, Dade City
2/2   “Last Man Standing: Sex and Survival in the Interracial Apocalyptic” Talk by Dr. Jacqueline Foertsch, 2:30pm, TECO Hall
2/5   Fine Arts Building Open House, 3:30pm, FAB
2/5   Margarita Glebov, Piano Recital, 7pm, Selby Auditorium
2/17  Speaker Series, Bobbie Gottschalk, 7pm, SCC Boardrooms (Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow 2/16-2/19)
3/5-3/8 Good Night, Desdemona (Good Morning, Juliet), Spring Play, TBA
3/26  Speaker Series, Darryl Strawberry, 7pm, TBA
3/31  New Moon Concert Series: Spring Sing Choral Concert, 7pm, SCC Boardrooms
4/7   Spring Student Art Show, 4-5:30, Fine Arts Building
4/7   Sandhill Review Launch, 6-8pm, TBA
4/14  New Moon Concert Series: “Saint Leo City Limits” Just the FACTS, 5pm, SCC Boardrooms
5/16  Sandhill Review Writers Retreat, 9am-6pm, TECO
### Personal Data Form

Please complete this form. Print Legibly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mr/Mrs/Ms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nickname (how you like to be called)</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Name</td>
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<td>Phone Cell- Optional</td>
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<td>E-Mail (Required)</td>
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By my signature I confirm that I have read the syllabus and understand the responsibilities and duties associated with this course and that using other students’ work products from former classes or this class is plagiarism.

Signature & Date: __________________________________________

I hereby grant permission to have my documents duplicated and made available for review by accrediting bodies and the State of Florida.

Signature & Date: __________________________________________