

The Embodiment of Intercultural Communication through Course Syllabi

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Abstract: This study explores how the teaching of intercultural communication is embodied through syllabi in the U.S. classroom. A syllabus is the initial communicative tool for the instructor to display his or her central concerns of the subject, and this is a personal, or a political, statement of the instructor's academic stance in approaching the specific communication issues and views. Through emails and an online search, this study collected and reviewed 90 intercultural communication syllabi. Based on three major research paradigms—social science, interpretive, and critical, we coded key words and assignment types to make sense of these syllabi. The result shows that the majority of the syllabi allow students to understand intercultural communication through practice, self-reflection, and participation. Moreover, “practical” assignments were often adopted if interpretive or critical pedagogies were applied. It is also worth noting that exams were still a popular means of assessment despite instructors' awareness of the importance of increasing students' everyday intercultural experiences. This study reveals that most instructors take a context-based approach in teaching intercultural communication and seven types of assignments are commonly adopted in an intercultural communication class.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, syllabus, instructional development, teaching ideas, research paradigms

1. Introduction

The rationale of the syllabus is one element that has not been explored extensively in the field of teaching intercultural communication. A syllabus introduces students to various information including, but not limited to, the instructor's contact information, course objectives, teaching materials, student evaluations, course policies, and a tentative weekly schedule. A syllabus is the initial communicative tool for the instructor to display his or her central concerns of the subject, and this is a personal and political statement of the instructor's academic stance in approaching the specific communication issues and views. In other words, a syllabus, compared with the choice of the textbooks, reveals more about how intercultural communication is taught and understood in the U.S. college-level classroom.

On the whole, the textbooks that are commonly adopted to teach intercultural communication at the college level emphasize the general-specific integration—general theories and concepts are introduced in the context of intercultural communication with specific cultural snapshots, international figures' voices, local students' stories, news events, and so on (Hall, 2005; Lustig & Koester, 2012, Martin & Nakayama, 2013; Neuliep, 2015; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2013; Sorrells, 2013; Ting-Toomey & Chung 2012). Since the majority of the textbooks aim to provide a comprehensive knowledge of intercultural communication in order to fit as many instructors' needs as possible, the choice of the textbooks is not a sufficient index to uncover how intercultural communication is

conceptualized and taught in class. Thus, we believe that examining syllabi instead of textbooks can reveal instructors' perspectives of intercultural communication and their alignments of student learning objectives.

What should be included in an intercultural communication syllabus has been discussed in several directions. A context-based approach, advocated by Broome (1986), aims to combine the culture-specific focus with the culture-general focus to help students understand the relationships between culture and communication. Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Wiseman (1991) suggest that instructors design a course in intercultural communication to evaluate students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral understandings of this topic. They also provide a thorough list of supplemental materials that can be used in classroom teaching. Keshishian (2005) proposes a historical-materialist approach in teaching culture and communication, for cultural activities are not independent from economic systems. Martin and Davis (2009) further elaborate the current interest in incorporating whiteness studies into intercultural communication. Two trends have been observed from the current literature of teaching intercultural communication—first, the range of intercultural communication has been expanded from the distinction of cultural differences between the U.S. and other foreign countries to the concern of the powerless, subordinate, minority, and marginalized groups in various contexts; second, instructors from different research paradigms (mainly, social science, interpretive, and critical) have their own agenda to establish a systematic way of studying culture. These differences can be observed by the rationale in the syllabus texts. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to describe how intercultural communication instructors use a course syllabus to embody their ways of seeing culture and teaching culture. The research question that guided this study was as follows: How is the teaching of intercultural communication embodied through syllabi in the U.S. classroom?

Specifically, this paper views course syllabi as the guide for students to navigate the body of knowledge in intercultural communication. In this study, we examined the coherence of course objectives and the corresponding assessments. We paid particular attention to the following aspects in a syllabus: (1) whether the course syllabus was designed to establish/follow a sole research paradigm or based on a synthetic approach; (2) whether the syllabus took a research-heavy direction or a practice-based manner in teaching intercultural communication; (3) what types of assignments were given and what percentage of each assignment was allotted; and (4) whether the course objectives were able to be achieved by the assignments.

2. Literature Review

This research is in the intersection of two scholarships—intercultural communication education and syllabus studies. The recent literature in both fields will be discussed to provide the theoretical context for the current study.

2.1. Teaching Diversity and Intercultural Communication Courses

Intercultural communication is one of the courses serving well the purpose of diversity education. One of the goals of implementing diversity education in the university's general education curriculum is to increase students' cultural awareness and cultural competency (Bennett & Salonen, 2007; Otten, 2003). Two major approaches are commonly adopted to reach the goal: (1) to increase courses with

specific emphasis on cultural perspectives in the curriculum, such as Intercultural Communication, Global Communication, and Communication Ethics and Cultural Diversity; and (2) to add a cultural assignment to a general education course, such as a speech presentation on a cultural issue in a public speaking class, and a cultural project in a media production course. According to Carrell (1997), the effectiveness of the second approach is questionable. Based on student self-reports, the goal is not easily achieved in a single assignment without proper contextual preparation. Students do not report significant changes in cultural awareness, skills, and attitudes after taking a course with the second approach. In other words, cognitive, affective, and behavioral knowledge of culture has to be established through a comparatively long period.

Metzger, Olaniran, and Futoran (1995) support this notion in their research by demonstrating that students have significant progress if course literature (theory) and individual integration (with actual cultural groups) are united continuously in a semester-long period. While a creative, “practical” method is encouraged, instructors in the past might not design the course in this way in reality. Beebe and Biggers (1986) conducted a survey to examine the overview of how intercultural communication courses were taught in the United States in terms of the frequency, the approach, the assessment, and the content. They found that lecture was the most commonly used teaching method, and exams were the most popular assessment tool. Since Beebe and Biggers’ survey, we have seen a positive development in which intercultural communication instructors are willing to share and adopt various teaching ideas or assessments to their course. For example, to assure that a “practical” approach can be easily applied, Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Wiseman (1991) have developed a sample syllabus, and other scholars have suggested several teaching ideas concerning how to facilitate the understanding of theories and concepts by creating intercultural experience both in and outside of the classroom. Most activities are designed for single sections, and some are unit ideas for students to develop in a longer period of time, such as the use of visual images and film clips (Alvaray, 2013; Cook, 2014; Erlandson, 2012), situation simulation and reflection (De La Mare, 2013; Peeples, Hall, & Seiter, 2012), and service learning and campus reach-out activities (Driskill, 2007; Zhang & Merolla, 2007). It is worth noting that long-term projects or activities take more percentage in the overall grade, while single class activities are not usually included into students’ final grade, and they mostly serve to elaborate a concept or stimulate idea exchanges in class.

Another factor that influences classroom teaching is instructors’ training in different theoretical approaches. The common research paradigms in communication can be divided into three main camps: social science, interpretive, and critical (Hall, 2005; Martin & Nakayama, 2013). The differing views of the paradigms are determined by researchers’ takes on communication as a subject in social science or in humanities, as a means to improve the effectiveness or to realize social justice, and as the embodiment of their beliefs in a single truth (the right answer) or in multiple realities. These three research paradigms develop their own research agendas and emphases, which become core to the theoretical foundations in their respective traditions. Specifically, a research paradigm reveals how a researcher/instructor approaches culture and intercultural communication.

From a social scientific view, culture is predictable, and cultural variables can be analyzed in a systematic way to eventually find a possible, practical, effective solution to the communication problem. The interpretive paradigm regards culture as a dynamic community with patterns, rituals, and norms, which can be identified by close participant observation. The purpose of the interpretive approach is to describe cultural phenomena as to understand the meaning from the native’s perspective.

Traced back to the Marxist tradition, a critical paradigm views culture as a contested zone in which dominant and minority cultural groups compete to define and change cultural artifacts and social values. Social change is the ultimate goal for this paradigm. These three research paradigms in intercultural communication are categorized based on how culture is conceptualized, and will be scrutinized further in the examination of course syllabi. Further debate among scholars that complicates paradigmatic challenges and problems is mainly meant to develop meaningful research programs and theorizing culture-based communication issues, which is beyond the scope of this paper (for details, see Gudykunst, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 2010).

2.2. Syllabus Research

In general, an ideal intercultural communication course should contain a context-based approach (Broome, 1986; Carrell, 1997), balancing between theories and practices, regardless of the instructor's take for his or her research agenda. However, it is not clear how individual instructors compose their syllabus to convey the central concerns of intercultural communication. To turn the emphasis to syllabi, we will briefly review current syllabus studies to position our own research. Syllabus research has been applied across a variety of different disciplines and many researchers provide suggestions as to what the syllabus should include (McKeachie, 1986; Wittig, Perkins, Balough, Whitley, & Keith-Spiegel, 1999), how a syllabus should be organized (Becker & Calhoun, 1999; Matejka & Kurke, 1994; Smith, 1993), and presented (Thompson, 2007). While researchers show their concerns on different aspects of a syllabus, they agree that a syllabus must serve the following functions: (1) a clear navigation for students, (2) a reliable contract between the instructor and students, and (3) an overview of the course purpose along with aligning assignments to ensure course objectives are assessed.

Researchers suggest that a clear syllabus provides students with a comprehensive understanding of the expertise and skill set of the instructor (Habaneck, 2005), describes instructor expectations for learning (Baecker, 1998; Becker & Calhoun, 1999; Parkes & Harris, 2002; Smith & Razzouk, 1993), provides course goals (Matejka & Kurke, 1994), and lists formal policies, such as attendance and technology rules (Wittig et al., 1999). As guidance on an instructor's expectations for the course, a syllabus is a communicative device that sets the tone for the course. It is an effective presentation of both instructors' thoughts and answers to students' anticipated questions. Matejka and Kurke (1994) offer a metaphor to view the syllabus as an exercise in "preventive medicine"—any information provided can save time later. While it is common for instructors to exert their authority through the rules and procedures detailed in the syllabus, Singham (2005) notes that the authoritarian tone implied in a majority of syllabi demonstrates a lack of trust between teacher and student, "By devising complex general rules to cope with any and all anticipated behavior, we tend to constrain, alienate, and dehumanize students, and we remove a great deal of the enjoyment from the learning experience" (p. 56).

For a course that emphasizes interactions between teacher and student, the possible dictatorship tone revealed in instructors' syllabi should be avoided.

Additionally, researchers have reviewed the syllabus in context of a reliable contract between instructor and student (Habaneck, 2005; Matejka & Kurke, 1994; Parkes & Harris, 2002; Smith & Razzouk, 1993). Habaneck (2005) noted that the syllabus is a permanent record of curriculum and stated, "the information that designates the responsibilities of all parties in the learning process must be included" (p. 62). Parkes and Harris (2002) described the function of the contract as guiding the behavior of both

the instructor and student on expectations during the term of the contract by outlining responsibilities of students and of the instructor in such areas as attendance, assignments, examinations, and other policy requirements within a course. Focusing the syllabus as a contract allows a student to check his or her progress throughout a semester, decide whether to continue a class, and indicate how a student should prepare for the class.

Finally, a major function of the syllabus that researchers discuss is the focus on listing course content and assignments. Syllabus content suggestions vary and include connecting learning outcomes to assignments (Habaneck, 2005), creating a clear teaching philosophy (Parkes & Harris, 2002), and detailing the expectations for learning (Smith & Razzouk, 1993). Habaneck (2005) noted that a syllabus should indicate what a student has learned and list what a student should be able to do by the end of a semester. Additionally, Smith and Razzouk (1993) suggest an instructor should reference course objectives several times within a semester to help students connect assignments to course goals. Intercultural communication has been included as part of diversity education and it has potential to grow further in the field of communication. By reviewing what a good syllabus should look like, we set up the standard to examine the intercultural communication syllabi in this study. Based on previous research on these two fields, we aim to highlight the importance of the long-neglected syllabus to understand what has been done in intercultural communication education and the benefits of making good use of the syllabus to communicate with students.

3. Methodology

In order to reach the goal of this study, a document analysis method was used to collect necessary data in three consecutive stages. The first stage aimed to request current syllabi from international communication instructors and initially reduce the data size; the second stage aimed to establish the criteria in analyzing data, and code the collected syllabi to seek for meanings; and the last stage aimed to test the reliability of the research readings.

3.1. Stage One

The qualitative data collection technique we utilized for this study was document analysis. Document analysis is a systematic process for reviewing and evaluating documents that provides insight, meaning, and deep context into a research problem as well as conceptual understanding of the values and beliefs of participants involved in a research topic (Bowen, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Whereas document analysis is often a complement to other research methods, it may have immense value solely for studies within an interpretive paradigm, or in historical and cross-cultural research. In this study, intercultural communication course syllabi are the data sources to understand how intercultural communication is embodied through syllabi in the US classroom.

Syllabi collection took place between January 2014 and March 2014. Syllabi sources were located either through public searches on the Internet or from requests sent out through an e-mail listserv of intercultural communication interest group members from the National Communication Association and Central States Communication Association organizations. The number of valid email addresses was 316. We collected a total of 90 syllabi (18 online, 72 through email); however, 19 syllabi were dropped immediately due to vague or non-existent descriptions, learning objectives, and/or

assignments and another seven were dropped during the coding process due to either graduate status courses or vague descriptions. In total, 64 syllabi were examined for this study. We kept the identities of all participants and institutions confidential by assigning each syllabus a number.

3.2. Stage Two

We used the constant comparative method to code the data by emerging themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We followed four systematic steps. First, we openly coded each syllabus by taking notation of the major elements located in a majority of the syllabi. This allowed us to define categories, or units of information, through comparison. After we openly coded all 64 syllabi, we constructed a protocol to refine our coding process. Altheide (1996) noted, “a protocol is a list of questions, items, categories, or variables that guide data collection from documents” (p. 26). This protocol helped guide us to capture the right definition and meanings related to the different paradigms of the intercultural classroom. Within our protocol, we developed seven categories, which included course purpose, learning objectives, textbooks, exam percentage, reflection assignments, research assignments, and miscellaneous classroom/homework activities. Once the protocol was completed, we re-coded the 64 syllabi.

After examining each of the seven categories, each researcher would independently code the syllabus as follows: (1) critical, (2) social science, (3) interpretive, (4) combination of two paradigms, or (5) none of the above, which might include aspects of all three paradigms or too vague to tell. We took approximately 1/3 of our sample, which resulted in 21 syllabi, and compared our paradigm coding. We agreed on six of the 21 syllabi. Disagreements led us into the third step of the data analysis process where we revisited categories and further defined their properties by developing links between the relationships used to classify the data. As Altheide (1996) noted, a document analysis protocol should continue to emerge over several drafts. Thus, the data were re-examined to ensure that it was consistent with the redefined properties. Again, each researcher re-coded the data separately. After re-coding, we compared codes for all 64 syllabi. In regards to the 64 syllabi, we disagreed on the assigned paradigm codes for 12 syllabi. Again, we refined the document analysis protocol in the final step and we came to the result reported in this paper. For specific criteria for each research paradigm, please review Table 1. For a more detailed view, see appendix.

Table 1. Paradigm Criteria for Coding Purposes

Social Scientific Research Paradigm Elements:
1. Course purpose and/or objectives specifically state the theoretical foundation of the course was based on a social science perspective by mentioning the application of intercultural theory through data collection and analysis;
2. The emphasis of the solutions to the barriers of cross-cultural communication;
3. The written application of psychological models to a specific intercultural group, which acts as an investigation into a specific communication case study;
4. The envisioning of students as researchers to conduct a research paper that aimed to use systematic and social-scientific approaches to the intercultural communication problems; and

5. The emphasis of competence, strategies, and effectiveness in international and cross-cultural business settings in order to make a student successful in his/her career.
Interpretive Research Paradigm Elements:
1. Course purpose and/or objectives specifically state the theoretical foundation of the course was based on an interpretive perspective, which examines the patterns, rituals, and norms within a culture through personal observation;
2. The emphasis of the combined methods of observing, describing, and analyzing as the process of understanding cultures, which allows students to engage in cultural experiences as an observer to better understand the influence of culture;
3. The recognition of multiple realities and the encouragement of “native” cultural lenses in studying cultural differences;
4. The integration of “practical” assignments that involved interactions beyond the classroom and/or cultural experiences on campus or within the community. Direct examples involve assignments related to participant observation, dyadic and group interviews, and cultural experiences; and
5. The retrospective reflection on one’s own culture in context to course materials and intercultural theory.
Critical Research Paradigm Elements:
1. Course purpose and/or objectives specifically state the theoretical foundation of the course was based on a critical perspective, which focuses on social injustice and social change;
2. The expansion of the scope of intercultural communication to various forms of oppression, domination, or discrimination in a variety of contexts, including gender, sexual orientation, age, and class;
3. The revelation of the instructor’s teaching philosophy, positionality, and social identities that shapes the specific course;
4. The emphasis of students’ reflections on gender, race, social justice, praxis, and power inequality.

3.3. Stage Three

In order to demonstrate the reliability of our qualitative findings, we employed an audit trail technique, which allows an outside researcher to metaphorically audit both the research process and product to attest to the dependability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We enlisted a qualitative researcher to conduct an audit by examining our detailed records that included the research questions, methodological choices, documents, findings, and conclusions. After the review, the outside researcher established that this study’s findings were credible and dependable.

4. Findings

4.1. Research Paradigms in U.S. Intercultural Communication Courses

In this section, we aimed to answer whether instructors adopt a sole research paradigm or a synthetic

approach in designing an intercultural communication course and how research and practice of intercultural communication have been integrated in the syllabi. The results of this study demonstrated that most intercultural communication classes do not focus on merely one research paradigm. Within the 64 syllabi, four took a pure social scientific approach, 18 took an interpretive perspective, and four used a critical approach. There were 14 syllabi that combined both the social scientific and interpretive lenses in teaching intercultural communication. Another 16 syllabi were categorized as the combination of both interpretive and critical perspectives. Among various combinations, it is interesting to note that there is no combination between social science and critical paradigms. Eight syllabi showed lack of a clear index of their theoretical paradigms. Additionally, it is important to note that some syllabi were positioned as a specific paradigm in regards to the course description or learning objectives; however, assignments did not necessarily do the best at reflecting the approach.

A pure social scientific and a pure critical syllabus were rare in our collection, which implied that the trend of teaching this course was more toward understanding and immersive learning, and students' personal experience of intercultural communication was highly encouraged. According to our collected syllabi, a pure social scientific approach in teaching intercultural communication usually emphasized students' research ability, with the expectation that students could play an objective role in analyzing the intercultural communication problem under study. The emphasis of the theoretical comprehension, not the actual cultural experience, was the distinctive feature of a social science-driven course syllabus. A pure critical intercultural communication course usually had emphases on the scholarship of critical cultural studies and the continuous power issues and group conflicts within the U.S. society. Such a direction may lead the course to be more allied with courses such as whiteness studies, social justice, and race, gender, and ethnicity, and so on. The implication of "foreign" elements was hardly seen in a syllabus of this kind.

Most syllabi adopting the interpretive approach in understanding intercultural communication contained more interactive activities in class and aimed to train students to observe, describe, and analyze the process of understanding cultures. The recognition of multiple realities and the encouragement of "native" cultural lenses in studying cultural differences were another commonly shared feature. Syllabus 7, for example, emphasized students' ability in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving that requires in-depth interactions with people and artifacts of a culture. Three assignments—cultural identity analysis, cultural representation analysis, and cultural exchange analysis—align with the interpretive paradigm to dig the "native" meanings by interviewing others or reflecting on one's own experience. Due to the match of the interpretive criteria 3, 4, and 5, we labeled syllabus 7 to be an interpretive syllabus.

Based on the same method of scrutinizing, we labeled 14 syllabi as a combination of social science and interpretive approaches. For instance, in the section of course goals, Syllabus 27 stated, "[t]his survey course is designed to introduce students to a range of scholarship about intercultural communication..., we will first examine the cognitive processes involved with communication across cultures," and it mentions, "other deep psychological and cognitive mechanism often shape the way we approach someone of another culture" (Syllabus 27). The above description matched criteria 3 and 4 of the social science paradigm. While the goal-setting had a strong social scientific flavor, it contained two assignments (about 16% of the total grade) that required the interpretive approach—family history assignment and movie analysis. Through interviewing a family elder and a counterpart about how the family had settled down in the U.S., students were required to compare and reflect on

their interview results. The movie analysis assignment was designed as a group project, where students were required to watch and analyze the film with intercultural communication concepts and theories. These assignments applied the interpretive learning process of observing, describing, and analyzing, and aimed to fulfill the course objective to “gain an understanding of the ways in which major U.S. cultural groups differ from each other” (Syllabus 27).

Another example of a combinational approach to teaching intercultural communication explicitly divides course objectives into two aspects. The first aspect of Syllabus 26 addressed the social scientific approach, which aimed to understand “variables” that “affect the success or failure of an intercultural communication.” The second aspect of Syllabus 26 emphasized the interpretive paradigm and proposed to “enhance mutual understanding and harmony between people from different cultures.” To reach the goal of the first aspect, the instructor designed several units to cover the following issues: (a) cultural assumptions, (b) cultural variability, (c) perceptual and cognitive orientations, (d) adaptation, (e) nonverbal codes, and (f) intergroup contact. Readings assigned during these weeks usually viewed culture as measurable and predictable, such as *Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity and Identity Implications of Influence Goals*. Quizzes and exams (50% in total) were the major evaluation in this regard.

On the other hand, Syllabus 26 also emphasized the interpretive approach relating to assigned readings. For example, Edward Hall’s theory of contextuality was studied in the week of discussing different cultural messages. A group project that required students to interact with people in another country was the attempt to increase the opportunity of participating in intercultural communication in everyday life. This group project was worth 25% of a student’s final grade. Based on the above indexes, we categorized the syllabus as a combination of social science and interpretive approaches.

Similarly, when we identified both interpretive and critical elements in a syllabus, we categorized the syllabus as the combination of both approaches. A typical syllabus in this category usually contained a strong participatory approach to understanding different cultures and a broader concern about racial/gender/social class inequality within the U.S. society. The course objectives of Syllabus 45 were summarized as follows:

1. The instructor encourages students to participate in campus-wide or community-based intercultural activities by alerting the events taking place during the semester;
2. Students are guided to develop “understanding of the role that identity plays in intercultural communication, . . . and how cultural rules affect communication”; and
3. The issues of historically marginalized groups in the U.S. will be investigated in terms of class, gender, racial prejudice.

This course had a lower percentage of quizzes and exams—only 12.5% of the final grade. The emphasis of course evaluation was on an intercultural communication experience independent project (43.75%), aiming to increase students’ participation in everyday intercultural events. The comparatively low percentage on standard tests and exams was another notable feature in interpretive- and critical-oriented syllabi. Written assignments, reflection papers, or independent projects that allowed students to think critically were generally preferred in these two paradigms.

4.2. Assignments of Intercultural Communication Courses

While assignments varied with each syllabus, there were specific assignment themes that emerged in

this study. The most common form of assessment identified in the document analysis of intercultural communication syllabi was formalized testing. All but five syllabi had some component of formal examination noted in the course syllabus. For the 59 syllabi that included formal examination, the percentage of weight held by this type of assessment ranged from 12.5% to 82%. The average percentage for exams within an intercultural communication course was 40.84%. Additionally, the percentage for an exam category varied by each research paradigm (see Table 2).

Table 2. Research Paradigm and Exam Percentage

Syllabus Types	Average Tests and Exams Percentage
Social Science	46.75%
Interpretive	31.02%
Critical	32.5%
Social Science & Interpretive	45.15%
Interpretive & Critical	34.06%

While exams were the most commonly identifiable assignment given in intercultural communication courses, there were a variety of other assignments outlined in the 64 intercultural communication course syllabi. The assignments derived from the syllabi examined in this study can be divided into the following categories: (1) identity and reflection (35 entries), (2) interactions with people with diverse cultures (33 entries), (3) media analysis (23 entries), (4) event or activity participation (16 entries), (5) research paper (14 entries), (6) foreign culture report (10 entries), and (7) situation simulation (8 entries). One assignment might be cross-listed in two or more categories. For example, if an assignment required students to work in a team and interview people from a foreign country in order to report the country of their interest, it would be counted in categories (2) and (6). For a brief description of the types of student assignments and approaches, please review Table 3.

Table 3. Typical Student Assignment Types

Assignment	Brief Description	Paradigm Approaches
Identity and Reflection Journals/Papers	A writing exercise that aims to prepare students to think critically about how their identities shape their own cultural perspective.	Interpretive Critical
Interactions	Interviews, conversational partners, or group dialogues with non-U.S. citizens, a family member, an assigned guest, or a peer student of international origin.	Interpretive Critical
Media Analysis	A movie, news, documentary, or book analysis. While, assignments varied, students were asked to examine American media in relation to a	Interpretive Critical

	foreign film, relate specific concepts from media to social injustice, or apply course concepts to a film or a book.	
Activity or Event Participation	An assignment requiring students to have an intercultural experience outside of the classroom.	Social Scientific Interpretive Critical
Research Paper	Students conduct a research paper, which may include the collection of data, individually or with a group.	Social Scientific Interpretive
Foreign Culture Report	A paper requiring research of a foreign country's culture in various aspects.	Interpretive Critical
Situational Simulation	In-class activities that challenge students to think about the impact of communication with people deriving from various cultures.	Social Scientific Interpretive

The assignment type, identity and reflection, usually took the form of a writing exercise, including weekly journals, cultural identity paper, cultural artifact analysis, and critical reflection. This type of writing exercise aims to prepare students to think critically about how their identities shape their own cultural perspective. Students are requested to analyze their own family history, their own cultural heritage, or their identities that influence their values and interpersonal relationships. This was a popular assignment seen in interpretive and critical paradigms. For instance, the interpretive Syllabus 5 provided the instructor's expectations for a journal assignment by noting that students needed to fully comprehend the course concept(s), to apply them to a real world experience, and to reflect about how and what can be related to students' future life experiences. Syllabus 51 was an example of a combination of interpretive and critical approaches and this syllabus took an applied interpretive approach to reading responses through a blog assignment, which directed students to create a blog and share their blog with the course.

The assignment type, interactions with people from different cultures, included a variety of activities, such as interviewing a non-U.S. citizen, a family member, an assigned guest, or a peer student; pairing with an international student or a conversation partner; and group dialogues on a cultural issue to present different perspectives. The interview assignments commonly took an interpretive or critical approach. For instance, Syllabus 9 provided this interpretive description, "You will interview an individual of an ethnicity other than your own. During this interview (which should be more of a conversation), you should discuss the individual's perception of his or her own culture and the similarities and differences between you and the interviewee" (Syllabus 9). The "native" view of the interviewee was expected in the assignment evaluation. Additionally, Syllabus 42 was an example of a combination of interpretive and critical approaches and this syllabus took a more critical approach with the international friendship description:

Each student will conduct an in-depth interview of a minority group person. The oral history project utilizes interpersonal skills, promotes cross-cultural understanding,

generates knowledge, and enhances our understanding of another's experience. This assignment brings to life voices, which might otherwise remain silent. Studying and recording the communication of ordinary people invites us to listen to the margins of discourse and to give voice to muted groups. The interview investigates the community, family, history, stories, religion, social relationships, art, music food, and dress norms of the group member. (Syllabus 42)

Although Syllabus 9 and Syllabus 42 contained similar assignments, the objectives revealed different paradigmatic emphases by how the instructors described the nature of the assignments.

The third popular type of assignment was media analysis, which varied the most across the syllabi. All the following were included in this group: movie analysis, news analysis, book analysis, cultural presentation, snapshots, and documentary analysis. Some assignments asked students to compare and contrast an American film with a foreign film, others directed students to specific concepts relating to social injustice, and yet other assignments required students to apply course concepts to a film or a book. For example, Syllabus 5, which took an interpretive approach, asked students to "highlight how viewing this movie, through trained and developed 'cultural lenses,' can give viewers a richer understanding of both the movie and the topics/theories you discuss."

Intercultural experiences outside of the classroom were assignments required in some intercultural communication courses. For instance, Syllabus 36, which took a combination of interpretive and social science approaches, stated that students would be given several opportunities throughout the semester to attend at least two cultural events. In this course, students were required to complete a report or a journal to describe and relate the experience to course content. Some instructors would list the campus-wide activities or attach the link for students to choose from various cultural events. Additionally, service-learning components of courses were experientially based. For example, Syllabus 20, an interpretive syllabus, requested students to visit one of local retirement homes with a group of fellow students as a cultural service-learning project. The purpose of this project aimed to engage a neglected subcultural group in conversation.

Some instructors required students to conduct a research paper individually or with a group. Social science research-oriented projects tended to expect students to complete a paper including a literature review or article review. Three research projects emphasized the interpretive approach in collecting data, which incorporated either an ethnographic approach or a loosely-structured interview. Two autoethnography essay assignments are found in Syllabus 54 and Syllabus 57, which took a more critical approach.

Moreover, several syllabi included a culture or country report that took an interpretive or critical approach. For instance, an interpretive syllabus, Syllabus 20, asked students to research the culture of a particular country by informing the audience on culture-specific items, such as food, relationship aspects, business interactions, and other cultural practices. Students were reminded of avoiding stereotyping the country of their choice, and were encouraged to "move beyond what most people know about the country" to dig for hidden meanings.

Finally, in-class simulations took mostly an interpretive approach and were generally described as activities in the class that would challenge students to think about the impact of communication with people deriving from various cultures. Syllabus 31 took a combination of interpretive and social

science approaches and this syllabus noted that in-class simulations requested that students participate in class exercises, group activities, impromptu performances, and so on, to better understand the values, beliefs, and behaviors of people from other cultures.

Simulations sometimes took place in the form of a workshop, which required students to create a program to train a group of people on concepts related to communicating with people of different cultures. Syllabus 41, which took an interpretive and critical approach, described this activity as preparation for future employment by stating the following: "In the future, you may find yourself having the opportunity to speak before or train groups of people who will be encountering other cultures either in the U.S. or while traveling or working overseas." The purpose of the workshop was to help students anticipate a possible scenario at work and know how to deal with it.

5. Discussion

After examining the intercultural communication syllabi, we found that instructors usually implicitly claimed an academic stance in designing the course syllabus. It could be shown in the course descriptions, course objectives, textbooks, assignments, and weekly schedule. Most syllabi were designed based on a solely interpretive approach, the combination of social science and interpretive paradigms, or the combination of interpretive and critical paradigms. Our use of the research paradigms to examine the instructors' vision of intercultural communication aimed to understand how this course is conceptualized to help classroom teaching and learning. It was not used to claim which paradigm is better than the other.

Instructors intended to incorporate interactive assignments and/or encourage students to understand cultures from the natives' perspectives. The intentions were embodied in various course activities, such as interviewing a non-US citizen, participating in intercultural events and reporting the experience, analyzing a movie, leading a workshop to discuss an intercultural issue, and so on. It showed that teaching intercultural communication was different from teaching a theory-based course in which the conventional teaching style can be lecture. The variety of course activities required a more interactive classroom for teaching intercultural communication, which also implied that the instructor should not adopt an authoritarian tone in course design.

It is important to note that some syllabi were positioned as a specific paradigm in the course description or learning objectives; however, assignments did not necessarily do the best at reflecting the approach. The inconsistency between the claimed learning objectives and the assignments was one of the biggest flaws we observed in this research. The importance of alignment should be emphasized in a syllabus. For example, several syllabi aimed to increase students' everyday experience of intercultural communication, but not many assignments addressed this aspect. When the assignments that encouraged students to explore their everyday intercultural experiences were merely 10% or less, it is hard to imagine that students would take the learning objectives seriously.

When we started this project and read each syllabus to determine the theoretical foundation, we sometimes encountered difficulties in our decision making process. We concluded that the following might be the main reasons:

- (1) The syllabus had a sketchy outline, and did not provide a detailed description. In this case, instructors usually had separate assignment instructions, and we requested these additional materials from the instructors.

- (2) There were numerous, ambitious course objectives, but there were not corresponding evaluations or assignments. We categorized the syllabus based on the alignment of the course objectives and the assignments.
- (3) The percentage of exams and quizzes was dominant in a final grade. In the 64 syllabi, 20 of them had over 50% course evaluation in the form of quizzes, tests, and exams. The highest percentage was 82%. With such a high percentage on exams and similar evaluation on students' memorization, comprehensive ability, we doubt if the instructors' goals would be reached, and it provided few clues for us to judge the claimed paradigms. Lowering the percentage of the exams might be an easy solution.

Nevertheless, we concluded that the majority of instructors viewed real-world experience as a significant part of intercultural communication. The purpose of this course was not to sharpen students' research ability as an objective onlooker, but to build up an understanding of differences and the awareness of possible reasons that caused conflicts and social injustice. To reach these goals, a "practical" method focusing on participation, self-reflection, and experience-sharing was more adopted to teach intercultural communication.

6. Limitations and Future Research

One of the motives for us to conduct this research was the lack of latest sources about how intercultural communication has been taught. The related survey was conducted almost thirty years ago (Beebe & Biggers, 1986), and we wanted to examine if teaching intercultural communication was more diverse and more practical by analyzing the course syllabi. We acknowledged that the possible difficulties of focusing on course syllabi could be the vague descriptions or lack of detail to really provide the best support for the original position of the course. Additionally, when coding the syllabi we discussed whether or not instructors were purposefully setting up a course to align with a specific paradigm. Nevertheless, certain patterns were indeed discovered in the 64 syllabi and supported our assumptions. Our research examined what the popular course activities were in those syllabi. We hope that this analysis provides instructors of intercultural communication with a possible way to incorporate the variety of activities into their own class.

Given the lack of research on intercultural course syllabi, learning how teachers create a course is critical in understanding the teaching paradigm utilized by instructors in the classroom. In the process of data collecting, we got more responses from teaching-oriented universities and colleges, where the course was taught by faculty members, rather than graduate teaching assistants. While the importance of diversity education and intercultural exchange is increasingly emphasized in higher education, the flagship research universities seem to be absent in this regard. Our sample loyally reflects a partial truth of how intercultural communication instructors conceptualize and apply theories to everyday life, but we also recognize that the picture can be more complete if we can collect more syllabi throughout the U.S.

On the other hand, a related limitation is the exclusion of non-conventional intercultural communication syllabi in our analysis. Intercultural communication course syllabi that are designed for overseas exchange programs, summer sections, special workshops, or online were not included for further examination. A variety of formats in teaching intercultural communication have been encouraged in higher education, and we intend to conduct future syllabus analysis of these various

formats. Moreover, this syllabus research was limited to the U.S. context. It might be insightful to compare how intercultural communication is taught in other cultures, and how cultural differences, empathy, and power issues are emphasized in classroom teaching. In this way, the intercultural communication course can truly serve the institutional goals to establish a diverse campus and enhance the everyday intercultural communication competency in higher education.

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Appendix: Paradigm Criteria for Coding Purposes

Coding Examples

Social Scientific Research Paradigm Elements:
<p>1. Course purpose and/or objectives specifically state the theoretical foundation of the course was based on a social science perspective by mentioning the application of intercultural theory through data collection and analysis; Coding Examples: <i>“The course combines theory and research from a social science perspective and a Christian worldview with the hope that students may grasp the challenge of communicating Christ in another culture”</i> (Syllabus 4). <i>“Intercultural communication will be viewed through the lenses of individual, interpersonal, organizational, and social scientific perspectives to help students learn”</i> (Syllabus 67).</p>
<p>2. The emphasis of the solutions to the barriers of cross-cultural communication; Coding Example: <i>“To assist individuals who will be involved in communicating with people of other cultures, as in educational, commercial, social, and/or ministry endeavours; to provide some understanding of general barriers in cross-cultural interaction”</i> (Syllabus 4).</p>
<p>3. The written application of psychological models to a specific intercultural group, which acts as an investigation into a specific communication case study; Coding Example: <i>“This survey course is designed to introduce students to a wide range of scholarship about intercultural communication. More specifically, it will introduce students’ to the basic</i></p>

concepts, principles, and skills for improving communication across racial, ethnic and understanding that in addition to gaining cultural understanding of various groups of people, we must understand the cognitive processes governing our reaction to people who are different from us.

In this class, we will first examine the cognitive processes involved with communicating across cultures. Stereotyping, the drive to reduce uncertainty, the formation of attributions, and other deep psychological and cognitive mechanism often shape the way we approach someone of another culture. We will examine differences in both verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as the overarching cultural assumptions that shape communication acts.” (Syllabus 27).

4. The envisioning of students as researchers to conduct a research paper that aimed to use systematic and social-scientific approaches to the intercultural communication problems;
Coding Examples:
*“Each class member is required to write an 8-10 page paper that utilizes a clearly identified framework to examine a specific intercultural situation (see attached description)” (Syllabus 1).
“Through a series of class presentations, case studies and individual research projects, we hope to explore the process of cross-cultural communication and conflict arising from cultural diversity and globalization in a variety of contexts including counseling, human services, education, health care, environmental conservation, organizational behavior, human resource development, and international development.... The research project may contain visuals, videotape, etc., and may be based on case study, experimental, content analytic, field survey methodology” (Syllabus 38).*
5. The emphasis of competence, strategies, and effectiveness in international and cross-cultural business settings in order to make a student successful in his/her career.
Coding Examples:
*“To help students develop skills for communicating in intercultural business settings and explore obstacles to competent intercultural communication” (Syllabus 32).
“To help develop practical skills needed for effective intercultural communication” (Syllabus 39).*

Interpretive Research Paradigm Elements:

1. Course purpose and/or objectives specifically state the theoretical foundation of the course was based on an interpretive perspective, which examines the patterns, rituals, and norms within a culture through personal observation;
Coding Example:
“Describe the essential role that culture plays on people’s perceptions, beliefs, communication patterns and behavior; recognize and interpret underlying cultural values, messages, and implicit cultural meanings expressed in intercultural communication” (Syllabus 36).
2. The emphasis of the combined methods of observing, describing, and analyzing as the process of understanding cultures, which allows students to engage in cultural experiences as an observer to better understand the influence of culture;
Coding Example:

<p><i>“Their topics may be broad (a specific ethnic/racial group) or narrow (a gender or age within a specific group). Students may locate people from different cultures on campus, in their neighborhood or at work. This assignment demonstrates the students’ ability a) to research and write; b) to participate in ethnographic fieldwork; c) to demonstrate ethical behavior as they observe and interview people different cultures; d) to evaluate cultural myths and stereotypes, and assess their findings using key terminology and concepts learned in class; e) to present an organized and interesting oral report of their findings”</i> (Syllabus 10).</p>
<p>3. The recognition of multiple realities and the encouragement of “native” cultural lenses in studying cultural differences; Coding Example: <i>“Have acquired the ability to develop a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural communication issues”</i> <i>During this intercultural contact, ask each other questions- in other words, interview one another- to gain an insight about the culture and the event or activity you experience. Later, you will write a three-page paper, where you will discuss what you learned about your partner’s culture, the insight you gained, and similarities/differences you observed between the culture you experienced and your own.”</i> (Syllabus 7).</p>
<p>4. The integration of “practical” assignments that involved interactions beyond the classroom and/or cultural experiences on campus or within the community. Direct examples involve assignments related to participant observation, dyadic and group interviews, and cultural experiences; Coding Examples: “Field Experience Options: A. Service Learning... B. Virtual Relationship... C. A Cross-Cultural Interview... D. Expatriate Interview...” (Syllabus 6). “Provide further details on the cultural group you are observing and participating in. For this paper, you will have to visit your cultural group at least once and provide observational field notes” (Syllabus 14).</p>
<p>5. The retrospective reflection on one’s own culture in context to course materials and intercultural theory. Coding Examples: <i>You will talk about your own cultural identity: values, perspectives, norms, understandings, and lifestyle that guide you and your interactions. Explore and explain which cultural groups, in which you belong, help create and shape your identity”</i> (Syllabus 7). <i>“Keep in mind that culture shock can result from a specific event or series of events. It comes from the experience of encountering ways of doing, organizing, perceiving or valuing things which are different from yours and which threaten your basic, unconscious belief that your enculturated customs, assumptions, values and behaviors are right”</i> (Syllabus 39).</p>

Critical Research Paradigm Elements:	
1.	<p>Course purpose and/or objectives specifically state the theoretical foundation of the course was based on a critical perspective, which focuses on social injustice and social change; Coding Examples: <i>“Taking a critical and global perspective, we will explore the ways in which culture and communication interact and influence each other...”</i> (Syllabus 41). <i>“Overall, our course will require that we engage in critical self-reflexivity which will likely be difficult in different ways for each of us. For example, students who have never openly discussed issues related to culture such as race, gender, sexuality, class, g lobalization, social justice, etc. will likely feel nervous and/or uncomfortable...”</i> (Syllabus 24).</p>
2.	<p>The expansion of the scope of intercultural communication to various forms of oppression, domination, or discrimination in a variety of contexts, including gender, sexual orientation, age, and class; Coding Example: <i>“You will investigate a social/cultural practice or problem near you—in the workplace, school, community, or home—where getting along and working together result in practices that either hinder some of the members from participating as equals or deprive them of due recognition or appropriate treatment which prevents them from participating on their own terms.... Based on what you have learned in the course, you will analyze the problematic communication practice from your investigation work and propose an intervention plan to resolve the problem or issue”</i> (Syllabus 43).</p>
3.	<p>The revelation of the instructor’s teaching philosophy, positionality, and social identities that shapes the specific course; Coding Examples: <i>“I approach my teaching as a method to practice my culture, gender, and communication r esearch. Specifically, the culture, gender, and communication-related courses become pedagogical spaces for me to perform my theories in practice”</i> (Syllabus 22).<i>Syllabi that include a paragraph section of “Teacher’s Philosophy” or “Instructor’s Comments”</i> (Syllabus 23, 24, and 25.)</p>
4.	<p>The emphasis of students’ reflections on gender, race, social justice, praxis, and power inequality. Coding Examples: <i>“To recognize the importance and validity of other than Euro-centric points of view in the United States and globally”</i> (Syllabus 13). <i>“Through reading and discussion, in-depth study of a historically marginalized group in the U.S. and of another cultural group of your choosing, and class activities and projects, you will learn about differences and similarities among cultures. You will also develop understanding of the historical and contemporary experiences of cultural groups within the U.S., including African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latino/a Americans, Muslims, Amish, and others”</i> (Syllabus 45). <i>“Recognize and critique the impact of religion, ethnicity, age, race, social class, gender, sexuality, region, nationality, generation, disability on the construction of cultural identity, communication behavior, and inequalities among groups”</i> (Syllabus 50).</p>