## Lesson Plan
**Subject:** Cross-Cultural Communication  
**Unit:** Social Science  
**Grade(s):** 9-12; Adult

### Learning Targets
1. Build comprehension skills through engagement with multiple forms of content and/or media  
2. Cultivate critical thinking skills through discussion of issues that are relevant to students’ lived experiences  
3. Develop capacities for analysis and constructive communication/dialogue

### Learning Objectives
Students will…
- a) identify and understand various aspects of culture and how they relate to identity  
- b) identify and discuss barriers/issues that might prevent them from effectively engaging across cultures (or, more generally, in diverse settings)  
- c) review characteristics of (and methods for) effective multicultural communication and hypothesize how they might apply such methods in their daily lives

### Relevance/Rationale
- Promote constructive dialogue around forms of cultural difference within the classroom and broader community  
- Strengthen understanding of diversity and multiculturalism within and beyond educational settings

### Assessment Criteria
- Students will be evaluated on the basis of participation. Instructors may adapt this lesson plan in a manner that requires students to produce written outputs (reflections, group worksheets, etc.). An instructor could opt to require these components and evaluate them in accordance with appropriate standards.

### Activities/Tasks
**Opening Activity (approximately 10 minutes)**
- Ask students to brainstorm (either individually or in small groups) about what culture means/includes. Allow for multiple forms of expression, if possible (written reflection, drawing, or sculpture with clay or pipe cleaners). If time permits, facilitate a brief talkback about the cultural components identified. (Similarities/differences in components identified? Why might this be?)  
- Or…
- Ask students to brainstorm (either individually or in small groups) about the components that make up their personal identities (nationality, race, ethnicity, sex, gender etc.). Instructor may find it appropriate to challenge students to rank these strands of identity according to perceived importance. If time permits, facilitate a brief talkback about the components of identity that...
Option #1 – Role-play Activity and talkback (appx. 20-25 minutes)
- Ask for a group of volunteers (4-8) to participate in a simulation at the front of the classroom. Split the group of volunteers into two groups. Provide each group with its own set of character sheets (see below for character sheet examples). Explain to the participants that each of them have been given an identity to assume. Once they review the characteristics of their respective roles, they will attempt to engage the other group in a business transaction. Ask the remainder of the class to observe and take notes on what they see. What forms of verbal and non-verbal communication do they see? Are there certain dynamics or characteristics that are helping or hindering the business transaction? Once simulation is complete, ask first for observers to report back. Then, ask simulation participants to reflect back on their experience. What aspects of their assumed characters made the interaction difficult? Did certain aspects of the interaction frustrate them more than others? If so, why? After debriefing the activity, engage the students in a conversation around how this activity might apply to misunderstanding or miscommunication in their own lives.

Option #2 – Case Study/Scenario Approach (analysis and discussion; approximately 25-35 minutes)
Split the class into small groups and provide each group with its own article, scenario or multimedia resource to review (see below for examples). Ask each group to identify the key actors and issues implicated in their materials. How is cultural difference contributing to miscommunication? What issues or barriers might be escalating the misunderstanding? What might be some ways to work through this difference? Provide each group with materials to collectively brainstorm and record responses. Allow each group a few minutes to report a summary of their case and their thoughts. Once all groups have presented, allow some time for students to report their preliminary reactions to what they’ve heard. Discussion questions might include…

- Were there similarities or differences amongst the cases?
- What were characteristics of some of the cultures identified?
- How would you describe or understand the issues identified in each case?
- Did students come up with similar strategies for resolving the issue?
- What other strategies might promote more effective communication?

Option #3 – Prompts and Possibilities (20-30 minutes)
Have students work in small groups to brainstorm and identify issues around cultural (mis)communication that are relevant to their lives. Instructor might use prompts such as…
- Have you ever been stereotyped on the basis of race, sex, gender, etc.? How did this experience make you feel? Were you able to constructively address it with the person that stereotyped you? If so, how? If not, how might you have been able to?
- What types of stereotypes or cultural misconceptions are prevalent in this school? In the wider community? Why do you think these flawed perceptions exist? What might you do to change them?
Think of a time where you successfully communicated despite cultural or identity-based differences. How did this situation make you feel? What circumstances made this situation unique? What can you do (or what might you need) to have more experiences like this one?

Instructor might put a selection of prompts (either one set, or a selection from the various sets) onto worksheets and have each individual fill out a worksheet whilst engaging in small group discussion. Or, it may be sufficient for the small groups to work with a large piece of butcher paper to scribe on. Instructor would then facilitate a short talkback to hear student reactions to the activity. Then, if time permits, instructor could engage in a short lecture around effective communication techniques (see supporting materials).

Closing Activity (5-10 minutes)
- Ask students to take a few minutes to write about something they learned as a result of this session. Instructor my find it appropriate to collect written reflections as “exit tickets” for assessment.

Or...
Conversation Pairs – Have students pair up with someone in the class that they don’t normally work with. Have students take turns telling their respective partners about something they learned from the session. Then, ask students to find a new partner. In their second pairing, have students either repeat the first set of instructions or ask students to take turns telling their new partners something about their own culture or identity that they think their partner doesn’t already know.

Supporting Materials (See below)
- Character Bios (Simulation)
- Articles
- Scenarios

Access and Equity
- Design small groups in a semi-randomized manner that promotes diversity amongst participants (in hopes of maximizing potential for meaningful discussion).

- Supporting written materials might be substituted for more in-depth video or audio sources. (This may be most feasible if a computer lab or similar facility is available.)

- If group is small enough and time permits, instructor could work with the class to collectively analyze one case/example and then allow students to work on a second (This may be a good approach to working with groups that have strong comprehension abilities but minimal experience with analysis and skills application.)

Modifications/Accommodations
- If students aren’t able to effectively discuss the process as a group (or if there is not enough time to do so), the group discussion questions could be modified and serve as prompts for students to write personal reflections (either in class or as homework).
Supporting Materials

*Simulation Character Sheets/Bios*

*Each group should have a chance to sell and a chance to buy. Each group is selling variations of “widgets” (fictional objects) that are in high demand amongst both groups.*

**Bio for Group #1**

**As salespeople:** You operate off of commission, which motivates you to quickly make multiple sales. You come from a culture that is characterized by individualism and motivated by capital gain. It follows that you are often in competition for customers with your peers. Your communication style is direct – you make eye contact with potential customers, believe in firm handshakes, and spend as little time as possible on greetings/introductions. You aren’t strictly against bartering, but as a general rule you try to adhere to the $15 price tag per widget. If a customer wants to buy in bulk, you may be willing to cut them a deal.

**As buyers/consumers:** You are interested in quick transactions – you have lots of other shopping to do today! You are somewhat skeptical of people that don’t communicate with you directly and efficiently. Some might describe your communication style/body language as loud or boisterous – not only do you expect eye contact and handshakes, you often speak quickly and talk with your hands. You come from a culture that is characterized by individualism. Each of you has a lot of purchasing power – you might even be willing to try to outbid your peers, if widget supply is in short demand.

**Bio for Group #2**

**As salespeople:** You try to sell your widgets as a group. You are more interested in sustenance and building relationships than exorbitant profits. You come from a culture that is characterized by collectivism. Where you come from, introductions and greetings are important – you like to know your customers by name, and are often interested in the lives of them and their families. Though the going price for your widgets is $20 each, you are open to bartering with consumers over these prices. You aren’t familiar with the idea of individuals buying products in bulk in order to save money – you might even be suspicious of this practice or consider it selfish/wasteful.

**As buyers/consumers:** You are often interested in making purchases in pairs or as a whole group. This purchasing practice is of interest to you because it creates collective purchasing power and enables you to provide products/goods to your families and communities. Generally speaking, you are in no hurry to rush through transactions. Where you come from, you often have strong relational ties with the people that sell you goods and services. You sometimes find yourself suspicious of (or even intimidated by) those that are strongly driven by monetary gain. Consensus and harmony within your group is important to you. You might even ask for privacy to consult with your peers before you finalize a transaction. You are willing to barter with salespeople and service providers.
Articles/Cases/Scenarios

- For some easy to understand scenarios concerning cross-cultural communication, check out: http://www.culture-at-work.com/ex1samples.html
  These vignettes are short and easy to follow. They may be useful in a situation where an instructor has little time to allow for group work/processing. However, more advanced students might find these scenarios to be oversimplified.

- For scenarios that are a little more complex, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/altc/cross_cultural_supervision_project/scenarios/index.php
  Many of these scenarios concern cross-cultural communication amongst individuals in an academic or professional environment. Most of these scenarios are about a page in length, yet have enough complexity/detail to encourage conversation.

Example Scenario – Group Project

**Context:** A team of three students (at an American university) has entered into heated conflict/disagreement around a group project and presentation that they are working on for a class. None of the three students know each other well. The deadline for the project is in three weeks. The group is frustrated because all three of them feel that they have wasted the first week and are now significantly behind schedule.

**Student Perspective #1 – Richard**
Richard is an all-American boy that grew up in the area and is very familiar with American education. He tries to get good grades, but has extracurricular activities and a part-time job that take up a lot of his time. He has never failed a class, but neither he nor his parents are upset if he gets an occasional “C”. Richard likes his teammates and figures that, since he is most familiar with the school and its expectations, that he should naturally be the one to lead the team to success. He has tried to convince the group (in person and via text message) that they should have a “divide and conquer” strategy. He thinks each person should be responsible for researching and writing about one aspect of the topic on their own. Richard believes that after the tasks are delegated and complete, the group could then meet to go over the information and work on the presentation in person. Since he has plenty of other obligations, he wants this group meeting to be as short and efficient as possible. Richard assumes that their final presentation would of course be a Microsoft PowerPoint. Richard is a commuter student – he lives in an apartment (about 15 minutes away from campus) with his older brother. Richard’s brother and his parents help him as best as they can to finance his education and day-to-day expenses.

**Student Perspective #2 – Charles**
Charles is a jovial young man who recently moved to the United States from Nigeria in order to further his education. He is on an academic scholarship and maintains a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Charles would love to have a part-time job off campus, but since he is not an American citizen he is only eligible to work a few hours a week through the college/university. Though this means that he lives more frugally than some of his peers, it also gives him more time to study and socialize. Charles is used to taking on a leadership role in team settings. He considers himself to be a visionary – he has a lot of great ideas, but often struggles to commit to pursuing just one.
Charles wants the group to work on the research components of the project together at the on-campus library. He is not opposed to delegating out some work/tasks, but thinks the group should work collaboratively on the final presentation. Charles strongly prefers face-to-face communication. When electronic communication is the only option, Charles prefers phone calls and Skype conversations to text messages and/or emails.

**Student Perspective #3 – Sofia**
Sofia is the youngest student of the group and the only female. Her family originally hails from South Korea, and she is a dual citizen of the United States and South Korea. Sofia went to a U.S. elementary school and a South Korean high school. Sofia is exceptionally bright and is financing her education through need-based and merit-based aid. Though academics have come naturally to Sofia, she is diligent about working hard to maintain as high of a GPA as possible. Sofia has an older brother that failed out of an American university just last year. Sofia has a wide range of interests, including photography and videography. Many might describe Sofia as quiet or shy. She tried to pitch some of her ideas to Richard and Charles the first time that they met as a group. Sofia was a little hurt when the boys didn’t seem interested in what she had to say, though this was not the first time that she had worked in a male-dominated group. Sofia is very tech savvy. She checks her phone, email, and social media outlets often. Though Sofia lives on-campus, she often prefers to do her work at a café off-campus or at her best friend’s off-campus apartment. Unbeknownst to the boys, Sofia has already done a lot of research and some writing for the project. If the group can’t agree on a plan soon, Sofia intends to send them what she has worked on in hopes that it will convince them to just get moving – she’ll tell them she doesn’t mind working just as hard on the remainder of the workload, either.

**Example Article #1**
“Europe’s crackdown on human smugglers sparks criticism”

This article provides multiple perspectives on the issue of human smuggling and refugee protections. Instructors might encourage pupils to analyze the competing values and interests that cause the different cultural perspectives to clash with one another.

**Example Article #2**
“Rights groups criticize resumption of executions in Indonesia”
[http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/2/2/rights-groups-criticize.html](http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/2/2/rights-groups-criticize.html)
This article provides insight into clashing perspectives on the issue of the death penalty in Indonesia. Instructors might encourage pupils to try and discern how culture and values fit into the arguments being showcased.
Multimedia Content (may be used in conjunction with Activity Option #2 or as independent/supplemental material)

1) Cross Cultural Communication Ted Talk with Pellegrino Riccardi (20 minutes)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMyoREc5Jk

2) Cross-Cultural Communication for Americans (13 minutes; interviews with international college students comparing and contrasting communication styles of different nationalities)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSY3zdPOupI

Additional Resources

University of Brighton - Centre for Learning & Teaching (Cross-Cultural Communication Module) http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/international/3Crosscultural.html
This module elaborates on causes/consequences of miscommunication. It also provides examples of common miscommunications and some informative reflections on language (verbal and non-verbal).

“The Costly (and Humorous) Impact of Cultural Blunders”
This article provides some real-world examples of cross-cultural miscommunication. Instructors might find this material to be useful in stimulating conversation/discussion, particularly if they don’t have time for more interactive/expansive activities.

Cross-Cultural Communication: How Culture Affects Communication
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9waEeSQqZU4&list=PLVexp9xeeoEWIsQxRbdZ8nBytLFnNdQds&index=9 (3 minute introduction/overview to the topic)