32. Did you develop a charter or guidelines for student interaction? If so, please paste it into the field below. How well did this document work as a means to guide student interactions? How might you change it in the future?

FMST 59: Re-Envisioning Diasporas Course Charter

The course will take place on two campuses, Ashesi University in Accra, Ghana and Swarthmore College in Philadelphia, USA. The class will utilize a hybrid of face-time and online or digital communication. For 30 minutes each class day, we will attempt a synchronous classroom experience via Skype, video chat or satellite. For this reason, intercultural communication and collaborative learning are central to our work this semester.

Because many of the topics we will be discussing this term may be of a sensitive nature – race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, geography – and may impact each member of the class in different and overlapping ways, we need to be mindful of the line between ideas and lived experiences. We can talk about these issues in the abstract but recognize that these may result from and affect real experiences. Tips: Ask questions, situate yourself, which includes situating your own assumptions. This will set the tone for discussion with others in the class. If ever you need clarification during or after a communication, ask first: “What did you mean by that; maybe I didn’t understand?”

1. Student commitment to the course:

Please adhere to the following protocol for all activities, assignments and group meetings:

Email and chat etiquette:

- Be respectful, consider cultural and linguistic differences before using irony or sarcasm.
- Use standard English, no abbreviations or emoticons (for example: LOL, smiley faces etc.).
- If you are asked to comment on other students’ work, write more than one line following the 5 Ws: who, what, when, where, why.
- Comment first on a post with the least responses, and make sure you don’t overlook early entries.
- Stay on message when responding, dialoguing and discussing topics in and out of class!
- Be mindful of the 5 hour time difference: 3 pm Swarthmore is 8pm Ashesi time.
- If you encounter technological difficulties when communicating, try another technological tool. Example: if skype is down, chat – if email won’t work, blog. Do not get frustrated, seek practical solutions.
- In case of communication delays, technology is usually the culprit. Try a different mode of communication to reach your partner. If experiencing prolonged silence (3 tries over 72 hours), please contact one of your instructors.
- You will be working in teams across continents and cultures. You will need to plan your work accordingly, which means: ample time to contact each other, to gather and access information, to meet, to discuss, to write, etc. and review and submit. For a typical asynchronous homework assignment, you will probably need to figure in at least 5 instances of back and forth contact.
- For visual assignments: the most important part will be content, not production value; that you show your understanding of the course materials in a clear and analytical way.
- For written assignments: please refer to the section on writing in the syllabus, but remember to adhere to professional standards, which include always citing outside sources to avoid plagiarism, and citing each other’s ideas.
- For synchronous assignments: Listen well! Hear each other out! Don’t interrupt! Mind the gap--there is always a few seconds delay with our technologies. If one of you is consuming more than 80% of airtime, something is wrong with the hierarchy of the discourse.
2. Faculty commitment to this course

- Faculty members will communicate regularly with each other and with the students in an honest and open way.
- Faculty will review all student work. This includes daily homework and group projects, and we will look for the grasp of historical information, film/visual analysis, intercultural competencies, writing, and the ongoing participation in the course. Faculty will follow local grading procedures for own school groups, while keeping a grade log for all three faculty to see.
- Faculty will discuss grades for final projects and offer comments to each student.
- Faculty will collectively monitor blogs and wikis, but will "officially" write comments for students on the teaching units for which we are responsible.

Assessment: Faculty will invite students to assess the course progress, technologies, and learning points with short anonymous response requests throughout the term. Faculty ask that students be candid and honest so that we can improve the course as it unfolds.

Office hours: To facilitate student-faculty interaction and on-going assessment in an informal environment, faculty will hold joint office hours online on Fridays.

Procedure for intervening: Faculty will step in if/when necessary. While we hope to never have to intervene in student work, students should be aware that we are here to provide a safe and productive space in which they may work. We will get involved and arbitrate in a case by case basis, especially if students are not following the above protocol.

### DISCUSSION MODULES

**COMMENTARY (300-350 words):** For each module your team has been assigned two of the six thinking questions to discuss. (See Team Assignments.) Your team will compose one commentary discussing the two questions. Each team leader is responsible for ensuring your team commentary is posted on time. The questions should be interpreted broadly. Students should not “over” analyse the questions. They are “thinking” questions to help you think about the subject. Students should feel free to move beyond the question.

**RESPONSES:** Each member of the group must provide two responses in Modules 1 & 2. One response must be on the discussion board (conference) your group posted a commentary. The other must be on one of the other two discussion boards.

**MECHANICS: How to Post to the Discussion Board**

A "thread" is started each time you submit a discussion item. Each response (reply) to the original post is indented once - a response (reply) to a response (reply) is indented a second time - etc. This system of indents helps all of us to determine which responses go together. A threaded discussion is the web equivalent of a classroom discussion.

- Descriptive Subject Line
- Include a descriptive subject line.
- Responding to the main item
- To compose your response (reply) to a main discussion item you are reading, click on the "Reply" link located at the bottom of that page. (There are several options—reply, edit (which only works for posts you contributed—you can't edit others' posts), e-mail author (ANGEL course mail—it will stay in the system), and delete (again, only works for your own posts).
- Responding to someone else's response
- If you are reading someone else's response document, click on the "Reply" link located at the bottom of that page to respond to that response. Make sure that you respond on the document intended so that your contribution will line up in the threaded discussion in the right place.
- Submitting your response
- When you have completed your response, click the "Save" button at the bottom of the page.
- Netiquette
- As discussion is of a public nature, please observe proper "netiquette"—courteous and appropriate forms of communication and interaction over the Internet (in online discussions). This means no personal attacks, obscene language, or intolerant expression. All viewpoints should be respected.

Yes we did develop a charter or what we termed our “10 Golden Rules” for student interaction. It is as follows:

10 Proposed GOLDEN RULES for the COIL course
1. Have sensitivity and respect for cultural differences
2. Be honest and avoid plagiarism
3. Have an open mind for new ideas
4. Be creative in your approach
5. Submit on time
6. Listen Listen Listen to as much jazz as possible and know what you are listening to
7. Be spontaneous to react and comment other opinions, and be respectful to classmates and faculty as you comment. If there is a concern you would like to have addressed, please email the faculty at your school immediately.
8. Be proud of your own cultural heritage and write/think from that perspective
9. Music and the experience of it remains objective, therefore let your taste guide you
10. Always try and sing or play what you learn to apply your knowledge

One more golden rule or thing to be aware of:
Please note that English is a foreign language for Danish students and teachers. Please remember anyone can inadvertently say and write things that can be misunderstood. We may therefore sometimes need for others to speak slowly, using vocabulary that is not too advanced.

To guide students in their collaborations across institutions, we used a collaborative course blog where we posted assignments: [http://mjuttu.wordpress.com/2012/10/08/house-description/](http://mjuttu.wordpress.com/2012/10/08/house-description/)
The blog was challenging for all students to find and use. I would not use it again (Kelli, TTU). I would use a Classroom Management System that more easily accessible and more centrally controlled (by one or the other institution).

ULPGC : We did not develop any guidelines for student interactions. We built and taught our course keeping in mind that, as instructors, our most important goals were
1) to motivate students (especially because the course was on a voluntary basis, without any extra credit of academic advantage)
2) to stress the importance of intercultural awareness in a globalized world. The fact that, in this specific situation, they took the initiative to use no institutional ways to contact with their US partners by themselves is for us the most evident sign of the success of the course.

No but we think it could have been helpful to set guidelines for interactions. We would consider doing this next time around.
We did not develop any guidelines for students’ interaction. Though because of our experiences, it may be something we explore in the future. The form or scope of such a guideline, however, is an open question. We did spend time in class talking about providing peer feedback, especially after a somewhat dramatic experience during the second time we taught the class:

As part of the assignment sequence meant to help students identify and analyze the range of influences that have shaped their own development as writers, students, and individuals, students interviewed each other and wrote “literacy profiles” of two classmates. Because of the disparity in class sizes, each RIT student interviewed and profiled one ACMT student, and small groups of ACMT students interviewed one RIT student. In-class discussion identified the challenges of such group interviews, with particular attention to the difficulties of online, asynchronous interview conducted over email. Students were encouraged to “get to know each other” before the conducting the actual interview, using live chat or Skype to discuss hobbies or other low risk topics. They were also encouraged to follow up on written answers to questions before writing their final drafts. However, in practice, students completed this interview process on their own, outside of class, without synchronous communication, and without direct instructor supervision or oversight.

Because of the time difference, Charry was able to alert Martins to a situation in which one of the RIT students responded negatively to the profile written about her. Martins was then able to spend half that morning’s class period discussing this particular peer review and ways of making peer review more productive. As a result of the early intervention, the student was able to revise her comments and the other five students in the class who had not yet responded to the profile written about them were primed to respond in potentially more productive ways. It is impossible to know how they would have responded without the class discussion on the first student’s response. However, because the initial response occurred, the class was able to focus on meaningful cultural and language differences, and begin altering their own discursive resources for negotiating meaning in writing.

At ACMT, during the class meeting immediately following this exchange of online feedback, students were noticeably upset. As class began, one student volunteered casually, “It’s funny that in a class that is supposed to make us more friends with the Rochester students, it ended up making us not like them.” Sensing the tension, Charry asked students to write down their general reactions to the feedback they had received from their RIT classmates. This feedback was intended for the instructor only, and students were told it would not be shared with the Rochester group. While students whose profiles had received only minor fact checking corrections seemed to feel that the process had been “good” or “easy enough,” students who received extensive feedback beyond fact checking from their peers were dissatisfied and felt that their own creative process and even authority to write the paper had been undermined, and that the RIT students were just “too sensitive.” In the next class discussion the students at ACMT were encouraged to think about whether they had actually misunderstood or misrepresented their RIT classmates, or whether issues of language difference had been at work. As a group, they seemed to resist self-criticism and continued to blame the RIT students for being too sensitive.

Charry and Martins discussed ways to address the situation in class, so presented each class with a Café Bar prompt on the topic of “authority in writing.” Students were asked to respond to a course reading by sharing a story about a writing experience that drew attention to the factors they believe led to a sense of authority, and that sense affected what they did to complete the writing task. The one post that focused on the peer review of the profiles, and that raised issues of authority in writing, the scope and nature of feedback, and ideas about the role of dialogue, was not responded to by any of the RIT students. One ACMT classmate did respond, but simply voiced general support. After a rather dramatic and somewhat difficult asynchronous confrontation, students seemed to return to “Pleasantville.”
Nothing for the course itself but the American students, when given the opportunity to participate in the course, were asked to formally commit to doing so with an agreement letter. This was via email communication. Griffith University has a charter for students covering the relevant interactions. There were distinctive aspects of this course where the development of some guidelines may prove advantageous, especially in relation to expectations of how the cross-cultural pairs function and partner responsibilities.

This is from the UTEP syllabus:
Student Conduct: [From the Handbook of Operating Procedures: Student Affairs]: Each student is responsible for notice of and compliance with the provisions of the Regents Rules and Regulations, which are available for inspection electronically at http://www.utsystem.edu/bor/rules/homepage.htm. We will have frequent discussions and students are expected to tolerate and respect the opinions of others. All students are expected to behave as responsible adults.

No, though CCC students were introduced to basic netiquette guidelines and we discussed related issues in class from time to time.

Dr. Aragon’s students were instructed that shared respect was key to establishing trust and engaging in conversation between the two student groups. Dr. Gupta-Carlson’s students were encouraged to see differences between themselves and their Canadian counterparts as opportunities to learn from each other.

We did not have any shared guidelines, perse. Instead of using written guidelines, Junko spent the spring semester providing scaffolding for the Osaka University students in terms of how to communicate, while I spent the beginning of the fall semester discussing issues of cross-cultural communication with speakers of English as a second (or sometimes third) language. Having led the course once, I would probably develop written documentation concerning expectations for student interaction as an additional means of scaffolding for the students.

I set up the interview topics for my students to talk about with Kagoshima students for the first two group-unit sessions, such as proverbs that they think represent their culture and they like and health management. Students were supposed to prepare what they would like to say along with the topics in their assignments and I corrected and gave them some feedbacks in advance.

Both classes established independent guidelines for student interaction and then through a collaborative effort worked to blend those two sets of guidelines into one shared document. This process worked well and we would probably not change it in the future.