

Culture, Organizations, and Technology
PUBP 503.004
DRAFT SYLLABUS – fall 2003

Professor: *Ann C. Baker, Ph.D.*

Class Time: Tuesdays, 4:30-7:10pm

Class Meets on Arlington campus, Room 251

Office: Arlington, Room 246

Telephone: 703-993-3805

E-mail: abaker1@gmu.edu

Fax: 703-993-8215

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Effective policy analysis, program design, implementation, and management often depend on understanding the culture(s) of the organization and individuals involved. Whether we are talking about professional culture such as engineering or accounting, the culture of transportation, technological, military, or business systems, or the processes of organizational and societal change, the lack of cultural knowledge frequently results in failures. This course is designed to provide practical and intellectual skills, not only to help minimize such failures, but to maximize success in organizational and societal contexts.

The course focuses on the influence of culture in societal, political, and economic processes, nationally and internationally. Culture is seen as dynamic and interactional, often shaping and shaped by technological change, and as influenced by, influencing, or otherwise interacting with the processes of globalization. Information technology in particular is having a profound and pervasive impact on the way we think and thus on how we analyze.

Thus, the objectives of the course include learning to:

- Observe and describe culture at the organizational and societal levels;
- Observe and describe the important cultural and organizational features of target populations or groups;
- Identify cultural enablers and barriers to effective policy development, program design, and implementation; and
- Observe and describe the interaction between technologies on the one hand, and cultural and organizational systems on the other.

The course prepares students to perform organizational and cultural audits, negotiate transactions, and resolve conflicts by training them in the following techniques and methods:

- Open-ended interviewing
- Participant-observation
- Ethnographic case method
- Technology assessment

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Course requirements include a combination of required readings, approximately five to seven short papers that serve as talking points for assigned reading, two observational exercises to develop ethnographic skills, one exam that will be given during approximately the ninth week of the semester, and attendance and full participation in all class activities.

Course Readings

Required books are listed below. If a more recent version is available, we will use the most recent version.

- Mann, J. (1997). *Beijing jeep: A case study of western business in China*.
- Rycroft, R. & Kash, D. (1999). *The complexity challenge: Technological innovation for the 21st century*.
- Schein, Edgar (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*.

One of the following two:

- Agar, M. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography*.
- Stewart, A. (1998). *The ethnographer's method*.

The following required books are available full text, on-line to GMU students.

- Hampden-Turner, C. & Trompenaars, F. *The seven cultures of capitalism: Value systems for creating wealth in the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands*.
- Trompenaars, F. *Riding the wave of culture: Understanding diversity in global business*.

In addition there will be a packet of additional articles and book chapters that will include both required and recommended reading for the course.

Course Assignments and Evaluation:

- Talking points: short papers on the assigned readings for approximately half of the classes – 30%
- Exam – 20%
- Two ethnographic exercises – 10% for the first and 20% for the second
- Effort and approach used throughout the semester – 20%