

**PUBA 624**  
***Intercultural Challenges in the Public Sector***  
***Syllabus and Course Manual***

Professor: Jeffrey C. Ady, Public Administration Program

**Graduate students from all programs are welcome to enroll: Please contact Jeffrey Ady at [jady@hawaii.edu](mailto:jady@hawaii.edu) if an enrollment override code is needed.**

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## **Background**

Policy transfer in the form of conditional grants and lending by international finance bodies, planning, problem-solving and crisis response action among national governments, regional and global transgovernmental agencies, NGOs and private-sector actors all involve working with others from various cultural backgrounds. This cross-cultural work often presents unique challenges: Approaches toward defining problems, managing, leading, making decisions, differ from culture to culture—often to the degree where progress toward objectives can be substantially impeded if not lost altogether.

Challenges of this nature to work across cultural boundaries have received much attention as they have impacted private sector endeavors. And many of the cross-cultural problems experienced in global business apply to public sector work. In addition, public sector work crossing cultural boundaries produces its own set of problems. This course focuses on how these problems manifest as people work on international, regional and local projects and problems of compelling public interest.

**So: This course focuses on the intercultural aspects of public-sector work, from intercultural interpersonal relationship dynamics, to geopolitical/diplomatic and policy transfer considerations.** That's a fairly wide scope, but the question of where culture exerts meaningful impacts on the public sector yields some interesting and compelling answers! The central question stimulating our seminar this semester in PUBA 624 is: **"What do leaders in public service need to understand in order to be globally effective?"**

This course operates from three assumptions:

1. *Public activity crossing cultural boundaries, like any organized interaction across cultures, can be impeded by cultural divergence in critical areas of structural context, interaction patterns, established procedures, and organizational goals. But knowledge of these manifestations of cultural divergence can be combined with cross-cultural interventions in order to bring actors within an intercultural public activity evolution to a degree of convergence necessary to complete that evolution with both success and satisfaction for all concerned.*

2. *Analysis, training and support interventions* are crucial to public and hybrid organization strategies toward, and responses to, disaster management, diplomatic and other crises crossing national and regional borders.
3. Interventions ranging from *situational assessment* to various types of *training and in-crisis support* can *empower public, NP/NGO, private, and intergovernmental sector actors in crisis and developmental circumstances to work more effectively together in technology-mediated and on-the-ground intercultural and international task relationships to achieve their goals* more quickly and effectively.

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### Course Objective and Expected Learning Outcomes

***Intercultural Challenges in the Public Sector*** is intended to engage participants in a review of an array of general challenges facing those who are at work in the public sector at the global level and in the intercultural world. Specifically, as a participant in this seminar-type course, you should:

1. **Gain knowledge of major dimensions of cultural variability** and how they affect organized action in the public sector, including international policy transfer and interorganizational and interpersonal intercultural task interaction, such as negotiation, cross-cultural conflict management, intercultural workplace planning and intercultural relationship management;
2. **Gain understanding** of how these contexts of public sector work operate from **both theoretical and pragmatic standpoints**; and
3. **Acquire and master analytical frameworks for assessing cross-cultural difficulties and recommending courses of action that help others work through cross-cultural conflict effectively.**

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### Course Format

***Intercultural Challenges in the Public Sector*** follows a seminar-type format:

- We will devote significant time to the discussion of concepts and pragmatics. Reference materials for our discussions will include assigned readings from the Edfelt and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner texts, and selected readings from various online journals, papers and other electronic resources.
- We will also make extensive use of case studies. We will conduct case analyses to strengthen concept and strategy application; we will also author area studies to sharpen our understanding of contextual factors in successful public work across cultures. [see below].
- Numerous activities and structured experiences will create awareness, sharpen analytical and diagnostic skills, and stimulate advanced reflection on the concepts and strategies we discuss.

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## Course Materials

Textbooks: The two texts will be made available for purchase in-class via Modern Times book providers at a very good price. You can pay for these texts via check or cash on the first night of class and following weeks [or in the PUBA office during regular business hours]. I will have information on the cost at that time.

1. **Global Comparative Management**, by Ralph B. Edfelt. Sage Publishers, ISBN: 978-1-4129-4470-0.
2. **Riding the Waves of Culture**, by Fons Trompenaars & Charles Hampden-Turner. McGraw-Hill, ISBN: 978-0-07-177308-8.
3. Other articles and sources as assigned. Most of these sources will be in PDF format and will be made available either as hyperlinks to static pages or PDF files. I will make attempts to post these materials on the Laulima site at the University of Hawaii.

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## Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation in this graduate seminar will be both formative and summative in nature; it will focus on your involvement and the learning you exhibit in our learning processes. I will continually assess your participation and performance in our proceedings and provide feedback as appropriate in order to help you maximize your gains from this course. I will assign a letter grade at the end of the term. I expect excellent participation and performance from everyone in this course. Participation in our discussions should be both consistent and well-informed. Stay current on the assigned readings and participate on the basis of the perspectives we use.

Your approach toward teamwork and course projects should be both positive and proactive.

The major assignments and their evaluation logics are:

### WEEKLY JOURNALS

You will be required to keep a journal of your thoughts and learning regarding work across cultures on a weekly basis. Your journal entries should detail what you have learned and considered—and how you have changed as a result. I will expect you to go well beyond statements such as "this is what I learned this week..." and into reflection of "how my understanding" and "practice" will change. Does your learning help you understand past events? Do you notice personal patterns and ways of thought and response that you are learning must be changed? How does what you've learned both comfort and challenge you?

Your weekly journal entries [copies of which you will submit to me at the *start* of each session] should be at least two pages in length [double-spaced, word-processed] if they are to evince adequate thought and reflection.

**I do not guarantee a response to, or evaluation of, each journal entry you submit.** This is particularly true of commenting on your writing per se. While hearing each week from me may be desirable, I'm not sure of my ability to keep that commitment regularly. We will be discussing your entries in small teams during most of our sessions; this approach will have its own unique advantages, more so as we advance through the term.

**The Weekly Journals assignment is worth a possible 50 points.**

### **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this course will mean that you are **almost always with us, actively engaging in our conversations**, and completing ad hoc assignments on time.

This course's success depends on your conscientious participation in our discussions. Your participation affects everyone else in the course. I therefore expect full and competent participation in our discourse on the intercultural challenges we face in public service. This means that I will expect you to:

1. Complete our course readings/discussion preparation assignments **before the class sessions** in which we discuss them;
2. *Come to our sessions with something to say* that is both meaningful to you and relevant to the rest of the group;
3. *Listen actively to others*, and **joining our conversation**.

Coming to class unprepared, and answering the assigned questions reading directly from our text, is not sufficient. [*Yes, some people do tend to do just that!*]

Language proficiency is not important to me, so if English is not your first language do not let that impede your attempts to participate. One of my best-participating students of all time spoke EBL [English as a Broken Language—like my Japanese ability!] but that didn't matter. The key is that she wasn't afraid to express her opinions. Fluency was no obstacle for her and it usually should not be for anyone in my courses.

I will use this grading rubric for the Class Participation assignment:

- 100 points: Your participation in all class discussions demonstrated unusual focus and mastery of the reading materials for each class session. Your participation

was a remarkable asset to our processing of ideas and concepts offered in PUBA 624.

- 90 points: You participated in almost every class discussion; your participation was constructive and demonstrated thorough familiarity with the reading and conceptual materials for each class session.
  - 80 points: You participated in many class discussions; your participation was usually constructive [though sometimes irrelevant]; you demonstrated some familiarity with the reading materials for each class session.
- [below the 80-point level, the curve drops quickly!]*
- 60 points: You participated in class discussions about half the time. Your participation was about evenly divided between being constructive along the lines of our discussions and being less than relevant. Your participation did not demonstrate familiarity with the reading materials for each class session.
  - 40 points: You participated only occasionally in class discussions; your contributions were infrequent, not relevant or not informed by reading materials to the extent that you did not contribute meaningfully to our discourse on PUBA 624 material generally over the term. You will be given a grade of “C” for PUBA 624 if your participation is of this most unsatisfactory nature.

This grading rubric assumes that you do participate in class and that you do read the materials for each session. The keys to successful participation are simple:

1. Actively read; take time with the reading; think about what you are reading. Perhaps this means outlining the chapter for each session. At minimum you should answer any questions, or complete any assignment, I provide to you the prior week.
2. **Think of this course’s material as eminently relevant** to you. Even if you are not currently employed, you have been or will be. Most students in this class will find the material relevant to their lives five or six days each week!
3. Come to class with questions and opinions of your own regarding the material. If you disagree with something our authors have written [I do at times], don’t be afraid to express that disagreement. If you don’t understand something, don’t be afraid to admit it! We’ll gladly help...remember, we’re here to learn!
4. Join our conversation as an interested and helpful partner. If you disagree with what someone says in class, respectfully give us your view. If you agree with what someone says, say so! Perhaps you can elaborate, offer an example from your experience, or rephrase the opinion in a way that is most meaningful to you.
5. Don’t just sit in class and look at your watch. You’re using up other people’s oxygen, too, so make it worth it.
6. Come to class with the attitude of enjoying the material, learning things that you will find eminently useful for the rest of your life, and—above all—enjoying the fine people who will be in class with you.

**There are a total of 100 points possible for class participation.**

**AREA STUDIES.**

The Edfelt text is known for its survey of culture groups' orientations toward organized activity. A good number of monographs and journal articles elsewhere provide excellent profiles on general orientations and specific manifestations of cultures as they relate to public work. We will take advantage of this information by examining different major culture groups' approaches to work [and, when possible, work in the public sector]. Area Studies examine ways in which selected people groups, and clusters of groups, define and experience task and public interaction.

You will undertake and present at least one Area Study during the term. When possible, Area Studies' assigned foci will coincide with Edfelt chapter readings and discussions.

**There are a total of 50 points possible for your area studies.**

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**Attendance**

I expect regular attendance. "Roll" will be taken, and repeated absences will inevitably hurt your performance in this class. **You may miss up to three class sessions without penalty. Thereafter thirty points per absence will be deducted from your course point total.** "Medical" excuses or other incidental excuses for absences will count toward the three you may use. Special emergencies and catastrophes requiring extended absence from class will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in a manner that is fair for everyone in the course. But you must let me know about those circumstances as soon as you can. Missing six or more class sessions will result in your automatically failing the course.

Come to class in a timely manner. Coming in late may disrupt class and annoy both your professor and your classmates. Roll will be taken as class begins. Five points will be deducted from your course point total for every time you are fifteen minutes late. To avoid this problem please notify me ASAP of traffic and other reasons for being delayed.

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**Course Schedule:** Based on Spring 2013 Academic Calendar for UH Manoa

*Subject to Change on Circumstantial Necessity*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics/Activities</i>	<i>Readings/Discussion for This Session</i>
Jan 8	Overview; Glossary Work; Public Action; Culture; Convergence & Divergence. Presentation & Discussion: Ethics in Public Service	PUBA 624 Syllabus; ICPS Glossary
Jan 15	Glossary Work; Convergence & Divergence. Chapter 1.	Edfelt 1 [MGT & Culture]; THT 1-3 [Culture & MGT]; ICPS Glossary
Jan 22	Dimensions of Convergence & Divergence; Intractability; Communication.	Edfelt 2 [US MGT]; THT 4-7: [Relationships, Groups, Feelings & Involvement]
Jan 29	Glossary work. IC Relationship mgt.	Edfelt 3: [Western European MGT]; THT 8-10 [Status, Time & Nature]
Feb 5	International/Transnational Issues: Policy Transfer, etc.	Edfelt 4 [Soviet Socialist MGT]; THT 11 [National & Corporate Cultures]
Feb 12	Applications: IC Conflict Resolution	Edfelt 5 [MGT by Democracy]; THT 12 [Int'l, Transnational MGT]
Feb 19	Applications: Culture Shock and its Discontents	Edfelt 6 [Chinese MGT]; THT 13 [Cultural Dilemmas]
Feb 26	Applications: IC Teamwork Dynamics	Edfelt 7 [Japanese MGT]; THT 14 [Culture Clashes]
Mar 5	Applications: DMHA & IC Dynamics	Edfelt 8 [MGT in Latin America]; THT 15 [Diversity]
Mar 12	Applications: Track Two Diplomacy	THT 16 [Summary & Conclusions]
Mar 19	Area Studies workshop.	
Mar 26	Spring recess	
Apr 2	Area Studies.	
Apr 9	Area Studies.	
Apr 16	Area Studies.	
Apr 23	Area Studies.	
Apr 30	Last day of class: Finale, Wrap-Up	