

**3rd Biennial North American Region Conference on
“Internationalizing Christian Higher Education:
Learning to Listen, Listening to Learn”**

Listening with Humility



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Study Abroad

- ✦ **Study Abroad Cross-Cultural Preparation (1 credit)**
- ✦ **Enhancing the Study Abroad Experience (1 credit)**
- ✦ **Required for Spanish Majors**
- ✦ **Discussion and reflection**
 - ✦ **motivations**
 - ✦ **culture shock**
 - ✦ **tourist v. neighbor**



Culture

- ✦ Influence in upbringing and everyday life
- ✦ Christian identity
- ✦ Cultural humility
 - ✦ Productive approach
 - ✦ Permeated reflections along the semester



Cultural humility



- ✦ “a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to redressing the power imbalances in the patient-physician dynamic, and to developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic clinical and advocacy partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations”

Tervalón & Murray-García

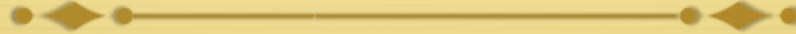
Cultural humility



- ✦ “having an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented rather than self-focused, characterized by respect and lack of superiority toward an individual’s cultural background and experience.”
- ✦ “[T]herapists who are culturally humble not only strive to be effective but also cultivate a growing awareness that they are inevitably limited in their knowledge and understanding of a client’s cultural background, which motivates them to interpersonally attune themselves to the client in a quest to understand the individual client’s cultural background and experience.”

Hook *et al.*

Cultural humility



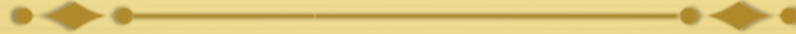
- ✦ “the components of cultural humility provide a loosely held framework or guiding principles which move each of us beyond mere proficiencies or competencies, and place us in a role of a life-long learner regarding culture and interactions with those who are different than we are.”

Hook

- ✦ “researchers have identified two additional factors that are necessary to develop cultural competence: 1) awareness that cultures are dynamic and ever changing; and 2) the practice of cultural humility.”

DeGraaf

Cultural humility



✦ “key concepts of cultural humility are formulated around the following core themes:

1. Building relationships: the key foundational component;
2. Intentional listening: gathering information, listening to the needs of the people;
3. Setting aside predetermined biases and assumptions and critically examining them in light of new information and knowledge;
4. Collaboration and co-learning; learning with and from one another.”

Hockett & Muhanji

Humility

- ✦ accurate assessment of one's abilities and achievements (not low self esteem, self deprecation).
- ✦ ability to acknowledge one's mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge, and limitations [...]
- ✦ openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice.
- ✦ keeping of one's abilities and accomplishments —one's place in the world—in perspective (e.g., seeing oneself as just one person in a larger scheme of things).
- ✦ relatively low self-focus [...], while recognizing that one is but one part of the larger universe.
- ✦ appreciation of the value of all things, as well as the many different ways that people and things can contribute to our world.

“Foreign failures spark learning”

- ✦ *“Thanks to a slip of the tongue, I accidentally called my host mom a pig within the first two hours of knowing her.” (The Beacon)*
- ✦ *I am frustrated with how fast people speak. I feel I am back in my first year Spanish because I can't understand anything. I believe the family is frustrated with me as well because they need to speak very slowly when they talk to me (2013).*
- ✦ *It was hard for me to have the attitude to learn. I had to face that I was not able to survive by myself in a culture different from mine. [...] I wanted to be fluent in Spanish, and each joke about my Spanish, even in a friendly tone, reminded me that I was short of reaching my goal. In addition, I always had been a good student and was not accustomed to fail (2014).*

Approach based on cultural humility

Selected comments after the addition of readings about cultural humility

- ✦ *The capacity to be sensitive, intelligent and humble is very important to learn about culture and people without being judgmental or negative. I need those qualities because I want to learn a lot, be culturally intelligent and have a healthy and balanced experience.*
- ✦ *If you have a humble attitude, probably other people will be willing to relate to you.*
- ✦ *Humility shows you are grateful for the things others provide, and also that you have the desire to learn about their culture.*

Spring Semester 2017

Addition of readings about humility

Selected comments inspired by short readings on humility

- ✦ *Nobody expects that I will be perfect. Through my fears I can learn how to trust in God and cultivate the value of humility.*
- ✦ *I was reminded that God would help me abroad as He does here in every situation.*
- ✦ *Humility = I can't but God can. Acknowledging God's power and that I cannot do it on my own.*
- ✦ *Humility = I acknowledge my mistakes and weaknesses, and put my trust in God.*
- ✦ *Silence is a good practice. Often we talk to Jesus, but don't make time to listen to Him.*

Receptive humility

Selected comments after reading about receptive humility

- ✦ *I need to listen to others when they talk about their life and their family.*
- ✦ *I need to have an open mind when I am talking to someone.*
- ✦ *I need to remember humility. I don't know everything, and can learn from everyone.*
- ✦ *I need to take time to reflect about my experiences.*
- ✦ *I need to make friends.*
- ✦ *We all are neighbors—some need help and others can offer it.*
- ✦ *I need to think first of others, and be patient with others and myself.*
- ✦ *I need to ask myself everyday, how am I going to love my neighbor today?*

Final project

Selected comments on humility from students' final projects

- ✦ *I believe humility as well as trust and respect are very important aspects. This semester taught me the importance of humility not only when I travel abroad but also in my daily life.*
- ✦ *For me, the most important topic was humility: we cannot enter a new culture and shine for Christ if we are not humble. If we think we know everything and don't need any help, we won't be good models and will fail in our mission of learning and having an open mind.*

Spring Semester 2017

Semester abroad: First week

An attitude of cultural humility...

- ✦ *helped me in my first week with my new family since I was prepared to encounter differences. I needed to observe and ask questions to understand better about expected behavior, food, and worship customs.*
- ✦ *helped me with my first reactions, because I was able to face new things with a positive attitude and was ready to accept differences.*
- ✦ *helped me to experience every new thing with a positive perspective.*

Semester abroad: Final project



✦ *Cultural humility was very important during my time in Costa Rica in order to show respect and appreciation for the culture. I experienced many cultural differences and suffered culture shock. It would have been easy to reject those differences and follow my own customs and cultural values...*

Being culturally humble was beneficial during my transition to the new country. Without a humble attitude, I wouldn't have had experiences with such a powerful impact on my life, and wouldn't have had the quality of relationships I attained with my host families and other people I met during the semester.

Semester abroad: Final project



- ✦ *For me, humility was important for adjusting to the host culture. Adjusting was necessary in order to spend four months away from home. I had to recognize what were the things of my home culture that I really loved, and those I didn't like. When I was able to do so, I started appreciating the Spanish culture.*
- Humility was necessary for admitting the bad aspects of my own culture and valuing the good in the other. When I was humble, I was able to mix good aspects of both cultures and let them have a positive influence in my life.*

Semester abroad: Final project

- ✦ *God taught me many things during the experience of studying a semester in Spain. But first He taught me about cultural humility and its value in a cross-cultural context. It was essential for learning and maturing. One needs to maintain a humble attitude to be able to appreciate and accept differences found in other countries. Instead of judging or comparing, one needs to be open to a new perspective in each cross-cultural context. Furthermore, it is important to seek opportunities to learn from the people around us. This experience taught me that each person has a story, and taking the time to know her, to listen to her story and to build a relationship is one of the most valuable things anyone can do. Learning from other people and trying to build authentic relationships have the power of enriching one's life.*

Listening

- ✦ Listening is much more than allowing another to talk while waiting for a chance to respond. Listening is paying full attention to others and welcoming them into our very beings. The beauty of listening is that those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their words more seriously and discovering their true selves. Listening is a form of spiritual hospitality by which you invite strangers to become friends, to get to know their inner selves more fully, and even to dare to be silent with you.

Nowen

Conclusion



- ✦ Through the material addressing cultural humility introduced in my preparation courses, we learned that humility encourages listening with an open mind, to be receptive to the other and welcome her presence, to appreciate other peoples' ideas and advice, to learn from the stranger.
- ✦ All comments and journals collected during the last three semesters demonstrated that adding reflective activities based on readings about cultural humility helped students to feel better prepared for their semester abroad, and to adjust more easily to new experiences in the host country.

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