Cross Cultural Leadership – 15.996
Lecture Notes

Class One – Introduction and Overview

- *Set the baseline. What understanding of leaders and leadership has each of us already acquired? How does that reflect our global experiences?*
- *Identify teams*
- *Team introductory presentation of the team's region: geography, history, regional differences, politics, economic issues*
- *Brief overview of the theories and themes in this course*

Agenda

- Welcome – agenda, purpose of class
- Class Introductions –
    name, class, work experience, what cultural background?
- Create teams
- Introductory presentation by each team
    Give teams 20 minutes to prepare
    Presentation is short (5 minutes): 30,000 foot
        What do you think might be distinctive about your region?
        Geography, history, politics, economic issues, regional differences
- (if time permits)Brief overview of theories and themes
- Explanation of Syllabus and Next Week's Assignment

Overview and Purpose of Class

- Explain Agenda
- Purpose – to examine what constitutes "effective" leadership across cultures.
    - My definition of leadership – use this as your default definition until you find something you feel is more compelling
    - Leadership – the ability to influence a group of people to achieve a shared goal
- Assumption of class: If someone's behaviors and skills enable them to be an "effective leader" in a particular setting/culture – that those same behaviors and skills will <u>not</u> necessarily enable that person to be effective elsewhere
    - That is – what is experienced as "effective leadership" is contingent on the context. What industry, what phase the company is in (start-up, growth, blue chip, etc), corporate culture, economic context, regional (ethnic, cultural) context.
    - We will focus on regional context
- Pragmatic Goal – to prepare you for business assignments outside of your native country/ culture. (At least you will know some of the parameters to watch out for)
- Roadmap –
    - You will form teams. Each team will focus on a particular region/culture.
    - Each week
        - the class is structured around an aspect of what it's like to work in a culture that various theorists have identified as differentiated. Something that is not the same across cultures. Notions of time. Notions of power.
        - We will discuss what was in the readings.
        - Each team will present stories/anecdotes that help to illustrate how your culture/region responds to the aspect of the week. Sometimes as a stand-up presentation, others as round-robin informal presentations
        - Usually one pair of teams will prepare a "Cross-cultural dialogue." Each team will present how its region handles a specific situation. For example: hiring. Other teams are expected to provide content as well. All comment/discuss.
        - If something's not working, let me know and we will change it.
- Caveat about stereotypes. These are anecdotes. May not be indicative of the norm of the culture.
    - Do not take offense.
    - Offer alternate concepts. Offer alternate interpretations
    - This is toolkit and framework – sonar to help you improve your own international navigation – but what we do here (based on anecdotes and personal viewpoints) – may not be what you encounter.

- Course Evaluation –
    - Graded Pass/Fail
    - Class participation and attendance
    - Team presentations/notes
    - End of course paper (may be done by self or by small group (no more than 3). Must compare/contrast some aspect of leadership (influencing people in a business context) from at least 2 cultures/regions. 5 – 10 pages. Due last day of class.

Create Teams

I do this real time. When I ask them (earlier) to introduce themselves, I ask particularly that they state where in the world they have lived. Then at this point in the class I create teams based on a blend of supply and demand.

First I determine the demand – I ask for a list of places the class would like to learn about, expecting they will remember the places mentioned during the introductions. I write down the places that they mention on the board. "Europe" is clearly too broad and "Ghana" too narrow.   But for the most part I just write down what they say.

Then we explore the supply. Of the countries/regions listed – how many students have lived/worked in each? I'm looking for a minimum of two students for each country/region; individuals who have lived/worked in the area long enough that they can be spokespeople for the culture. I've tried teams anchored by people who are "really interested" or "have friends who live there" -- but that hasn't worked. Those teams just cannot provide a thick, rich description or answer the questions the other students have. I am open to experiment. For example – having one person from Saudi Arabia and one from Yemen (even though those are culturally distinct countries) makes a perfectly adequate base for a "Middle East" team. Especially since most of the students in my class have very little personal knowledge of that area of the world.

Then I step back and see what we have. I'm looking for 5 to 8 teams. Fewer teams means each team gets more time to speak. More teams mean that more of the world is discussed and I have to do a lot of active time management. I decide what regions we will use.   (For example: US, Germany, China, Japan, and Mexico).

I then write the names of each team across the board – so that there is space underneath each team name. I invite the students then to come up and choose teams.   I set minimum and maximum team sizes. For example, if there are 8 teams and 35 students I say that a team must have at least 3 and no more than 5 members.

Once the teams are created, I give them the first assignment. They are given 20 minutes to create overview presentations about their countries/regions. I ask them to briefly describe the geography, history, politics, economic issues, and regional differences of their target area.   Usually a 5 minute presentation with 5-10 minutes Q&A is fine. At this point I'm looking at the clock – I try to have every team present their overview in this class. Some teams use PowerPoint. Others use flip charts that I have available to them.