American Culture Workshop

International Student Orientation 2013
Multiculturalism/Diversity

- Started with the continuous mass immigration with brought different cultures/traditions to American Society
- Civil Rights movements – justice, freedom and equality for all.
- Salad Bowl/Melting Pot metaphor
- African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Italian-Americans, etc.
- Identity… I AM
Independence/Individualism

- Life decisions driven mostly by your needs (not needs of family/group)
- High value placed on individual accomplishments and independence
- Adult and independent at 18
- You are responsible for your actions/decisions as an adult
Individualism vs. Collectivism

- How did you decide:
  - To go to Miami
  - Your major
  - Your career aspiration
  - Where you will live
Time

- Time can be saved, spent, used wisely, or wasted
- Scarce “Time is money”
- Be on time: Sign of respect, person is serious and committed
- Expected to be a few minutes early for meetings and class
- Social settings ok to be 5 to 10 minutes late
- Do one thing at a time
- Meet deadlines on time, work first play later
Introductions & Gatherings

• Introduce by shaking hands and saying your given/first name (informal)
• Business and more formal settings, you would
  • say first and last name
• Friends may greet with a hug (females)
  • or with a handshake
• Call before visiting
• Typically gifts are not expected when invited to someone’s house.
  • Potlucks are common, in which guests bring a drink, dessert, or homemade dish
• When eating at a restaurant, everyone pays for themselves
Communication in the U.S.

- Direct, to-the-point, and clear communication but some small talk OK
- Conversations are search for information, a lot of questions, shows sign of interest, “No stupid questions”
- Replies can be quick and abrupt
- Say what they mean “No means No”
- Personal space (2 feet apart) and make eye contact
- Show politeness:
  - Excuse me, Thank you, Please
- Rude:
  - Interruptions
  - Speaking foreign language in front of somebody who doesn’t speak that language
- Taboo
  - Not OK to ask somebody about these topics unless they are a close friend or relative:
    - Political Orientation, Religion, Money (asking how much one earns), Sexual Orientation
- Small Talk
  - Weather, Traveling, Classes and Jobs, Sports, Music, Movies, Fashion, Shopping
Social Media Communication

- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Photo Snapchat etc.
- American communicate more through social media instead of physical interactions or using their phones.
- Students will advertise social events through these outlets so they can get a wide range of attendance.
- **PLEASE REMEMBER:** Do not put your personal information on these websites such as banking information, or any information that pertains to your identity.
**Written Communication**

- Email – You will almost always contact your professor or advisers through email. Please remember to:
  - Start the email by saying: “Dear Professor “Professor’s Last Name” or “Dear (Adviser’s name)
  - Identify yourself and let them know what course they teach
  - Write your issue, concern or compliment
  - Do not write your email like a text, be clear and concise
  - End the conversation by signing your name.

- Texting – Friends may text more than call, and use abbreviations or codes to replace words
  - **Lol**: laugh out loud, **U**: you, **4**: for, **2nite**: Tonight, **BRB**: Be Right Back, **J/K**: Just Kidding, **L8R**: Later, **NP**: No problem, **TTYL**: Talk To You Later
Friendship Patterns/Customs

Americans are usually friendly to get along with.

Coconut and Peach comparison

The Coconut
- Hard, difficult-to-penetrate shell with much softer fruit inside
- Represents friendship patterns in many cultures in which a relationship stays at a formal level for a long time before growing into a close friendship

The Peach
- Soft fruit on the outside with a hard pit in the inside
- Represents a pattern common in the US culture
- It’s relatively easy to become “social friends” or acquaintances with Americans (soft outside layer), however forming a close friendship takes time (the hard shell of the pit)
• While Americans are generally friendly — there are different levels of friendships among Americans.
  o Close Friendships (best friends, long-lasting friendships, roommates, hallmates etc)
  o Acquaintances (work colleagues, classmates, neighbors etc)
  o Niche Friends: Friends for different activities, hobbies, and interests
Friendship Patterns/Customs Cont.

• Americans may move many times, due to this mobile lifestyle, they are used to making ‘survival friendships’
  ▪ Make friends quickly
• American will have different “best friends” from all over:
  ▪ It is not unusual to grow up in one location, attend university out-of-state and then begin a professional career elsewhere
    ▪ Best Friend from Home
    ▪ Best Friend from Elementary School/Middle School
    ▪ Best Friend from High School/Undergrad
    ▪ Best Friend from Grad School/Work etc....
Social Interactions with Friends

• Compared to many other cultures, Americans are sometimes considered informal:
  o Americans are comfortable using first or nicknames quickly.
• It is also common to acknowledge strangers on the street by smiling, or maybe even saying “hi”
• Common to say “let’s hang out sometime” without making concrete plans, it is a courtesy expression
• Appropriate if you want to follow up to make plans
Miami Culture

- Academics
- Campus life: Involvement beyond the classroom
  - Residence Life
    - LLC Programs
    - Community Council
- Sports (Football, Hockey, Basketball)
  - Intermural Sports
- Homecoming
- University Pride
- Campus Events
  - Performances
  - Special Speakers-Lecture Series
  - Gallery's
- Party
  - Peer Pressure
  - Use of Alcohol/Drugs
Student Organizations

- **The Hub**: Directory of over 400 student organizations.
- **Diversity Affairs Council Organizations**:
  - International Student Organization (ISO)
  - Chinese Students & Scholars Friendship Association (CSSFA)
  - Korean American Student Association (KASA)
  - Asian American Association (AAA)
  - African Student Union (ASU)
  - Indian Student Association
  - Association of Latin American Students (ALAS)
  - Black Student Action Association (BSAA)
  - Middle Eastern Cultural Club & Arts (MECCA)
  - Native American Student Association (NASA)
  - **Signal**: Coordinators of BridgeMe ([http://bridgeme.org/](http://bridgeme.org/)), an online network & directory of international and domestic students at other Universities to blog, coordinate “hangouts” and share advise.
  - **There are 80+ Diversity Affairs Organizations!** Log onto the hub to search for organizations: [https://muhub.collegiatelink.net/](https://muhub.collegiatelink.net/)
- **Greek Life**
Opportunities to Learn About American Culture on Campus

Office of International Student and Scholar Services
Events:
NationaliTea
Global Buddies
Global Neighbors
Intercontinental Week

Office of Diversity Affairs:
Diversity Affairs Council
Diversity Affairs Council Events, Global Holiday Party and Diversity Week
Black History Celebration
Cesar Chavez Celebration
Cultural Norms/Values

• NO smoking in public areas
  • Ask if people mind if you smoke
• Environment/recycling
  • Paper, plastic bottles, and glass
• Picking up after self
• Volunteering
Popular Holidays

Martin Luther King Day (Jan)
President’s Day (Feb)
Memorial Day (May)
Independence Day (4th of July)
Labor Day (Sept)
Halloween (Oct)
Thanksgiving (Nov)
Christmas Day (Dec)
New Year’s Eve (Dec)
Questions?

Do you have any questions about American culture/traditions?