

**Final Report on the Research Visit to the University of the Western Cape to Teach A Graduate Module in Women and Gender Studies Programme, 17 July-10 August 2007**

BACKGROUND [From Application]

Current curricular practices in South Africa need to establish educational bases for communications instruction which values the self and 'other,' fosters mature personal expression, advances human relatedness and which allows for multiple concepts of identity. My course Negotiating Identities: Developing Communication Skills Among Diverse Professionals and the subsequent workshop are directed at developing these particular skills in order to facilitate the resolution of conflict and the development of sensitivity toward 'otherness.' My expertise with ethnic education acquired through instructional experience in Asia, Europe and the Americas can be a valuable contribution to South Africa's current dynamic process of the negotiated development of an inclusive democratic culture and society.

This block course has specifically designed and compiled descriptive readings, comparative discussion sessions, directed appropriate language usage games, directed role-play exercises, reflective research assignments and a final presentation. All of these activities are created to foster strategy development aimed to reduce feelings of cultural isolation, prejudice and suspicion even among the class population, and above all to foster within this discrete group, their expressed understanding of and appreciation for the 'mosaic' components of cultural identity within the South African national identity. The transformation and reduction of cultural conflicts among the diverse ethno-linguistic populations present in South Africa can only occur on the meta-level, once these kinds of micro-level, one-on-one communications and exchanges of perceptions have taken place.

The differences and similarities among the strategies for the academic community and those employed for the business community [ngo, go, corporate, non-profit, self-employed] will be highlighted within the two-week period. The first week (30 July-3 August) will have an education focus, and the second week (6 August-10 August) will present more business-focused discussions.

At course conclusion, Student Participants will have a context for verbal and non-verbal modes of communication, they will have been encouraged to develop listening skills based on trust and mutual appreciation, they will have been exposed to the concepts of Indigenous Knowledge Systems versus Academic Knowledge Systems, and they will have new and renewed respect for diverse ways of knowing the world.

EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES:

With sincere appreciation to Lepha Crockett at UMC and Debra Lamson at UWC, my overall experience was greatly more positive than negative. With thanks to Professor Rod Uphoff, despite his being on leave, for securing an apartment for me to rent for the

month in Cape Town. With deep gratitude to the fourteen graduate and undergraduate students in my course, for the experience of guiding and observing their professional and educational transformations in the realm of positively sharing time, space and ideas with persons different from themselves, and for letting me in on their lives both as a professor and a friend. With acknowledgement to Dr. Tammy Shefer and Dr. Desiree Lewis as chair and professor, respectively in the Women and Gender Studies Programme, who provided this involvement for me in their department at UWC.

I was extremely fortunate to meet and spend time with accomplished scholars from the UWC Faculty of Education, Professor Aslam Fataar, Director of Research Development and Professor Zubeida Desai, Dean, who both showed considerable interest in my decade of indigenous research documentation in Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces. They invited me to the Education Faculty weekly lunch research forums, which were a unique opportunity for me to hear the transformation stories of before and after in educational research projects from these professors who had taught in the apartheid era and are continuing as educators in the present day.

It was quite interesting to meet other professors, who happened to be of African descent, and full-time educators from the Missouri System who were also visiting at UWC. Dr. Daopu T. Numbere, Program Head, Petroleum Engineering from Missouri University of Science & Technology (formerly UMR) and Dr. Omiunota Ukpokodu, Associate Professor of Curriculum & Instructional Leadership from UMKC were on campus during my weeks at UWC. Our meetings were brief, but intensely enjoyable, as we swapped stories about comparisons of students and faculty from the USA and South Africa.

The highlight and signature purpose of my experience were the phenomenal fourteen participants in my course, “Negotiating Identities,” which began on 30 July, for four hours daily. This diverse group included graduate, undergraduate and honors students with cultural homes in Rwanda, Cameroon, Zimbabwe and ethnic colored and black South Africans. Our opening discussions brought up the terminologies related to the current mood of xenophobia forcefully apparent in South Africa. These students were from the disciplines of business management, religion, history, psychology, social development and women and gender studies. They taught me the meaning of the term, “macreri creri,” which had even been lobed my way, an insulting word for an outsider, interloper, foreigner. The classroom became our ‘safe haven’ to openly confront and discuss our experiences with difference, discrimination and appropriate and non-appropriate responses within the work place. Each person had to reach across the table to relate their own story to those who were only just learning about the varied life histories among this diverse group of women and men. The in-class reading of each student’s ancestral family portrait was a tear-filled, transforming day for all those present, including the professor.

On Monday, 6 August, the beginning of the second week of class, we took a group field trip to a seminar event sponsored by the South African Human Sciences Research Council, entitled “African Politics, Patriarchy and Gender Struggles,” which was broadcast to facilities around the country from the HSRC Pretoria headquarters. This

event was part of the national celebration of Women's Day on 9 August. We viewed the video conference/interactive session from a building at the University of Cape Town. The distinguished panel in Pretoria included Professor Amina Mama, chair of the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town and Mmatshilo Motsei, poet and author of "The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court." The two-hour session was extremely beneficial for my UWC class participants because the topics and questions from studio guests in Pretoria and the other video participants in Durban completely dovetailed with the focus of our course. I was blessed to be awarded by the moderator in Pretoria, the opportunity to pose the final question of the video seminar. I haven't viewed the final video, but do hope that the cogent responses articulated by the panel to my call for further strategies for seasoned and naive diverse work place professionals survived the HSRC video editors.

As a special treat for the course participants, the Ndzundza Ndebele royal Princess, eldest daughter of the late King Mayitja III, Princess Ntombizodwa Mahlangu accepted my invitation to travel from her post as a graduate lecturer in Infomatics Systems at the University of Pretoria to visit our class in Cape Town. Her PowerPoint presentation shown on her laptop in my class, gave participants a rare and unique opportunity to meet and question a member of the household of an indigenous sovereign concerning diverse and changing values and practices among members of this black nation based in Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Limpopo Provinces, perhaps never visited by the majority of these Cape Town based students. Princess Ntombizodwa discussed her life since the end of the apartheid era as an educated black woman, not a member of South Africa's ruling indigenous group, who has made her way into the corporate mainstream. The student response to her presentation/visit was impressive, as coloured South Africans learned firsthand about black South Africans and other black Africans gained insights into aspects of the South African culture in which they now live.

The final project for my course was a written descriptive scenario showing application of the strategies learned and discussed in the weeks of the class sessions. Students were asked to describe an actual workplace (or academic) event and discuss in detail their initial responses to the event and how the use of the new strategies might have mediated the previous outcomes and feeling surrounding this event. All final project reports were viewed by the Professor only, however anyone who desired was allowed to share their scenario openly to the group. Those reports, which were read aloud to the group brought tremendous verbal commentary from other students. Most responses of support garnered additional shared personal experiences of added insights for the participants and the professor. This group of diverse participants, who were initially somewhat wary of those in the room with whom they had no previous contact, now had become a bonded group who expressed true empathetic feelings for the plights of one another in daily life. Final evaluations were written about the course and professor, of which I did receive copies. Some of these accompany this report.

On the last day of class, the students threw a phenomenal surprise party for me with food, drink and presents for the teacher! Emotions in the room ran high for participants and professor. There were photographs taken, addresses and number exchanged, and good will expressed verbally and with meaningful gestures. Everyone wanted to hold onto

each other, and embrace the ‘friendships’ formed through this transformational course experience. Most impressive to me, as a 35-year veteran professor were these students, this cohort from UWC, who actually read all of the assigned book chapters and hand-outs, who participated fully in the class discussions, and who actually completed all of the written assignments in a timely manner. I would completely enjoy teaching this population of students again, and highly recommend this academic experience. The only down-side was the lack of my requested in-kind UWC departmental provisions, such as a permanent daily venue (classroom) for the course and video resources provided to record the 10 sessions.

Professor Tammy Shefer, Director of the Programme in Women and Gender Studies at UWC, was not on campus during my teaching stay, because she was a Carnegie Scholar on fellowship at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Following my weeks in Cape Town, I was fortunate to visit with her in Johannesburg, when she and Professor Norman Duncan, Head of the School of Human and Community Development, invited me to give a presentation on my course and the philosophical underpinnings, the strategies and terminologies used, and the course outcomes. On Tuesday, 14 August, I was privileged to give my presentation, “Negotiating Identities: Communication Strategies for the Professional in Diverse Workplaces,” to the Faculties of Humanities, the School of Education and the School of Human and Community Development.

Following my PowerPoint presentation in the Enthonjeni Centre Lecture Theater, the professors asked demonstrative questions, however, even more stimulating were the lively discussion statements, which ensued. One female Afrikaner professor spoke frankly about not wanting to relinquish any more aspects of “white privilege,” and questioned why it would benefit her. In addition to my comments concerning greater access in a society to provide greater investment in that society, both black and coloured professors gave verbal exclamations concerning their new society in which more have a place to be free to receive and contribute to a noble South Africa. The discussion/debate continued well passed the allotted time frame, and in conclusion, I thanked the professors for allowing me to witness and learn from such open discourse. I explained that in the 43 years of equal access in the USA society we have not yet solved all the issues of attitude toward/against diversity, and that for a country in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of open access in the society, I believed South Africa to be light years ahead of us because of provisional forums such as this one sponsored by the academy for open dialogue without recrimination among diverse colleagues.

A highlight of this day for me was meeting Professor Cheryl Potgieter, acclaimed professor from the University of Pretoria, who is a frequent visiting professor to UMSL through the UMC-UWC exchange. Dr. Potgieter’s book, “Women, Development and Transport,” had just come out in June. She and I had great discussions and share a passion for South African art and artists.

Following are student course evaluations from my “Negotiating Identities” class taught in July-August 2007 at the University of the Western Cape.



**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

**Evaluation Form: Thank you for your anonymous evaluation of this University of the Western Cape course module curriculum and Professor Hoard, written as an enrolled participant. You may make recommendations for future course sessions.**

**COURSE**

The course was excellent. IT gave people so much knowledge and skills how to deal with certain complex situations. This course helped to prepare ~~how~~ students how to evaluate yourself as a person and how to apply certain principles.

**PROFESSOR**

The lecturer was clear in bringing her points over to us. She was very interactive and encouraged everybody to be participative. She made the course very enjoyable and informative. She was so positive that this attitude influenced us in so many ways. Her voice is so soothing and beautiful that I find that it actually affected me when I talk.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The timeframe of the course could have been a bit longer. They should also look at setting a permanent venue as long as the course is.

**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

This course was thoroughly enjoyable & relevant. I've been reading & trying to put into practice these principles for sometime & Adrienne presented the tools in such an easy doable manner. This course is relevant for people from all walks of life, not just in an academic environment. The course was well-presented but I feel the time allowed, i.e. 2 weeks was not sufficient.

**PROFESSOR**

Prof Hoard is an excellent teacher & presented the course in a professional manner. She is approachable, apathetic & knew her subject. We felt comfortable with her, I liked her psychological approach to the subject. She should be brought back to UWC.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

✂ The course was not long enough: all the content was not covered in the time allowed to it. Additional time should have been allowed for processing the information. This kind of course should be offered again!

**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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COURSE

I think there needs to be more of these type of courses. I learnt a lot about negotiating identities especially in my diverse workplace and my everyday life.

PROFESSOR

Very good, intellectual easy going lecturer  
She knows her field and how to present  
the course to us. I am very thankful  
for the experience she taught us. She  
has a nice soothing voice that got  
my attention and let me relax.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I think you need to invite her back to  
come <sup>teach</sup> other students about this unique  
course. and others <sup>courses</sup> as well. He need a  
better venue to teach the class.



**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

Great course, will be able to take what I have learned and share with others.

I am definitely a stronger person since doing this course, and I will use the tools I've learnt

Quality of course - excellent!

**PROFESSOR**

Excellent!! Dr Hoard is very knowledgeable in the subject  
Dr Hoard has a calm, soft, gentle manner in which she conducts her lecture, yet the message is at all times clear and powerful.

would have benefitted so much more had there been more time. she's lovely!

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Course should be a bit longer
- Have not had enough time to process everything

**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

Too short, we need more time to explore the issues uncovered. The course is really something in which to stretch and explore ones inner assumptions and beliefs, to go where we are too afraid to venture

**PROFESSOR**

Meeting her I believe helped me to grow in my personal capacity. Not only were the seminars insightful, but the incentive to grow from insights gathered ~~have~~<sup>has</sup> been most enjoyable.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Please bring her back & make it compulsory for honours psyché students to take her course.

**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

This course is an informative course. It has been one of the modules that helps one to look beyond "theories", in this instance I mean to be able to practice what we've learned in class.

**PROFESSOR**

The lecturer is one of the best lecturers that I ever had. She has good quality of "listening". She is very attentive and calm, and gives space to students to share their thoughts and give their own comments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

I recommend this kind of course to students; because I definitely had had a great time. The multicultural and diversity aspect helps to bring students together and get to know each and another. I would have liked to have more time but still we have covered enough.

**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

Negotiating Identities taught me to learn about communicating properly with people. Of most importance I learnt that I had to work on myself more than I expected change in others.

**PROFESSOR**

Dr Adrienne Hoard is warm, accomodating and a wonder lecturer. Times I wished to be mentored by her

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This was an 'excellent' course - I thoroughly enjoyed it as each course developed me.

Sadly the time was limited.

Please bring her back ! If not can we go on exchange.

**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

This has been a very interactive, enjoyable course!!  
I wish it was for the semester.

**PROFESSOR**

Dr Hoard really gave us a chance to absorb the course practically. Her teaching method was one I enjoyed and she is a very good teacher.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

I want this course to be a semester!!  
Dr. Hoard come back again soon!!!

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**Negotiating Identities: Communications for Professionals in the Diverse Workplace**

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**COURSE**

The course were awesome, especially since it wasn't all about book knowledge only but also made allowance for personal & life experience

**PROFESSOR**

She's the most amazing person!  
I've learned so much from her especially her father's wise anecdotes eg:  
you must know who to which!

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

I'd recommend this course for anyone & would actually like for it to be a continuous module every year.  
Shanore