Cultural Competence: Getting Started

Increase cultural awareness and competence for working with and living among culturally diverse populations.

Getting Started

Diversity | World Cultures | Regional Cultures | Study Work Abroad

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you become more aware of different cultures and get started on building competence. Keep in mind that increasing knowledge, building skills, and changing attitudes to communicate effectively and appropriately with others is an ongoing engagement with many different aspects involved.

Inclusion Resources will help you:
- Understand more about cultures and cultural differences
- Become aware of local diversity
- Find quick facts about a country or ethnic group, or a religion
- Learn about the history, cultures, and customs of a region or a country
- Prepare for going abroad

Technology

This subject of cultural awareness and competence includes a variety of items, such as intercultural (interaction between at least two different cultures), intercultural (within the same culture), cross-cultural (comparing cultures), and multicultural (more than one culture).

Courses are not necessarily tied to specific boundaries, so intercultural communication is also distinct from international communication.

For more information, see topics like World’s Intercultural, Intercultural, Cross-Cultural, and International Communication: What’s the Difference? below and ANSICOC’s Cultural Competence PDF.

Keep an Open Mind

Please note that the resources recommended within this guide may not reflect the University of Michigan or the library's position. Although we may represent a particular perspective, often Western, with varying levels of sensitivity, they should help you understand and respect some aspects of another culture without imposing your own values. Nonetheless, these resources may also generate reactions, so it is important to keep in mind that everyone online and offline learns differently. Keeping an open mind and adapting accordingly to specific circumstances may help.

Interesting in learning more about open-mindedness? Take a look at How to Be Culturally Open-Minded: A Psychological and Rational Analysis (dilbert.com).

Why is Intercultural Awareness Important?

The University of Michigan has a large international and intercultural population, as demonstrated by the enrollment data below. You may encounter people with different customs and values that may affect communication and mutual understanding. Your cultural knowledge, sensitivity, and competence will help you interact more effectively with others and foster intercultural communication within the U.S. and abroad. Knowing about the local cultures of your destination may also help ease anxiety and make your travels more enjoyable.

University of Michigan - Ann Arbor

Student Enrollment by Country and Level

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Male</th>
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<td>567</td>
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<td>1234</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to Increase Intercultural Awareness

U-M Cultural Learning

U-PAC Cultural Training

Online training course with units and sections for learning about the concept of culture and how skills, attitudes, and behaviors affect adaptation to new and unfamiliar environments.

International Scholar Online Resources

These resources will give you an overview of what a trip is like and how to prepare for going abroad. They are a good starting point for learning about international travel.

World’s Cultural Guides (resources)

Visually engaging, short PDFs with simple suggestions for Americans traveling abroad.

U-M Best Friends Traveling

U-M’s project website dedicated to helping students traveling abroad to learn how to cope with culture shock, stress, loneliness, and more. Click on Self-Assessment to test your own mental health screening.

Ready to explore? Click on a tag below.

Asia
Africa
Europe
Latin America
North America
Middle East
South America
Central America
Caribbean

Diversity

Work Abroad

Study Abroad

Canada

$View resources by category.

Librarians and Subject Librarians

Alicia Pone

Contact: 320 North Library North

UM Portal in Foreign Languages

Library Contact

Recommended Resources or Web Sites

Submit Here

I recommend

Your name

Your email

Subject feedback on Google Forms.

This research project was completed by Sheila Chan as part of the Michigan Library Scholars summer internship at the University of Michigan Library.
Cultural Competence: World Cultures

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Getting Started  Diversity  World Cultures  Regional Cultures  Study/Work Abroad

Basic Facts

World Factbook (website)
The CIA's basic statistical and factual reviews of countries' geography, society, government, economy, energy, communication, transportation, military and transnational issues.

Europa World Plus (database)
Regularly updated profiles, statistics and economic and political essays of regions and countries.

GlobalEdge (website)
Business-oriented insight to states, countries, trade blocs, markets and industries. Country short facts and statistics cover social indicators. Includes external links to cultural resources.

NativePlanet Indigenous Mapping (website)
Demographic overview of indigenous communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Includes resource links for each group.

News Sources

- Newspaper Map
  Find newspaper websites by location on a map.

- Library PressDisplay
  Browse electronic, recent issues of world newspapers by country.

U-M Library Research Guides

- International, Regional, and National Data Sets
- News Sources
- Multicultural Studies
- Popular Culture
- Library Guide for International Students
- Interclass Resources
- Indigenous Resources
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Studies
- Women's Studies
- History (General)
- Musicology 139 - World Music
- Food Studies
- Religious Studies
- History of Art

I want to browse by...

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Series</th>
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Global Road Warrior (database)
This database provides basic country facts and lengthier articles on business, security, health, utilities, communication and entertainment. Addresses some stereotypes and demonstrates popular phrases in foreign languages. eBook versions available in Mirlyn.

CultureGrams (database)
Simple and easy to read overviews of over 200 countries, focusing on different populations' customs, lifestyles and societies from an American perspective. Includes a Kids, USA, Canada and World Edition.

Global Affairs Canada Country Insights (website)
The Canadian government's country profiles and guides to national cultures from Canadian and local perspectives. Includes resource links for additional information on culture, history, geography, etc.

Commisceo Country Guides (website)
Country guides discuss language, culture, customs and etiquette. This website also features additional blog posts regarding cultural awareness.

Countries and Their Cultures (2001 ebook)
National entries include information on history, ethnic relations, urbanism, government, society, economy, religion, health, arts, food, etc.

Images, Videos & Graphs

CalPhotos: People & Culture (website)
Photo bank of people and places.

Ethnographic Video Online (database)
Videos of family, cultural identity, gender roles, arts, religion, etc.

Hofstede Country Cultural Dimensions Ratings (website)
Graphical representation of countries' ratings of power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation & indulgence.
Cultural Competence: Regional Cultures

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Click on a region on the map or select a link below:

- USA & Canada
- Latin America & the Caribbean
- Europe
- Middle East & Northern Africa
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Asia & Oceania
Cultural Competence: USA & Canada

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Adjusting to the U.S.

- U-M SNRE Cultural Adjustment [website]
- U-M International Center: Adjusting to the U.S. [website]
- Questions for international students to think about when adjusting to the U.S. and Ann Arbor.
- International Student Guide to the U.S. [website]

National Cultures

- Culture Shock! ebook series (USA & Canada)
  Travel guide titles by country. Covers land and history, society, customs, local views, lifestyle, food, touristic activities, language, work and last facts. Commentary can be blunt and colloquial.

- Culture Smart! book series (USA & Canada)
  Travel guide titles by country. Covers country overview, various ethnic groups, values and attitudes, customs and traditions, etiquette, local lifestyle, entertainment, transportation, business and communication.

- Global Affairs Canada - Country Information Canada [website]
  Canadian government's country insight and cultural information for Canada from local perspective. Covers communication, dress, social institutions, entertainment, stereotypes, etc.

- Kids.gov Cultures & Ethnic Groups [website]
  U.S. government's recommended links to resources related to African, Asian, Hispanic and Native Americans, and Women.

- Interchange Learn About the U.S. [website]
  Recommendations for American books, TV/movies, music, sports, food, touristic attractions, as well as cultural activities in individual states.

News Sources

- Newspaper Map
  Find newspaper websites by location on a map.

- Library PressDisplay
  Browse electronic, recent issues of world newspapers by country.

Foreign Perspectives (books)

- The Chinese Character for Truth (1993)

- Across the Pond by Terry Eagleton
  Travelogue: Humorous anecdotes of America and its citizens from a British traveler and literary critic.

U-M Library Research Guides

- American Culture
- Anncent 461/Anthroc 461/Ling 461: Language, Culture and Society in Native North America
- Arab-American Studies
- Francophone Canada
- United States History

Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups

- Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America (2000 ebook)
  Entries by American ethnic group. Covers history, food, language, customs, greetings, social and gender dynamics, arts, media, etc.

- Multicultural America (2011 ebook)
  Entries by immigrant groups in the U.S. Covers background, migration and assimilation, demographic profile, impact on the U.S., later generations, notable people, etc. Includes timeline, map and statistics.

- Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples (1999 book)
  Entries by Canadian ethnic group. Covers origins, migration, community, family, culture, religion, politics, etc.

- A Native American Encyclopedia (2015 book)
  Entries organized by region and ethnic group. Includes overview, history, religion, government, customs, economy, dress, war and contemporary issues.

Images, Videos & Graphs

- American Indian History Online (database)
  Summaries, videos, slideshows, biographies, primary sources, maps and graphs on American Indian groups.
Cultural Competence: Latin America & the Caribbean

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

National & Regional Cultures

- **News Sources**
  - Newspaper Map
    - Find newspaper websites by location on a map.
  - Library PressDisplay
    - Browse electronic, recent issues of world newspapers by country.

- **Academic Texts**
  - Latin America Reader series
    - Titles by country. Anthologies of essays from different authors on history, politics and society.
  - Perspectives on... series
    - Anthology of essays on history, politics, society and culture that provide a multiperspective view.

- **U-M Library Research Guides**
  - AAS 473: Brazil History and Culture
  - Anthropology 330: Mexico: Culture and Society
  - Brazilian Studies
  - Caribbean Art and Visual Culture
  - DAAS 495: Transforming History: Haiti, Cuba and the Caribbean Region
  - From Colonial Saint-Domingue to Independent Haiti
  - LACS 321 Inca, Aztec and the Spanish Conquest
  - LACS 321: Indigenous Identity and Community in the Neoliberal Andes
  - Latin American & Caribbean Studies

- **References by Subject**
  - History & Culture
  - Arts & Literature
  - Beliefs

  **History & Culture**
  - *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture (2008 eBook)*
    - Entries by concept. Covers Portuguese-speaking regions and includes people, places, works, policies, languages, etc.
  - *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mexican American Cultures (2001 eBook)*
    - Entries by concept. Includes people, arts, religion, major civilizations' geography, cultural ecology, language and history.
    - Entries by concept. Includes arts, literature, media, political and social institutions, biographies, etc.
  - *Historical Dictionaries of Latin America & The Caribbean book series*
    - Encyclopedia titles by country. Brief entries on concepts, major historical and recent events, places and people.

- **Images, Videos & Graphs**
  - **Videos**
    - *Latin America in Video (database)*
      - Spanish video database for a variety of fields browsable by country.
    - *Americans (1993 video)*
      - English & Spanish video on issues that prevail in Latin America.
  - **Graphs**
    - *Glencoe World Geography textbook - Ch.5: The Cultural Geography of Latin America (PDF)*
      - Simple overview of Latin American people, history and culture. Includes graphs and maps for ethnic groups, languages, migration and urbanization, historical empires and religions.

Can’t find what you’re looking for? Try these resources:
Latin American Network Information Center (website)
CultureGrams  Global Road Warrior  GainGlobal  Encyclopedia of World Cultures  MyWorldAbroad

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Cultural Competence: Europe

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Regional & National Cultures

### All Resources

#### Regional

  Entries by ethnic group. Includes flag, map, descriptions of the people, their homeland, language, religion, etc.
  Entries by ethnic group. Overview discusses history, demography, language, etc.
- **Eastern Europe: An Introduction to the People, Lands, and Culture (2005 book)**
  Volumes organized by region, entries by country. Covers geography and demography, minorities, language, systems, cultural development, etc.
- **Encyclopedia of Eastern Europe: From the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism (2000 book)**
  Entries by concept. However, there are country-specific entries on geography, art, culture, language, literature, etc.
- **Southeast Europe: People and Culture (website)**
  Select a country to view introductory text and additional articles related to art, dance & theater, film, gastronomy, literature, music and sports.

#### National

- **Culture Shock! ebook series (Europe)**
  Travel guide titles by country. Covers land and history, society, customs, local views, lifestyle, food, touristic activities, language, work and last facts. Commentary can be blunt and colloquial.
- **Cultures and Customs of Europe book series**
  Titles by country. Introduces country and its history, then covers religion, customs, media, cinema, literature, and arts in more depth.
- **Culture Smart! book series (Europe)**
  Travel guide titles by country. Covers country overview, various ethnic groups, values and attitudes, customs and traditions, etiquette, local lifestyle, entertainment, transportation, business and communication.
- **Pop Culture Germany! (2006 book)**
  Overview of contemporary German popular culture. Covers music, social movements, sports, performances, tourism, literature, iconography, language, media, cinema, religion and arts.

### Images & Videos

- **Europeana Collections (website)**
  Database of artworks, artifacts, books, videos and sounds from museums, libraries and universities across Europe.
- **Sputnik Images (website)**
  Photo bank of historical images and coverage of current Russian and international events. Website viewable in English and Russian.

Can't find what you're looking for? Try these resources:

- CultureG Encyclopaedia
- Global Road Warrior
- GoGIN Global
- Encyclopedia of World Cultures
- MyWorldAbroad

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Regional & National Cultures

Regional

Encyclopaedic Ethnography of Middle-East and Central Asia (2005 book)
Entries by ethnic group. Includes overview of geography and population, language, history, society, family, ethnic conflict, economy, religion, culture, etc.

Pop Culture Arab World: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle (2005 book)
Overview of contemporary Middle Eastern popular culture. Covers music, social movements, sports, performances, tourism, literature, icons, language, media, cinema, religion and arts.

Endangered Peoples of Africa and the Middle East: Struggles to Survive and Thrive (2002 ebook)
Chapters sorted by region and communities. Provides information on traditional economy, social and political organization, religion, and threats to survival.

Global Connections: Middle East Culture (website)
Basic introduction to culture, language, religion of the Middle East in general, with timeline (up to 2002) and links to additional information.

National

Culture Shock! ebook series (Middle East & Northern Africa)
Travel guide titles by country. Covers land and history, society, customs, local views, lifestyle, food, touristic activities, language, work and fact. Commentary can be blunt and colloquial.

Cultures and Customs book series (Northern Africa) & Cultures and Customs of the Palestinians (2004 book)
Titles by country. Introduces country and its history, then covers religion, customs, media, cinema, literature, and arts in more depth.

Culture Smart! book series (Middle East & Northern Africa)
Travel guide titles by country. Covers country overview, various ethnic groups, values and attitudes, customs and traditions, etiquette, local lifestyle, entertainment, transportation, business and communication.

Images & Videos

Creative Dissent: Arts of the Arab World Uprisings (website)
The Arab American Museum's online exhibit of photos, graffiti images, videos and songs about the uprisings in the Arab World from 2010 to 2013. Curated by U-M associate professor & PhD student.

Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art (website)
The University of Oxford Ashmolean Museum's online collection of art from the Islamic Middle East, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, India and the Himalayas.

Can't find what you're looking for? Try these resources:
The Sub-Saharan Africa page may have more information related to Northern Africa.
Cultural Competence: Sub-Saharan Africa

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Regional & National Cultures

- **Regional**
    - Entries by ethnic group. Visual guide to history, language, ways of life, social structure, culture & religion.
    - Entries by region, country and major civilizations. Visual guide to history and peoples of countries.
    - Brief introductory entries on African language families, languages by country, and peoples and nations by country.
    - Broad introduction to African cultural diversity, gender dynamics, geomorphology, climate, history, population, economies, resources, current development and issues, etc.
  - Into Africa: A Guide to Sub-Saharan Culture and Diversity (2009 ebook)
    - General introduction to African communities, communication, customs, business etiquette, travel tips and regional differences.

- **National**
  - Culture Shock! ebook series (Africa)
    - Travel guide titles by country. Covers land and history, society, customs, local views, lifestyle, food, tourist activities, language, work and last facts. Commentary can be blunt and colloquial.
  - Cultures and Customs of Africa book series
    - Titles by country. Introduces country and its history, then covers religion, customs, media, cinema, literature, and arts in more depth.
  - Culture Smart! book series (Africa)
    - Travel guide titles by country. Covers country overview, various ethnic groups, values and attitudes, customs and traditions, etiquette, local lifestyle, entertainment, transportation, business and communication.
  - Society and Culture Complete Report ebook series
    - Entries by country. Information on gift-giving, greetings, holidays, life cycles, religion, sports, stereotypes, folklore, women, etc. Identical report and additional information on Global Road Warrior.
  - Historical Dictionaries of Africa series
    - Encyclopedia titles by country. Brief entries on concepts, major historical and recent events, places and people.

Websites

- **Art & Life in Africa**
  - Visual galleries and topic essays on art in and related to everyday life, education, ancient times, medicine, cultural exchange, etc. Country pages display key facts and figures, historical summary and local artworks.

- **Our Africa**
  - Country specific facts and figures, videos, images and descriptions of poverty, healthcare, food, daily life, people, culture, geography, nature, music, family, economy, education, jobs, history, politics, tourism, etc.

- **African Writing Online**
  - Short texts from African writers and articles about African literary works and authors.

- **Africaguide**
  - General African arts and culture, food, tribe, music, festivals information, basic country overviews, photo library and articles related to touristic travels in Africa.

- **Africa: The Art of a Continent**
  - The Guggenheim Museum's introductory online exhibit to artifacts, films and photographs from Africa. Use the clickable map to view by region.

Can't find what you're looking for? Try these resources:

- CultureGrams
- Global Road Warrior
- GoinGlobal
- Encyclopedia of World Cultures
- MyWorldAbroad
Cultural Competence: Asia & Oceania

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Regional & National Cultures

All Resources Print Only

Regional

Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania (2009 book)
Entries by ethnic group. Includes an overview of location, time period, ancestry and language, followed by a timeline and details about history, cultural identity, etc.

Encyclopedic entries by ethnic group. Overview describes population and history.

Encyclopedia of Modern Asia (2003 ebook)
Entries by concept. Includes people, festivals, themes, and subject entries on architecture, cuisine, cinema, literature, etc.

Charting the Pacific (website)
Discover stories of lives in the Pacific and explore maps, country profiles, and regional statistics and issues.

National

Culture Shock! ebook series (Asia & Oceania)
Travel guide titles by country. Covers land and history, society, customs, local views, lifestyle, food, tourist activities, language, work and fast facts. Commentary can be blunt and colloquial.

Cultures and Customs book series (Asia)
Titles by country. Introduces country and its history, then covers religion, customs, media, cinema, literature, and arts in more depth.

Culture Smart! book series (Asia & Oceania)
Travel guide titles by country. Covers country overview, various ethnic groups, values and attitudes, customs and traditions, etiquette, local lifestyle, entertainment, transportation, business and communication.

Etiquette Guides ebook series (China, Korea & the Philippines)
Titles by country. Includes information on character and values of the people, social etiquette, business etiquette and useful expressions.

The Encyclopedia of New Zealand (website)
New Zealand government’s online encyclopedia with entries on different ethnic groups, regions, creative and daily life, government, social concepts, nature, etc.

Images, Videos & Documents

ECAI Pacific Language Mapping (website)
Language atlas of the Pacific area, Southeast Asia, and Madagascar.

Yousef Jameel Centre for Islamic and Asian Art (website)
The University of Oxford Ashmolean Museum’s online collection of art from the Islamic Middle East, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, India and the Himalayas.

Trove (website)
The National Library of Australia’s digital collection of Australian books, images, newspapers, maps, music, websites, etc.

Coconet TV (website)
Interactive timeline, games, photos, blogs, videos about and from people in the Pacific.

Tribal Asia (2004 book)
A photo book of tribes in ancient Arabia, India, mountains, Central Asia and Malay archipelago.
Cultural Competence: Study/Work Abroad

Increase intercultural awareness and competencies for traveling abroad and living among culturally diverse populations.

Getting Started  Diversity  World Cultures  Regional Cultures  Study/Work Abroad

Things to keep in mind when preparing to go abroad...

U-Pacific Cultural Training

Online training resource with units and sections for learning about the concept of culture and how skills, attitudes and behaviors affect adaptation to a new and unfamiliar environment.

Global Scholar Online Learning

This interactive online course outlines what to do and expect before, during and after going abroad with many videos. Upon completion of the course, you can receive a 'Global Scholar Certificate.' Registration required.

World Citizens Guide (brochures)

Visually appealing, short PDFs with simple suggestions for Americans traveling or working abroad.

U-M Resilient Traveling

U-M's project website dedicated to helping students traveling abroad to learn how to cope with culture shock, stress, loneliness and more. Click on 'Self-Assessment' to take an online mental health screening.

Going Abroad Articles

MyWorldAbroad

Articles address various concerns related to international job and program applications, and emphasize that there are valuable skills to be learned before, during and after going abroad. Additional features include self-evaluations and resource links.

GoOverseas

Short overview of select countries and cities. Various articles about studying, teaching, interning and volunteering abroad. Includes program search.

GoAbroad.com

Read articles and reviews, and search for study, volunteer, intern and teach abroad programs.

TransitionsAbroad

Articles on work, study, travel and living abroad. This website has a large leisure travel section and its own online magazine.

Business-Specific Webpages

GoinGlobal

Country guides & USA/Canada City Career Guides provide business-focused cultural advice. Includes employer profiles, visa regulations, job application guidelines and trends, and job/internships listing.

World Business Culture

Business culture and etiquette guide to countries.

Business Insider Country Communication Chart

Diagrams of how different nationals negotiate business.

Passport to Trade European Business Culture

Select a country to read more about its business culture (communication, etiquette, etc.). Also includes information about the country, its history, cultural taboos, education, transport, being a foreigner in the country, and additional resource links.

News Sources

- Newspaper Map
  Find newspaper websites by location on a map.
- Library PressDisplay
  Browse electronic, recent issues of world newspapers by country.

U-M Resources

- Global Michigan
  U-M's portal for international opportunities and resources.
- International Center
  View more U-M webpages and resources for study, work & travel purposes.
- Center for Global and Intercultural Studies
  LSA-affiliated study abroad programs and tips. Click into "Intercultural Learning" under "Students." to view courses at U-M.
- M-Compass
  Portal for study or intern abroad programs.

U-M Library Research Guides

- Study Abroad Top 10 Countries
- Prep Course for Japan Trip - Library Guide
- Career Resources
- Funding for Students
- Funding Sources for School of Public Health Graduate Students
- Grants and Fundraising
- Social Work: Global Practice
- Stamps International Experience

How to speak and act?

Etiquette 101: Listen Up! (article)
How to say hello, good-bye, please, thank you and help in various languages, and country-specific greeting tips.

Journey/Woman What Should I Wear & Where (website)
*What to wear* tips for women traveling to select countries.

CultureCrossing Etiquette Guide (website)

Community-built and basic work and study etiquette guides by country.

Eating Abroad: The Cultural Resonance of Food (article)
An article that shares food tips for travelers.