Consciousness, Culture and Community in Bali, Indonesia

Summer, 2020. Bali, Indonesia

Credits: 3 Credits – HLTH 108

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Office Hours: By appointment

Target Audience: Undergraduate students, professionals, and continuing and distance education students interested in participating in a transformational travel opportunity and who seek a deeper understanding of human difference.

Pre-requisites or co-requisites: Instructor permission

Maximum Enrollment: 12

General education (e.g. D1) or other requirements satisfied: Diversity Two (D2)

Catalogue Description: Take a deep dive into Balinese culture, develop intercultural communication skills, better understand your own cultural blind spots and learn how to listen better while immersed in Balinese culture. Understand the concept of transformational travel, and the impact of tourism on traditional culture, both positive and negative.

Course Description

This course will provide opportunities to develop intercultural communication skills including cultural awareness, cultural adaptation, cultural empathy and non-evaluative listening. In addition, students will have opportunities to develop skills in the domain of consciousness or transcultural communication. Some of these include: present moment awareness, tolerance for ambiguity and not knowing, tolerance for different perspectives, holding multiple perspectives, non-reactive stillness, and traditional meditation practice.

We will form a learning community with working guidelines. This group will operate within the larger Balinese community which will allow students 1) to become more at ease with intercultural and transcultural skills; 2) to deepen their sense of community and; 3) to learn how to balance their own needs with the needs of others. There will be numerous opportunities for students to interface with Balinese families, teachers and traditional healers.

Our home base will be in Tebesaya, a quiet, traditional, community close to Ubud. Accommodation will be in Balinese “home stays” permitting close contact with extended families including the full range of generations from babies to grandparents. In this setting, where the arts are a central part of their culture, participants can
feel connected to how the Balinese approach daily life at work and relaxation, and in social, organizational, and ritual manners.

After we have settled in Tebesaya for a few days, we will travel to the Nirarta Center (www.awareness-bali.com), which is in the rice fields and green hills of rural east Bali. There we will take time for meditation and reflection, recognizing the rural roots of the Balinese way, and develop a deeper understanding of the Agama Hindu religion.

We will:

- Consider some of the key frames that shape Balinese holism, as we explore the emergence of polarities, their resolution, and integration
- Encounter the spirit of Balinese prayer and offerings, with an opportunity to create the latter
- Enjoy a visit to, and blessings from, a high priest in the village
- Attend several traditional music and dance performances
- Visit a Balinese master healer with an opportunity to observe and experience his work

Balinese psychiatrist, healer, and activist, Prof. Luh Ketut Suryani will offer her expertise in combining both traditional and contemporary approaches to what she calls bio-psycho-socio-cultural-spiritual well-being.

Western education and thinking tends to emphasize the rational mind. Categorization, analyzing and splitting, are prominent elements in the foreground of our awareness. In contrast, Balinese tradition, as with many Asian societies, tends to emphasize feeling, intuition, relationship, sensitivity to background context, complexity, balance, and a capacity to embrace change. In Bali the arts, healing, spirituality, and community are interwoven in daily life in a way that is unique in the modern world.

The Balinese perspective provides a compelling contrast to our own, and has profound implications for the maintenance of individual and collective well-being and the resolution of imbalances in our societies.

Our time in Bali will test and refine our assumptions, not just as an interesting cultural backdrop, but also as a profound difference through which we can probe deeper dimensions of well being and inter-being. We will examine the changing nature of Balinese society, getting a first-hand look at how transformational tourism has influenced traditional culture. What is gained from tourism – even so called transformational or spiritual tourism? What is lost? What traditions remain strong in Bali? Which have changed and which are under threat?

Course Learning Objectives

**After completing this course the student will be able to:**

1. Articulate the characteristics and epistemology of the Balinese people.

2. Describe specific differences between Balinese culture and your own.

3. Demonstrate intercultural & transcultural communication skills.
4. Describe how Balinese culture has been influenced by tourism, in both positive and negative ways.

**Working Guidelines for Our Learning Community**

1. We will work on non-evaluative listening, suspending judgment, categorization, and labeling.

   This process can be particularly challenging because our minds hear ideas, perspectives, and feelings different from our own. The mind then tends to evaluate the new, incoming data in terms of ‘how is that like my thought?’ or ‘how is that unlike my thought?’ The mind wants to immediately label, categorize and analyze the new data. Non-evaluative listening requires two responses, 1) acknowledgment of what the mind is wanting to do, and, 2) suspending that tendency. Instead the challenge is to be fully present, deepening our capacity to observe. After observation and pause there will be ample time to allow our cognitive processes to engage.

2. We will be present for all group meetings. If for some reason we need to be absent we will communicate that to the group.

   Once the group has come together, each person will be aware of all group members. The group will function as a small learning community. The expectation is that all community members will maximize their learning through their commitment and responsiveness to one another. In other words, much of the learning will happen in relationship with others.

3. All sharing within the group that is of a confidential nature will remain within the group.

   With this agreement members of the community can feel safe to share. With this feeling of emotional safety comes a increased willingness to explore parts of oneself that otherwise might be over-looked.

4. We will work on asking for what we want and need from the group.

   At times members of the group may have difficulty being in the group. This is when it is especially important that problems are communicated. Needs can then be articulated and solutions explored.

5. We will work on speaking from our own experience and honoring our own perspectives, thoughts, values, and attitudes.

   Often in our everyday lives we are challenged to focus on events in the external world. In this group there will be ample opportunity for participants to reflect on inner processes as well. This paves the way for our inner clarity to impact and inform our choices in the external world.

   **Implicit in these working guidelines is a respect for the evolving awareness of each member of the group, while being mindful of diverse perspectives and cultural frames of reference. Also implicit in these guidelines is the knowledge that each of us will take full responsibility for our own learning and simultaneously support the learning of our fellow group members.**
Preparation Questions Due *** (prior to first pre trip meeting)

Because we want you to become acquainted with how Balinese understand themselves and their own ways of being, we would like you to read chapters from the following two books: *The Balinese People* (Chapters 1, 2, 8, 9) and *Trance and Possession in Bali:* (Chapters 3, 5, 6, 8) both written by Luh Ketut Suryani, a Balinese healer and psychiatrist, & Gordon Jensen.

1. How do you think participation in Balinese ceremonies might help Westerners open to how Balinese understand the universe?
2. From your reading how do you think Balinese might understand or experience illness in ways different from our own?
3. How might you know if you are in or entering a meditative or trance state?
4. In developing relationships with Balinese people why might it be important to know the ways in which the Balinese experience and express emotions?
5. In his chapter “Meet Your Neighbors” what are several ways Jensen suggests you might try to connect and/or interact with your host family and with your neighbors?

Preparation Questions Due *** (prior to second pre trip meeting)

1. Larry Barna refers to six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication (p. 173 *Basic Concepts*). Can you give examples of how these stumbling blocks manifest in your daily life here in the U.S.?
2. Think of a person who has a communication style (p. 20 *Basic Concepts*) different from your own. Can you articulate what it is that is most problematic in your communication with that person?
3. As human beings we are almost continuously experiencing some kind of change or transition. What are some of the clues that tell us that we are entering into or moving through transitions?
4. What kind of perspective is required if one is to operate from “the Platinum Rule instead of the Golden Rule”?

Required Reading (Copies of all materials will be on reserve)

1. *The Balinese People* by Luh Ketut Suryani & Gordon Jensen
   Chapters 1, 2, 8, 9
2. *Trance and Possession in Bali:* by Luh Ketut Suryani & Gordon Jensen
   Chapters 3, 5, 6, 8
3. *Practicing the Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle
4. *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication* edited by Milton Bennett
5. *Intercultural Communication: A Current Perspective* by Milton Bennett pp. 1-34
6. *Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication* by Larry M. Barna pp. 173-190
7. *Overcoming the Golden Rule: Sympathy and Empathy* by Milton Bennett pp. 191-214
8. *Vagabonding* by Rolf Potts
Grading Criteria/Policies:

**Final course letter grades translate from the course work percentage of points earned – See table below.**

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Assessments:

**Required Writing**

**Daily Journal:** You will write daily in a journal as you come into contact with values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings that are different than your own. Part of this process will mean that you will track your own experiences, specifically clarifying your own feelings, attitudes, values, perceptions, and stumbling blocks as they emerge. The other part of the process asks how well you think you are doing with understanding from a Balinese perspective. **This journal will be a primary resource for your final project.**

**Possible Questions for students’ journal writing:**

1. What was the challenge today? What made it challenging?
2. What did I experience today that broadened my understanding of human diversity?
3. As I reflect on my experiences today am I being invited to let go of anything?
4. Do my experiences of this day invite me to open to anything new or to add something to my life?
5. Is there anything in my daily experience that is remaining in place or remaining the same over time?

**Final Project**

We expect you to complete a final project as the capstone to your time in Bali. This can take many forms: A video diary or travel longue, interviews with Balinese people, a final paper chronicling your personal experiences that address the course objectives, a podcast, or a performance piece are just a few suggestions.

As this course seeks to increase your direct understanding of the diversity of human experience, an expectation of the final project is that it will demonstrate how your understanding of difference has evolved during the course, and how this new learning might continue to evolve in the future.

Topics might include:

Recalling personal experiences that occurred before, during, and after the immersion period that contributed to your understanding of the Balinese people, or Balinese view of the universe.
A reflection on how you were able to apply intercultural communication skills, articulating the situations or events which stimulated the use of the skills. Describing a situation or encounter, which led you to question your self, your values, or “woke you up.”

You might speak to the insights and challenges both intrapersonally and interpersonally that emerged during your time in Bali, and how the use of these skills impacted your communication both with your fellow students and with the Balinese people.

You might describe your participation in ceremonies and community and illustrate how these activities impacted your cultural awareness and expanded your understanding of the diversity of human experience. Your experience in Bali will allow you to reflect on differences in culture, race, caste, religion, and the myriad impacts of tourism on culture.

**Evaluation**

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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Journal Writing &amp; Questions</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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**Course Evaluation**

All students are expected to complete an evaluation of the course at its conclusion. These evaluations will be anonymous and confidential. The information gained, including constructive criticisms, will be used to improve the course for the future.

**Course Schedule**

**Pre-trip meeting # 1 (Date and time tbd)**
Introduction of members of the learning community
Guidelines for the Learning Community
An Overview of the Program: expectations of the course, i.e. reading assignments, written work, and class participation
Presentation and Practice - Non-evaluative Listening

**Pre-trip meeting # 2 (Date and time tbd)**
Orientation: What to Bring
The Bali Itinerary
Balinese Etiquette
More practice: Non-evaluative Listening
Review of Working Agreements

**July 5, 2020—July 18, 2020** Classes will meet each day for about one and a half hours. We will use class time to process experiences and work on developing the communication skills that enable intercultural communication, and better understand the economic, racial, caste, and spiritual differences in Bali.
Post-return class
Sharing your experiences of reentry after one month of reflecting on your time away
A discussion of new understanding and how you’re integrating what you’ve learned
Continued learning in intercultural and transcultural communication

Student Learning Accommodations:
In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact SAS, the office of Disability Services on campus. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course. A student’s accommodation letter lists those accommodations that will not be implemented until the student meets with their faculty to create a plan.

Contact SAS:
A170 Living/Learning Center;
802-656-7753;
access@uvm.edu
www.uvm.edu/access

Religious Holidays:
Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.
https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/religious-holidays

Academic Integrity:
The policy addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating.
https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf

Grade Appeals:
If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy:
https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/gradeappeals.pdf

Grading:
For information on grading and GPA calculation, go to https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/grades

Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities:
http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/rightsandresponsibilities/

FERPA Rights Disclosure:
The purpose of this policy is to communicate the rights of students regarding access to, and privacy of their student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.
http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/ferparightsdisclosure/
Promoting Health & Safety: 
The University of Vermont's number one priority is to support a healthy and safe community:

Center for Health and Wellbeing:  
https://www.uvm.edu/health

Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS)  
Phone: (802) 656-3340

C.A.R.E.  
If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at https://www.uvm.edu/studentaffairs

Final Exam Policy:  
The University final exam policy outlines expectations during final exams and explains timing and process of examination period. https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/final-exams

Alcohol and Cannabis Statement:  
The Division of Student Affairs has offered the following statement on alcohol and cannabis use that faculty may choose to include, or modify for inclusion, in their syllabus or Blackboard site:

Statement on Alcohol and Cannabis in the Academic Environment

As a faculty member, I want you to get the most you can out of this course. You play a crucial role in your education and in your readiness to learn and fully engage with the course material. It is important to note that alcohol and cannabis have no place in an academic environment. They can seriously impair your ability to learn and retain information not only in the moment you may be using, but up to 48 hours or more afterwards. In addition, alcohol and cannabis can:

- Cause issues with attention, memory and concentration
- Negatively impact the quality of how information is processed and ultimately stored
- Affect sleep patterns, which interferes with long-term memory formation

It is my expectation that you will do everything you can to optimize your learning and to fully participate in this course.

Furthermore, the penalties for drug use in Indonesia are extremely severe! Please, please, please – refrain from any and all drug use while you are in Indonesia!