

**Summer 2014**

**EFSLANG 689L: Living in the USA**

Wednesdays (July 9 - August 13)  
11:00 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.  
Location: Building 380, Rm. 381U  
Instructor: Seth A. Streichler  
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**Description from EFS Web Site**

This course focuses on life and relationships outside the university classroom. The goal is to help you become familiar with the multiple expectations and the language usage that Americans bring to a variety of situations in the university and in other social situations you may encounter. Among the many areas to be discussed are strategies for both casual and serious conversation, professional relationships in academe (including with professors, colleagues, and undergraduate students), interacting with neighbors and acquaintances, American social customs, and an introduction to the intersecting issues of race, religion, politics and gender. Activities include discussions of short readings and films and role plays of challenging situations. This course is particularly recommended for doctoral students or others who are anticipating an extended stay in the US.

(http://www.stanford.edu/group/efs/ccs.html)  
(http://www.stanford.edu/group/efs/688.html)

**Additional Objectives**

- Broadening student perspectives (generational, historical, social, cultural, and experiential)
- Addressing, challenging, and dispelling misconceptions
- Providing pragmatic information to enhance success in everyday functioning
- Familiarizing international students with the following:
  - Social and cultural allusions and referential material
  - Vocabulary, terms, and idiomatic expressions
  - Historical foundations
  - Underlying events and conditions related to American civilization
  - Diversity and immensity
  - Perceptions, impressions, contradictions, and expectations
  - Cultural adjustment patterns

**Level of instruction**

A high level of language proficiency is generally expected in academic and professional communities. With this in mind, it is important for international students and scholars to master the type of discourse used among educated persons in the U.S. In order to stimulate progress and to familiarize students with sophisticated discourse, the level of instruction and classroom communication will be relatively advanced and challenging.
Critical thinking and analysis

An additional benefit of the course is its emphasis on critical thinking skills and analytical abilities, particularly when applied to addressing cross-cultural information and other social issues. Unless we are dealing with established facts, a variety of opinions and reactions may be expressed. Accordingly, it is important to support your point of view with clear and logical evidence when possible.

Student responsibility, initiative, and independent effort

These are powerful factors in language learning. In addition to classroom activities, students will be expected to work independently in order to improve their own knowledge and skills.

Integrated skills and assignments

The course may include brief reading, writing, listening, and speaking assignments to accompany and reinforce class activities (e.g., to prepare for, or to follow-up from, material presented in class).

Realistic expectations

689L meets for two contact hours per week for six weeks and offers an overview of life in the USA; it will not be possible to thoroughly address and comprehend every possible cultural situation.

Sample Assignments (tentative; students will be given the opportunity to select certain projects and not others)

1. Journal of cross-cultural experiences and impressions

Keep a journal with your thoughts and questions about living in the United States and about interacting with Americans. Journal entries can be written electronically or in a hard-copy notebook. Bring the journal to class each week (hard-copy notebook, laptop, or selected printouts of digital entries); these will serve as a springboard for class discussions during which we will compare, analyze, and discuss your discoveries and observations.

2. Mini presentations

Students will deliver informal mini-presentations based on homework activities assigned the previous week. If you miss class, be sure to check with me or with a classmate about the presentation for the following week.

3. Informal study of a social setting

This assignment involves writing a description of a particular social setting (e.g., a café, the student bookstore, a grocery store, or an exercise gym). Observe the selected site at least twice for approximately one hour each time. Take notes about the people and how they interact. Interview at least two people at the site, asking questions about why they come there, what they enjoy about the site, etc. Provide the date and times of observation in your reflection.
Materials

• Textbook: Title TBA

• Miscellaneous documents, worksheets, handouts, videos, Internet selections, and other materials will be provided by the instructor.

• Recommended: Comprehensive dictionary and thesaurus (online versions available)

• Other texts and resources will be discussed or recommended during the term.

Requirements

In order to receive a grade of “satisfactory” for the course, and in order to maximize your progress, students must follow the policies listed below:

• Attendance: Attend at least 90% of all class meetings (Language Center and EFS program policy). (Students are responsible for all information provided during class time whether or not they are present. Please avoid arranging a schedule which requires you to arrive late or leave early on a regular basis.)

• Participate very actively, attentively, and cooperatively.

• Demonstrate improvement with respect to the course content.

• Guidelines for homework and in-class projects:

  o Submit and/or present assignments on time. Do not assume that late work will be accepted, although certain deadlines may be flexible and negotiable when announced. Make-up work will be arranged at the instructor’s discretion.

  o At times, you will have the opportunity to select from among several options for homework assignments.

  o Some assignments will receive greater attention or emphasis than others. In other words, some projects will be discussed in-depth; others will be assigned as background information or for basic recognition, and will not necessarily be discussed extensively in class.

  o Certain homework assignments will be evaluated during class.

DISABILITY NOTICE: Students who have a disability which may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The SDRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the SDRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The Office of Accessible Education is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066; TDD: 725-1067).