



*The Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus (NIASD)  
presents the*

## **Summer Course**

*27 June – 8 July 2010*

## **Intercultural Communication**

***With housing from 18 June (12h00) until 12 July (12h00) !!!***

*Course fee: 700 Euro (with basic accommodation), 850 Euro (with apartment accommodation) or 550 Euro (without accommodation).*

*Special course fee for Syrian, Iraqi or Jordanian students based in Syria: 13000 Syrian Pounds (without accommodation).*



## **General introduction**

In the Netherlands and other Western countries which experienced a large influx of immigrants with a Middle Eastern — or Arab — cultural background, the integration of these immigrants into society and the intercultural conflicts and identity problems which are related to that constitute one of the major social challenges of this time.

The question how to live, communicate and work together is often surrounded by feelings of uneasiness, uncertainties and mutual embarrassment. One reads about it every day in the newspapers, while most people have personally experienced these feelings either in informal personal contacts, in client-professional contacts or in the organizations in which they work. At the same time, however, the feeling is growing among many people in many sectors of society that we need to establish and maintain more — and more positive — contacts with one another. How one should do so is a question on many people's minds.

A similar challenge rises on the international level, for example in the increasing number of cooperation projects between the EU and the Mediterranean countries. In these projects Western and Middle Eastern experts aim to achieve results in a variety of fields such as trade and business development, transport, agriculture, energy, water management, education, technology, science, media, health, tourism, urban planning, and many, many more. While good will is important, it is often not enough to bring about the necessary ability to act and communicate effectively in these intercultural settings so as to achieve good results. In this respect one can hardly overrate the importance of effective intercultural communicative skills as a success factor.

This course aims to give you a chance to improve your intercultural communicative skills, so as to better prepare you for (a working) life in an increasingly international and intercultural environment, be it in your own country or abroad. The lecturers will provide you with insights and competences to enable you to move around with ease and to act and communicate effectively in intercultural settings. We believe that will enhance your chances on the highly competitive and increasingly international labour markets as well as enrich your personal life and your contacts with people from other cultural backgrounds.

The course we present is unique in the sense that — as far as we know — it is the only Dutch course on intercultural communication which is provided in the Middle East, in a very different cultural setting compared to that of the Netherlands. During the course you will be submerged into that different cultural setting. This will more or less force you to look at the world and the people around you from a cultural minority perspective. That enhances your ability to replace yourself in someone else's position — a necessary precondition for successful intercultural communication —, while it will also bring to life the insights and concepts which are presented in the reader and course lectures.

Syria is a fascinating country. Here, East meets West and various communities have been living here side by side throughout the ages. Moreover, Damascus is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. The lecturers will optimally utilize the opportunities which Damascus presents for intercultural communication teaching, for example through assignments to be made in the city, through exercises in which

Syrians participate and through guest lectures by professionals from and/or resident in Syria, Jordan or Lebanon.

### **The Netherlands institute in Damascus**

The Netherlands institute is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and administrated by Leiden University in Leiden, the Netherlands. The institute is a platform which encourages and facilitates contacts between people and organizations in Holland and Syria in the areas of science and education, culture and international cooperation.

For Dutch students we provide assistance with research projects and finding study opportunities and internships. We also provide summer courses. Next to our summer courses Intercultural Communication and Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture, which are open to both Dutch and international students, we present a summer course Arabic which is open only to Dutch speaking students.

Our summer course on Intercultural Communication is developed over the past few years during which the institute presented a number of lectures on this topic as well as two workshops which were aimed at journalism students: *Connected* (June 2006) and *FACE2FACE – Interviewing Across Cultures* (November 2007).

### **Introduction to the course**

#### Goals of the course

The main goal is to enhance your intercultural competence. This encompasses:

1. improving awareness of your own communicative behaviour in intercultural contexts, including the functional, expressive and emotional aspects of it;
2. recognizing and understanding the factors of success and failure in intercultural communication;
3. learning to communicate and act effectively in intercultural settings, specifically with regard to:
  - a) informal personal communication;
  - b) communication between professionals and clients;
  - c) communication in organizations.

#### Cultural focus of the course

In view of the location where this course takes place, the emphasis will be on communication between persons with a Middle Eastern — or Arab — cultural background and persons with a Western cultural background. However, several insights and competences which you will gain from this course will enhance your communicative skills vis-à-vis persons with yet other cultural backgrounds as well.

## **Overview of the course**

### **I) Reading week**

Prior to the start of the course, the NIASD will send you a reader with articles on intercultural communication by email. You will have to read these articles carefully prior to the first course week. You may do that anytime prior to 27 June 2010 and at any place in the world, but you may as well decide to do your reading in Damascus prior to 27 June 2010, where your housing will be available for you without extra charges already from 18 June 2010 (12h00) onwards.

Reading the reader carefully before the start of the lessons is necessary because you need to acquaint yourself with certain notions, concepts and theories beforehand, if you want to follow and complete this course with success.

Against the background of the reader and with references to the articles it contains, you are required to write a one page text in English in which you present:

- one new insight about your own way of communicating in intercultural situations, which you have acquired by reading the reader, and
- one question which the reader has raised in your mind.

On the first day of the first course week, you have to hand in your one page text and give a plenary 5 minute presentation on the basis of that text.

### **II) First course week: 27 June to 1 July 2010**

The lecturers in the first course week will be Anke van Haastrecht, MA, and Dr. Ben Boog.

The first day of the course will focus on the student presentations on the basis of the one page texts mentioned above. On each presentation the lecturers and other students will give comments and feedback. In the afternoon you will then adapt your text during a self work session with lecturer guidance.

During the two days that follow various basic concepts and definitions will be discussed. Particular attention will be given to values, identities and perspectives which are relevant to intercultural communication.

During the next six days the course, in three sets of each two days, will focus on the three main focal points of the course. On the last two days of the first course week the focus will be on intercultural communication in informal personal communication. These sets of two days will be structured as follows: on the first of these two days lectures will be given, on the second day a workshop and/or assignment takes place in relation to the focal point and on the basis of a specific case or problem.

### **III) Second course week: 4 July to 8 July 2010**

The lecturers in the second course week will be Youssef Azghari, MA, and Jelle Alkema, MA.

The first two days of the second course week will be devoted to intercultural communication between professionals and clients, while the third and fourth day of the second course week will deal with intercultural communication in organizations. Lectures will be given the first day of these two day sets, workshops and/or assignments on the second day.

On the last day of the second course week, each student will give a short presentation reflecting on the insights gained during the course since the production of the adapted text on the first day. This presentation has to be prepared beforehand. On this day the students have to hand in their student portfolios containing the adapted text of the first course day, the final presentation as well as other materials produced during the course. The last day will end with an evaluation of the course itself.

#### Methodological approach of the course

The methodological approach of this course is called 'action learning'. Action learning emphasizes active learning in real social situations. In this case the city of Damascus provides a unique real social situation and intercultural setting. Action learning is an interactive learning approach in which the lecturers facilitate the learning process by presenting knowledge, insights, subject matters and subject materials, but in which they also encourage students' action-learning attitude, both individually and in the group.

#### Teaching methods and materials

Various teaching methods will be used during the course, including: lectures, exercises; assignments to be made in the city of Damascus, role playing games, student presentations, critical reflection sessions, guest lectures by speakers from and/or resident in Syria, Jordan or Lebanon and workshops. The course materials include a course reader with articles; media excerpts; audio visual materials, the institute's library collection on intercultural communication and internet sites.

#### Course lecturers

##### Dr. Ben Boog

Ben Boog has thirty years of experience as a senior lecturer and researcher at the Department of Adult Education and Social Intervention of the University of Groningen. He is presently leading Boog Research in Groningen. Ben Boog is a specialist on the action research methodology and has conducted many research projects in relation to issues of integration into Dutch society and to issues of intercultural communication between professionals and clients. His latest publication is "*Towards Quality Improvement of Action Research*", 2008.

##### Anke van Haastrecht, MA

Anke van Haastrecht works with the Department of Communication and Information Sciences of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Groningen and is a specialist in the linguistical aspects of intercultural and international communication. She has more than ten years of international teaching and research experience and was one of the lecturers in the institute's workshop *FACE2FACE* (November 2007).

### Youssef Azghari, MA

Youssef Azghari is a specialist in intercultural communication and the author of “*Cultuurbepaalde Communicatie*” in which he presented his bridge model (2005, 2006) and “*Aan de slag met diversiteit – effectief communiceren met verschillende culturen*” (2009). He works as a lecturer on intercultural communication at Avans University of Applied Science in Breda en s'-Hertogenbosch, is a columnist for Radio Oba Live, as well as a publicist. He participated as an expert in many workshops on intercultural communication, including the institute’s workshops *Connected* (June 2006) and *FACE2FACE* (November 2007).

### Jelle Alkema, MA

Jelle Alkema is a consultant, entrepreneur, trainer and lecturer at various masters programmes of applied sciences (e.g. HES International MBA, Pro Education ICT & Management). He is also a specialist in the fields of globalization, organizational behaviour, cross-cultural management and change management. He has consultancy experience in ten different countries and has clients in both the public and the private sector.

### **Course requirements, language and credits**

This summer course on Intercultural Communication is open to:

#### 1) Dutch students:

- bachelor and master students of research universities and universities of applied sciences, irrespective of their field of study.

#### 2) Syrian, or Jordanian, Lebanese or Iraqi students based in Syria:

- bachelor and master students, irrespective of their field of study.

#### 3) Other students:

- bachelor and master students, irrespective of their field of study.

The language of the reader articles and of the course itself will be English.

The course is valued at 5 ECTS, to be obtained through Anke van Haastrecht of the University of Groningen. Please note that master students may take this course either as an extracurricular activity or with the aim of obtaining ECTS points. However, in the latter case they will be required to write an extra paper under the guidance of one of the course lecturers.

### **Course period, dates and times, and availability of your housing**

The two course weeks are from 27 June to 1 July 2010 and from 4 July to 8 July 2010, each day from 09h00 to 17h00. Your housing is already available from 18 June 2010 (12h00) until 12 July 2010 (12h00).

### **Course fee and scholarships**

For Dutch students and students from other nationalities who are not based in Syria the course fee is 700 Euro. This includes: assistance with arranging visa and residence permits, airport transfer on arrival, simple accommodation from 18 June (12h00) until

12 July (12h00) 2010, daily transport from your house to the institute during the two course weeks and course materials. These students may also apply for this course without housing (550 Euro) or with housing in an apartment with air-conditioning (850 Euro). For more information on the housing options, see below. Not included: flight ticket (appr. 500-600 Euro), travel insurance and international health insurance (appr. 75 Euro), visa (for Dutch students appr. 35 Euro for a single entry, or appr. 75 Euro for a multiple entry visa arranged in the Netherlands; note: for students of other nationalities other visa prices may apply), living costs other than accommodation (appr. 15 Euro per day), taxi to the airport + airport exit tax (together appr. 35 Euro).

Students may apply for scholarships for this course at the international offices of their university or faculty. Check this with your university!

For Syrian, Jordanian, Lebanese or Iraqi students who are based in Syria the course fee is 13000 SYP. This course fee includes all course materials. This course fee does not include housing.

### **Application deadline: 15 April 2010**

The application form for this course is available on the website of the institute [www.niasd.org](http://www.niasd.org). The deadline for application is 15 April 2010. Before that date your course fee must have been received on the bank account of the institute which is indicated on the application form. As soon as we have enough students to run this course and at the latest on 18 April the institute will inform all students whether or not the course will indeed run. For more information see the terms and conditions of our summer courses which are published on our website.

### **Terms and Conditions**

Applying for this course implies acceptance of the terms and conditions of our summer courses which are published on our website.

### **Housing**

The institute offers the following options:

1. course with basic accommodation (700 Euro);

The institute will provide each student a private room in a house either with a Syrian family or with fellow students, for the period of 18 June 2010 (12h00) until 12 July 2010 (12h00). In the room at least the following items are present: cupboard, bed, desk, desk lamp, desk chair and a fan. In the house the student shares the kitchen, the toilet and the bathroom with the other occupants of the house. The kitchen contains a fridge and basic kitchen utensils. The institute will pick you up from the airport and bring you to your accommodation.

2. course with a room in apartment (850 Euro);

The institute will provide each student a private room in an air-conditioned apartment which he or she shares with fellow students, for the period of 18 June 2010 (12h00) until 12 July 2010 (12h00). While the apartment will have one or more AC's, not necessarily each room is separately air-conditioned. Each private room either has an

AC or a fan. In each private room also the following items are present: cupboard, bed, desk, desk lamp and a desk chair. The student shares the kitchen, the toilet and the bathroom with the fellow occupants of the apartment. The kitchen contains a fridge and basic kitchen utensils. The institute will pick you up from the airport and bring you to your accommodation.

3. course without housing (550 Euro).

In this case finding and arranging housing is the responsibility of the student.

### **Agreements with the landlords**

The terms and conditions for our summer courses stipulate that students who have chosen the option of a summer course with basic accommodation or an apartment have to comply with the agreements made between the landlord and the institute regarding cleaning etc. These agreements are the following:

1. The landlord is responsible for the registration of the students with the relevant Syrian authorities. Any costs related to this registration are covered by the rent and the landlord may therefore not ask any money from the students for this registration. The institute gives the students a written paper confirming their participation in the summer course. The students have to give this paper and a copy of their passports to the landlord.

2. The landlord may not charge, and the students are not obliged to pay, any costs which have not been agreed upon explicitly beforehand both by the students and the institute.

3. The landlord ensures:

- that the student rooms contain a bed, a closet, a desk, a desk light, a desk chair and an electric fan or air-conditioning;
- that the kitchen which the students may use contains a refrigerator and basic kitchen utensils;
- that there is a shower and a toilet which the students may use.

4. The students:

- are responsible for cleaning their student rooms;
- are responsible for clearing up the kitchen, shower, toilet, hallways and courtyards after they have used these places;
- are not allowed to use the house telephone, but they may receive calls from family or friends on the house phone in case of an emergency. (For other phone calls it is best to purchase a local sim card for your mobile phone and unlock it.)
- are not allowed to invite guests to the sleep over in the house, unless the landlord has given explicit prior permission.

5. The landlord is not allowed to access the student rooms during the rental period, unless the student gives explicit prior permission for a specific access.

### **Days before and after availability of the house**

Your basic accommodation or apartment is available from 18 June 2010 (12h00) until 12 July 2010 (12h00). In case you arrive earlier than 18 June or leave later than 12 July 2010, you should arrange accommodation in a youth hostel or hotel yourself.

The institute will publish contact details of some youth hostels and hotels on our website [www.niasd.org](http://www.niasd.org).

### **Transport to the institute**

On course days the institute will provide free transport from your accommodation to the institute.

### **Visa and residence permits**

The institute will provide assistance with obtaining a visa for Syria. That is why you should correctly fill out the passport information section on the application form. At the latest half April 2010 the institute will produce visa request support letters for the visa issuing Syrian authorities. These we will send to the participants themselves and to the relevant Syrian authorities. A visa support letter is needed if a student wants to obtain a single or multiple entry visa for Syria in their own country prior to departure.

The visa rules may differ depending on your nationality. Students with a US passport should try to arrange their visa as soon as possible, because the visa procedure for US citizens normally takes longer. You cannot enter Syria if your passport contains stamps of Israel, or of Jordanian or Egyptian border crossings with Israel. If your passport contains such stamps, you should timely renew your passport.

Persons with a Dutch passport who are not of Palestinian origin can also obtain a single entry visa upon arrival at Damascus International Airport or at Syrian land borders. The costs of that visa will be around 30 Euro which has to be paid in cash in Euro or USD. At the border you cannot obtain a multiple entry visa. For obtaining a single entry visa at the border, you do not need a visa support letter from our institute, but we may give you a letter confirming your participation in our summer course.

Students of non-Dutch nationalities should normally obtain a visa beforehand in their country in case their country hosts a Syrian Embassy. In case there is, like in Holland, no Syrian Embassy in your country, than you can normally obtain a visa at the Syrian border. Please check this however with the embassy of your country in Syria or with a possibly present Syrian consulate in your country.

The advantage of arranging your visa beforehand in your own country is that you can then apply for a multiple entry visa. Normally a requested multiple entry is also given. When asked where you will stay in Syria, you should indicate that your housing will be arranged for by the Netherlands institute in Damascus.

Once you enter Syria, you are allowed to stay in Syria for a period of 45 days, even though the entry stamp in your passport will suggest otherwise (15 days).

### **Safety**

The institute will send your passport and emergency details provided on your application form to the embassy of your country in Syria for security and safety reasons. It is safe to travel anywhere in Syria, but we advise you to keep clear of demonstrations or large gatherings. We advise students who make weekend trips to

inform the institute staff of their whereabouts. While traveling in Syria, you have to keep your passport with you and we advise you to take your insurance papers with you as well.

### **Health**

Damascus and Syria pose two common health hazards: problems caused by food and problems caused by heat. Be careful and conscious of your health: prevention is the best cure. To prevent diarrhoea and food poisoning you should make sure you do not drink tap water (this is generally not safe in Syria although in some cases it can be) and be careful of what you eat. In case of mild diarrhoea it is not necessary to take serious action other than to keep hydrated and keep your salt and sugar levels up. In case your diarrhoea becomes more serious you can use medication such as loperamine or diarrhoea blockers. Always consult the enclosed medical information.

It is important to drink enough water to prevent dehydration. In the Damascus summer heat one needs a lot of water to cool one's system down. Try to prevent yourself from doing heavy exercise especially during the heat of the day. Also keep your salt and sugar levels up. When the heat coincides with diarrhoea it is especially important to keep on drinking and to keep your salt and sugar levels up, because diarrhoea especially drains your body's water and fluid supplies. A good indicator of drinking enough water is the colour of your urine (and the amount of urine that you produce). When your urine is dark this is a sign you might not be drinking enough. Normally it should be pale and diluted.

In case you feel ill, always immediately inform the director of the institute about that, so that we can take the necessary measures together or advise you to see a doctor. In Syria there are good doctors and hospitals about which the institute will advise you. Vaccinations are normally not necessary for Syria.