

What's Up With Culture

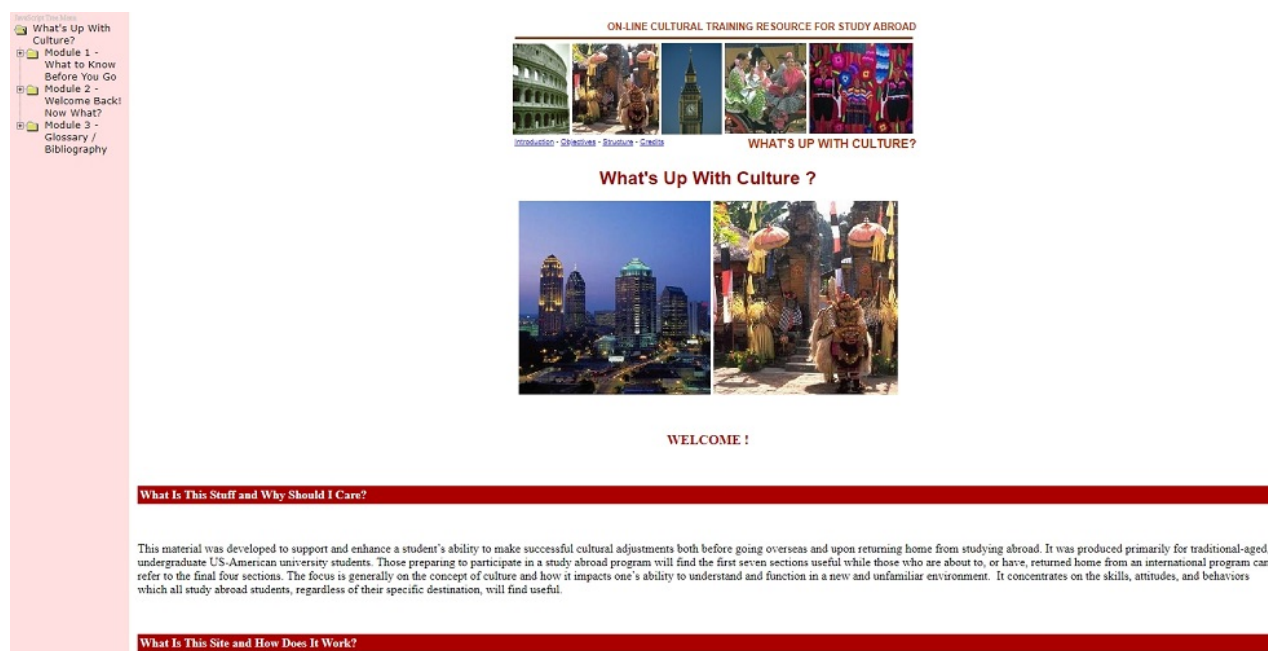
Crisis Communication

Culture

Study Abroad

Cognitive Constructivism

[What's Up With Culture](#) is a free online tutorial primarily for study abroad students. It is meant to orient learners to key concepts of intercultural communication and adjustment.



What's Up With Culture homepage screenshot

Tool Snapshot

Price	Free
Learning	Cognitive Constructivism
Ease of Use	★★★★☆
Privacy	★★★★★
Accessibility	★★★★★

Class Size	Unlimited
ISTE*S	Empowered Learner & Knowledge Constructor

What's Up with Culture Overview

[What's Up with Culture](#) (WUWC) is a free online tutorial that orients learners to key concepts of intercultural communication and adjustment. It was designed specifically for students preparing for study abroad, yet it could be used to augment any discussion on culture and diversity. This self-directed tutorial has three modules: pre-departure, re-entry, and a glossary/bibliography section, but nothing is stopping you from using elements of this tool for reinforcement activities while students are abroad as well. Its design does not require linear progression through modules — it is possible to start anywhere and skip through different sections. The site is not meant to be a stand-alone course nor a substitution for in-person orientations to study abroad programs.

WUWC was originally funded by the US Department of Education and designed by faculty at the University of the Pacific's School of International Service in 2003, which still hosts the site. Unfortunately, both the site's design and its content badly need updating if it is to be attractive — and more importantly — relevant to university students.

What's Up With Culture Overview Video

The screenshot shows the 'What's Up With Culture' website. On the left is a navigation menu with sections like 'What's Up With Culture?', 'Module 1 - What to Know Before You Go', 'Module 2 - Welcome Back! Now What?', and 'Module 3 - Glossary / Bibliography'. The main content area features a large video player with a red play button. Above the video, there are several small images and the text 'ON-LINE CULTURAL TRAINING RESOURCE FOR STUDY ABROAD'. Below the video, there is a section titled 'Culture: The Hidden Dimension' with a large red play button overlay. The text below the video discusses the concept of culture and its impact on behavior and attitudes.

ON-LINE CULTURAL TRAINING RESOURCE FOR STUDY ABROAD

WHAT'S UP WITH CULTURE?

Culture: The Hidden Dimension

One of first things you will encounter when you go abroad is something that is new to you. If you don't understand what it is and how it works, can seriously affect how you adjust to and enjoy your time overseas. That "thing" is CULTURE. The kind of culture we will address here is not at all the kind of thing one refers to when talking about being a "cultured person" or possessing a taste for modern art, champagne, and opera. Nor is culture the exclusive province of an educated elite.

Culture is a neutral term, neither good nor bad, and refers to the broadest conception about the learned knowledge that humans use to fulfill their needs and wants. It refers to the collective historical patterns, values, societal arrangements, manners, ideas, and ways of living that people have used to order their society. It is comprised of all those things we learn as part of growing up including language, religion, beliefs about economic and social relations, political organization and legitimacy, and the thousands of "Do's and Don'ts" society deems important that we know to become a functioning member of that group.

When you go abroad you immediately meet individuals, perhaps a bewildering variety of them, but you also enter another "culture." The behaviors and attitudes you can externally observe in others are molded and motivated by their prior cultural learning, just as you have been molded by yours. You can't see a person's culture directly because feelings, judgments, and mental constructs are not always on display, although they may become evident through what people say or do.

Culture has been defined in literally hundreds of ways for different reasons. For study abroad purposes, culture can be most broadly defined as the shared sets of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which are widely held by members of the host culture. A sojourner will not only need to be aware of these cultural patterns but will have to respond to them appropriately.

RECORDED WITH SCREENCAST MATIC

Back

[Watch on YouTube](#)

What's Up With Culture & the SAMR Model

Substitution: A student uses WUWC to learn about intercultural concepts at his/her own and pace and on his/her own schedule. This replaces a classroom lecture or necessity of purchasing/accessing a specific book.

Augmentation: Students cut and paste completed activities from WUWC and send them by email to their teacher or peers (instead of exchanging papers) who can then compile and summarize the range of responses.

Modification: WUWC is not sufficiently flexible on its own to reach the modification stage of SAMR.

Redefinition: WUWC is not sufficiently flexible on its own to reach the redefinition stage of SAMR.



Learning Activities

Math

Students complete one or more of the self-assessment inventories from WUWC, export the data, and compile class statistics. Students research comparable data (e.g., Hofstede studies) gathered from other populations and compare results in graphic form.

History/Social Studies

Students search the WUWC site for references to particular geographical/political locations and map them; discuss why some areas of the world might receive more attention than others for a site like this.

Students research the backgrounds of the organizations and individuals that contributed to the development of WUWC and discuss how cultural lenses and blinders may influence the production of knowledge.

Have students compare and contrast intercultural concepts as presented by WUWC with those they may have learned through discussions and study of race and diversity in the US context.

For American students: find examples of how non-Americans describe Americans or what advice non-Americans provide about studying in the US; ask students to critique the example and respond with an article or video which might more accurately represent the experience of studying in the US as a foreigner.

English/Language Arts

Students interview one another and create examples of 'critical incidents' as modeled on WUWC, with analysis of cultural differences. More generally, students can also critically examine how and what information is presented on this site (e.g., how the site may perpetuate or combat issues of power and bias).

Students find examples of cultural clash and adjustment in novels, short stories, poetry or non-fiction reading, and determine the degree to which the concepts introduced in WUWC might help to understand (or obfuscate) what is described.

Language

Students work in small groups to choose one of the concepts introduced in WUWC, create a skit in the target language which demonstrates an cross-cultural interaction and highlights the value of the concept.

Resources

- WUWC dedicates pages specifically for [parents of study abroad students](#) and [faculty of study abroad travel](#).
- The Association of International Educators (NAFSA)'s [description](#) of WUWC and [pdf User's Guide](#).
- Brubaker, C. (2008) What's up with Culture?: A Guided Tour, [Part I](#) and [Part II](#).
- [Global Scholar](#) is an online tool launched in 2016 which appears to be a revision and extension of the original WUWC tutorial.

How to Use What's Up With Culture

1. Go to the [What's Up with Culture homepage](#).
2. There is no need to register.
3. Click the module links on the left margin to see an overview of the course.
4. Use the next arrows to navigate to subsequent pages.
5. Complete reflection activities and exercises as they appear. Warning: cut and paste or use screenshots to save your work to your desktop, since the content will disappear when you navigate away from the page.

Research

Duke, S. (2016) The Importance of Intercultural Learning in Study Abroad. In J. Rhodes (Ed.), *Advancing Teacher Education and Curriculum Development through Study Abroad Programs*, (pp 74-89). Location. IGI Global.

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