

Review of Intercultural Communication for the Community College (Second Edition)

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Krumrey, K. (2022). *Intercultural communication for the community college (second edition)*.

Open Oregon Educational Resources. <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/comm115/>

It is with timely relevance that open educational resource (OER) materials are reviewed and discussed in relation to the topic of intercultural communication, the ongoing rise of textbook costs, and practices of (post-)pandemic pedagogies that keep some classes online.

Karen Krumrey authors the textbook, *Intercultural Communication for the Community College (Second Edition)*, a revised text by the same name originally published in May 2019. Given the improvements made in accessibility, and in its organization, I would recommend the use of this textbook for an introductory intercultural communication course. This review focuses on three specific aspects of the textbook: (1) an overview of the textbook content and its organization with commentary regarding how it lends itself to organizational ease, (2) shifts in textbook accessibility, and (3) criticisms and recommendations regarding the implementation of *Intercultural Communication for the Community College (Second Edition)* in the college classroom.

The original overview of the textbook published on OER Commons lists that the textbook content is “divided into three general areas: foundations, elements, and contexts” (2019). Whereby, the *foundations* cover “basic principles associated with communication studies and culture,” the *elements* cover “the basics into self, identities, verbal, and nonverbal

process[es], and *contexts* that apply ideas into the realms of “media, business, and education” (2019). Despite this OER description, these three helpful subheadings are not as clearly defined in the organization of the textbook. Rather, twelve chapters are listed in indistinguishable sub-categories that correspond to the three general areas mentioned in the description. The foundation is set with chapter 1 laying the *foundation* by defining intercultural communication & the imperatives for studying the topic; and chapter 2 explicitly defining the concept of culture. The *elements* of intercultural communication are laid out via chapter 3 covering the topic of self and identity; chapter 4 and 5 covering verbal and nonverbal communication; and chapter 6 addressing conflict. Finally, the *contexts* section of the textbook applies intercultural communication theories and sets the expectation for the emergence of intercultural contexts in relationships, popular culture/social media, tourism, business, education, and healthcare – each covered in their own chapters. The layout of a textbook with 12 chapters is logistically useful for institutions with a typical 15-16 week semester, where one chapter can be assigned per week with room for an introductory week, presentation weeks, and exam weeks.

It is necessary to contextualize this review in a (post-)pandemic present where higher education can no longer ignore the symptoms of the digital divide. As institutions have been called to respect privacy in online learning and consider whether, “policies mandating that people show their faces during class [...] are strictly necessary,” colleges have made enduring shifts to student-paced, asynchronous classes (McKenzie, 2021, p. 25). The 12-chapter layout lends itself to being the ideal companion OER textbook for affordable, fully online teaching modalities. Students using this textbook in a self-paced, online classroom, may find that the division of chapters creates the structure to *expect* to engage with a full chapter of reading per week. The difference in organization aids in curricular design, best streamlining class content

with the timelines of the semester, and aids students in development of study-skills to anticipate reading-loads.

The (post-)pandemic era made more urgent the anticipation of the “needs of diverse learners” (McKenzie, 2021, p. 25). A new feature of the second edition is the option to download the book as an EPUB, PDF, Pressbooks XML, and Common Cartridge. The prior edition was uniquely designed to be an online textbook. The updated option to download the text is an accessibility feature for students requiring hardcopies, or other downloadable forms of the textbook, needed for assistive technology compatibility.

Finally, I critique the relevance of the textbook and its gaps in critical depth. Specifically, as an *online*, open educational resource, instructors in higher education must consider how, “analogies drawn between the printing press and the internet are apt in highlighting how increased publication of viewpoints widens the possibilities for social identification” (Pfister & Soliz, 2011, n.p.). Said otherwise, in using an *online* resource, educators must consider the way that information, content, and topics can dis/connect students from cultural contexts, conflict, and the politics of identification. It would be remiss not to mention and compare this textbook under review to one of the most downloaded OER intercultural communication textbooks by Shannon Ahrndt released in 2020. Ahrndt’s (2020) textbook includes a timely letter to students acknowledging the urgency of studying intercultural communication topics in a moment coinciding with the height of the BLM movement, changes in accessibility to reproductive rights, and increasing class disparities spurred on by the global pandemic. Instead, Krumrey’s (2022) introduction in this textbook includes her own epiphanic experiences in identity and intercultural communication set in 1987. Such a dated moment lends itself to criticism regarding the textbook’s overall currency and relevance. However, this introduction can otherwise serve as an

opportunity for educators to begin a conversation of the enduring need for topics in intercultural communication to be studied and understood in the past, present, and future. As an introductory text, sufficient intercultural theories are presented with room for discussion on related current events. These theories can be easily maneuvered via the addition of examples provided by the classroom's facilitator.

With the consideration of the organization of intercultural communication ideas covered, changes in textbook accessibility, and careful consideration of the role that introductory online textbooks play in education, I recommend that community college instructors consider Krumrey's (2022) updated version of *Intercultural Communication for the Community College* textbook.

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