VIPP Course Descriptions: FALL 2017

FULL SEMESTER (9/6 – 12/8)

VIP 415 Conversation I
Instructor: Ingrid Gharai
Full Semester (September 6 – December 8); 3 Credit Hours
The main focus of the Conversation I class is improving oral and aural proficiency and increasing overall confidence. Outside of class, participants are encouraged to keep up on current issues via news reports on TV and radio, or in newspapers and magazines (focusing on their weaker skill area in either listening or reading) and reporting back to the class. This also serves as background for discussing editorial cartoons, which is a regular part of the class. Participants are required to give a short (5-10 minute) oral presentation in front of the class to further boost their confidence. A part of most classes is partner work and/or small group discussion of topics of interest including personal experiences and values, American culture, socializing, travel, etc. Each pair and small group is organized so as to be as culturally diverse as possible given the class demographics in order to create opportunities for cross-cultural sharing and an atmosphere that stimulates real communication.

VIP 441 Pronunciation & Public Speaking
Instructor: Ian Leighton
Full Semester (September 6 – December 8); 3 Credit Hours
The purpose of this course is to give you the skills you need to become a more skilled, dynamic presenter in English. The overall aim of this class is to develop your ability to present academic material in English, and to do this with confidence. Specifically, this means that you will practice developing your presentation from a simple idea through to a valuable, informative and interesting talk. We will study and practice various types of presentations; do activities to overcome stage-fright; study body language, proper voice projection and usage, eye contact, posture, using visual aids, and of course, we will practice presenting a great deal with several short (3-5 minute) presentations. These presentations are designed to be light and fun. They should not require too much outside preparation time. Though, they will take some time. My philosophy is that students need to practice a lot, as opposed to studying about presentations in a book. However, we will use sections of a book at times. Though you may be an experienced presenter/teacher, there is always more that you can learn. Perhaps you’ve been presenting almost every day of your professional life. By studying and with guidance, you can learn to become a more dynamic presenter. We will also study English pronunciation. I plan on studying this for 20-30 minutes, or longer if needed). There will be some graded activities associated with pronunciation. We are teaching these skills together, as we believe that proper pronunciation in English will help you present better, and with more confidence.

FIRST-HALF SEMESTER (9/6 – 10/20)

VIP 401A America 101
Instructor: Ian Leighton
First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1 Credit Hour (not 1.5 Credit Hours)
*** Same course as VIP 401B in the second-half semester – You cannot take both! ***
This class is an expansion of the traditional orientation that VIPP has always offered. In past years, students would get all the orientation material at the beginning of the semester within a few hours. With this class, we’ve tried to spread things out so that we can go into more detail and allow for some question & answer time that many students need. We found that it was “information overload” when students were expected to learn all of this information within 2-3 hours. The purpose of this course is to give you the background for understanding the US and living comfortably while here. International students in the US (including VIPP) often require a little extra assistance to help make a comfortable transition to living in a foreign country. This class aims to help provide you with a deeper understanding of the topics that are offered. Each lesson aims to provide more detail, along with a question & answer time, so that students feel comfortable doing everything by themselves, or at least knowing that there are options (for example: finding a doctor who speaks your native language, enrolling your children in a special program, etc.). If you’re not comfortable doing these yourself, after you learn about them, you will at least know that you may have the option, and that you can ask us for assistance. Our main goal is to help make your life here as smooth and comfortable as possible. There will always be challenges ahead, but by learning what’s out there, and what’s possible, we hope to improve your quality of life while at MSU.

**VIP 417 Academic and Professional Writing**
Instructor: Ruth Mendel
First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours
This course focuses on areas of writing that are important in academic and professional writing and can pose difficulties for second language speakers. Topics covered in the course include the following: email writing, data commentary (how we discuss data), cause-effect writing, cross-cultural issues in second language writing, process descriptions, business memo writing, problem-solution texts, use of the conditional tense in writing, and common patterns of errors in second language writing. Exercises developed by the instructor are designed to be interesting and stimulating and involve discussion with classmates. Writing improves by...writing. You will therefore have ample opportunity to write in this class, through both in-class short writing exercises and short writing assignments. There will be no long paper or presentation required for the class; instead there will be 3-4 short (approximately 1 page) assignments. Students will receive extensive individualized feedback on both in-class writing exercises and written homework to help them improve writing. I place great emphasis on having a stress-free low-key (not high pressure) class. I believe that mistakes are only opportunities to learn.

**VIP 418A Environmental Policy Issues & Community Engagement**
Instructor: Jessica DeForest
First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours
This course focuses on developing students’ awareness of the characteristics of persuasive communication and building skills in evaluating and constructing effective messages. To insure that students have the knowledge to evaluate specific messages we will focus on a single or a set of related real world problems and examine how policy makers, advocates, and activists convince the public of the merits of either enacting certain policies or, on the other hand, to enact no policy at all. This semester, we will study some examples of public projects in the Lansing area that use public parks and public art to improve the quality of life of local residents while improving the water quality of nearby rivers, preventing flooding, and supporting biodiversity by restoring tiny wildlife habitats in urban and suburban areas. We will tour at least one such project — a combination of two small suburban parks, a Michigan State University oak tree research forest, and a golf course. This very ambitious project
required massive public expense and even periodically setting the local golf course on fire, all of which had to be justified to local citizens who had to pay for the project and/or who used the golf course.

**VIP 451A American Culture**
Instructor: Joe Cousins
**First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours**
This course examines American culture from the perspective of its own mainstream topics such as government, education, diversity/race, and family and sports. And popular culture, etc. will be discussed. We’ll have guest speakers and videos may be shown. The goal of this class is to familiarize you with various aspects of mainstream American culture. You will gain insights of culture that are often uniquely American, while at the same time, improving your abilities to read, comprehend, and express yourself in English.

**VIP 464 Business English**
Instructor: Jessica Farrar
**First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours**
In this integrated skills course, students will develop fluency, accuracy, and communication skills in order to gain confidence in a variety of English-speaking business situations. There is an emphasis on speaking, from practiced presentations to impromptu situations. Writing for various business purposes, such as professional letters, emails, and application forms, will be practiced. Essential business vocabulary will also be introduced. Participants will develop useful skills and vocabulary through active participation in everyday business situations. Active learning methods will be utilized and integrated throughout the semester.

**VIP 483 Organizational Behavior**
Instructor: Erika Butler
**First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours**
This course assumes that students are working professionals who have some academic and personal experience with organizations and how they function. The course will review classic western based organizational behavior theory from a macro and micro perspective. We will review theories of motivation in the work environment and how organizational design influences these processes. We will also review leadership, decision making and power theories. This course will be a condensed form of a master’s level foundational course in Organizational Behavior.

**VIP 815 U.S. Telecommunication Systems and Services**
Instructor: Erika Butler
**First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours**
This course will explore the questions important to understanding how telecommunication systems and services developed in the United States. We will explore how state regulated telecommunication systems developed in the rest of the world and how the US telecommunication system was built through private investment and various lobbying efforts, and how regulation developed around the growth of this industry. We will study the Communications Act of 1934 and the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and review related terminology as it pertains to the history of regulation of telecommunication systems and services in the US, its effects today on network neutrality and how other countries have handled regulation of their telecommunication systems and services.

**VIP 856B Pedagogy of University Teaching**
Instructor: Sonja Wang
**First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours**
This course intends to provide learning and professional development opportunities to international educational professionals, especially college and university professors from non-native English speaking countries. Drawing on theoretical, empirical, and philosophical discussions from cognitive science and teacher education, I work with professionals to explore the essential questions of intelligence, knowledge, teaching and learning, as well as critical and creative thinking. Furthermore, I invite participants to consider how understandings of contrastive cultural perspectives inform our teaching and learning practices. Together, we will practice and develop procedures for designing, implementing, and evaluating curricular at the senior college level, including identifying and articulating learning outcomes, crafting course syllabus, designing activities, lessons, units, and assignments, and implementing effective assessment tools.

**VIP 858 General Research Methodology**
Instructor: Teresa Svec
First Half Semester (September 6 – October 20); 1.5 Credit Hours
This course will introduce methodologies used in conducting scholarly research in the U.S. Participants will learn to distinguish between scholarly and popular sources, locate research materials electronically and in print, search online databases, and evaluate the appropriateness of sources. Participants will practice developing a research question, creating a research plan, and finding research materials. Participants will also learn to analyze their research findings, and effectively communicate their findings in writing.

**SECOND-HALF SEMESTER (10/23 – 12/8)**

**VIP 401B America 101**
Instructor: Ian Leighton
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1 Credit Hour (not 1.5 Credit Hours)
*** Same course as VIP 401A in the first-half semester – You cannot take both! ***
This class is an expansion of the traditional orientation that VIPP has always offered. In past years, students would get all the orientation material at the beginning of the semester within a few hours. With this class, we’ve tried to spread things out so that we can go into more detail and allow for some question & answer time that many students need. We found that it was “information overload” when students were expected to learn all of this information within 2-3 hours. The purpose of this course is to give you the background for understanding the US and living comfortably while here. International students in the US (including VIPP) often require a little extra assistance to help make a comfortable transition to living in a foreign country. This class aims to help provide you with a deeper understanding of the topics that are offered. Each lesson aims to provide more detail, along with a question & answer time, so that students feel comfortable doing everything by themselves, or at least knowing that there are options (for example: finding a doctor who speaks your native language, enrolling your children in a special program, etc.). If you’re not comfortable doing these yourself, after you learn about them, you will at least know that you may have the option, and that you can ask us for assistance. Our main goal is to help make your life here as smooth and comfortable as possible. There will always be challenges ahead, but by learning what’s out there, and what’s possible, we hope to improve your quality of life while at MSU.

**VIP 414 Idioms**
Instructor: Jessica Farrar
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours
Native speakers commonly use idioms in both speaking and to a lesser extent writing to add color and interest to their communications. Idioms can be confusing to non-native speakers because they often haven’t studied idioms in their traditional textbooks and English coursework. So, in this course, we will use authentic materials to study the colloquial uses of idioms in their contexts. Additionally, we will explore the connections between the literal and figurative meanings of many common American idioms in order to help students better remember idioms and be able to figure out meanings of new idioms. We will practice idioms through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities within many common American cultural situations.

**VIP 422 Academic Reading**  
Instructor: Ruth Mendel  
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours  
This course is a companion course to Academic and Professional Writing. Students who have taken the writing course are free to take this reading course as there is only minimal overlap; this reading course is also suitable for students who have not taken the VIPP writing course. Academic Reading uses a variety of readings to achieve the following objectives:

- Using strategies to read more attentively, effectively and efficiently and reduce the stress of heavy reading loads*
- Improving skills of critical analysis
- Increasing familiarity with the structure of academic journal articles
- Acquiring new vocabulary
- Learning how to summarize materials effectively
- Using reading to improve writing by noting particular linguistic features.
- Exploring cross-cultural differences in academic work

This course will not have extensive reading materials: magazine articles will be 1-2 pages and, when academic journals are used, students will generally be reading only excerpts from it, not the entire journal article. There will be 2-3 brief (1 page) writing assignments to respond to readings, and students will receive extensive individualized feedback on their work. Students’ vocabulary logs will be compiled and a master list with explanations will be prepared for students at the end of the term.

*It should be noted that Academic Reading is not a course in how to read more rapidly; it is not a speed reading course. That is a separate field, and there are mixed reviews about how useful it is. At the same time, strategies taught here may help improve reading efficacy and make reading easier.

**VIP 451B American Culture through Movies and Music**  
Instructor: Collin Blair  
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours  
Get to know American culture through great movies and tunes! This course allows students to take an in-depth look at American culture through the important movements in American film and music. Students will follow the changes and movements in popular and political U.S. culture over the past 80 years. Some of the highlighted film and music genres will be musicals, film noir, summer blockbusters, big band, rock, Motown, and folk. This class is highly interactive and will improve all parts of students’ language skills while introducing them to key moments in American entertainment. Though there will naturally be a focus on listening and discussion, there is also reading and writing involved throughout the semester in order to enhance preparation for and comprehension of the class material.
VIP 454 Discovering MSU  
Instructor: Todd Bradley  
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours  
This course is designed to highlight the special attributes of Michigan State University’s programs, attractions, resources, expertise, diversity and autonomy. Participants will be involved with weekly field trips around campus, presentations, and conversations with faculty, staff and leaders. The goal of this program is to engage participants in an interactive experience, exposure and on-boarding to the diverse functions of Michigan State University, and the expertise of individual campus units. Engagement in program presentations/discussions with a high priority of campus networking. A field trip pool (depending on availability) includes Central Human Resources, Infrastructure and Planning Facilities, Residential and Hospitality Services, President’s Office, Office of Governmental Affairs, College of Engineering, Abrams Planetarium, MSU Historic Museum, Broad Art Museum, University Advancement, College of Agriculture, MSU Health Team, MSU Dairy Store, Recycling/Surplus Store, College of Veterinarian Medicine, MSU Student Union, MSU Stadium, Breslin Center, and Wharton Center.

VIP 472 Critical Thinking  
Instructor: Michael Rip  
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours  
We are all constantly reasoning—that is, forming beliefs, opinions, conclusions, judgments, or inferences. Our ability to do so effectively determines our success in situation analysis, problem solving, and decision making, especially in relation to key areas such as business planning, process improvement, and people management. For organizations to be successful in today’s highly competitive markets, they need to invest in and harness one of their most vital assets: their human capital, specifically the collective creativity of the minds of all employees. Regrettably, we are all born with a “hard-wired” predisposition to use thinking strategies that are inadequate for determining and understanding causation in organizations and life in general. Reliance on these “instinctive thinking” (reflexive) strategies that usually produce false claims of causality has a significant adverse effect on learning, quality, productivity, and policy. To maximize one’s reasoning effectiveness, and to promote innovation, it is necessary to master the skills of “ingenious thinking,” which is a fundamental characteristic of successful innovators, business executives, scientists, strategists, and many Nobel prize winners. At the individual level, by leveraging reasoning skills, you are investing in your most important resource and the ultimate competitive advantage — your mind.

VIP 477 American East Asian Relations in Historical Context  
Instructor: Jessica DeForest  
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours  
Perhaps more than ever before, international attention is focused on the American presidential election campaigns. From the Democratic and Republican Party primaries emerged two very different candidates: one who many consider to have considerable experience in American foreign affairs and another whose campaign speeches express deep racial, religious, and national prejudice. This makes it a good time to examine American attitudes toward non-Americans. This semester, we will take advantage of the fact that the most important electoral contest in the United States presents many reminders of American exceptionalism; exceptionalism is the idea that America is fundamentally different from (and generally superior to) other nations. This attitude strongly influences American attitudes toward immigrants. On the other hand, most Americans are themselves descended from relatively recent immigrants. In addition, sectors of American society have formed deep ties with people of other counties. Historically, missionaries, scholars, and opinion leaders have had a powerful impact both on representing America in other countries and in shaping Americans public opinion about other nations.
This course will focus on the history of American relations with East Asia with an emphasis on how East Asian immigrants to the United States and Americans abroad has helped to shape mutual impressions and sometimes even national policy. The primary focus will be on American relations with and attitudes toward China, Japan, and, more recently, South Korea and Vietnam.

VIP 857 Instructed Foreign Language Learning
Instructor: Xiaoqing Chen
Second Half Semester (October 23 – December 8); 1.5 Credit Hours
The target audience of this course is mainly foreign language teachers who intend to familiarize themselves with theories concerning their teaching practice and who are interested in doing research on second language acquisition. In this course, foreign language teaching will be broken down into an array of its components, including input, output, implicit learning, explicit learning, corrective feedback, learner attention, individual differences such as motivation and working memory, and so forth. Then we will tap into the theory underpinning each of these components, such as Noticing Hypothesis, Interaction Hypothesis, Skill Acquisition Theory, etc. In so doing, we will corroborate not only the ways that justify how a foreign language is taught, but also the factors that affect the learning of this language. This process is intertwined with the analysis of a number of influential empirical studies that throw light on how we develop research question, design experiment, collect and analyze data, and interpret research findings. Equipped with knowledge and skill in this area, students will come up with their own research topics and do research in groups on the next phases of their program.

Note:
Classes coded 470 and higher are considered advanced courses. Courses are worth 3 credits for full semester courses and 1.5 credits for half semester courses. Class size has been limited to 22 students.