

First Year Seminar (Dr. Kille, Fall 2005)

Paper Assignment #5: Reaction Paper to Althen and International Week

*Paper is due Tuesday November 22

The paper should be a minimum of 4 pages in length. Remember that students may choose to re-write up to two short papers to improve the paper. Revised papers will be re-graded, with the final grade reflecting an average of the two grades awarded.

Writing Assignment (8% of total course grade)

Both Althen's book and International Week seek to build understanding across cultures. How well does this book and International Week events succeed at this task? In answering this question, be sure to address the following points:

1. Althen observes that Americans "cannot understand why people from other countries should have any difficulty understanding them...But most foreigners do have trouble understanding Americans" (p. xix). Reacting to this statement, please address the following:

- Do you agree with how Althen portrays American culture? Be sure to carefully identify aspects of Althen's book with which you particularly agree or disagree. Incorporate into this discussion at least two of the "specific aspects of American life" discussed in Part II.
- How helpful do you think Althen's suggestions are for coping with cultural differences? Be sure to discuss which aspects you believe are most or least helpful.
- If you were to write such a guide for foreigners in the United States, what would you add or change in comparison to Althen's book?

2. While Althen's book is designed to explain the United States to foreigners, International Week allows students to learn about other areas in the world. In reaction to International Week, please provide the following:

- What International Week events did you attend? Briefly describe what occurred at the events and then provide your reaction to the event. What are the key things that you learned from this event? How could this event be improved to provide you with better understanding of other places in the world?
- If you were to study abroad for a semester outside of the United States and that institution had an international week, what would you do to represent Wooster?

3. Overall, how difficult do you believe that it is to overcome cultural differences? What strategies would you recommend for helping "us" better understand "them"?

International Week Attendance

*Attend at least two international week events.