

# Common Cultural Differences

- ❖ Student make-up may be different
  - Religious diversity
  - In college just to party?
  - Not full time students? Have outside jobs?
  - Americans seem less well prepared, especially new students
  - American students may not all be motivated... meaning teachers are sometimes expected to provide stimulation in the material
  - Some students will be intolerant of accents
    - Racist? Or simply too lazy to do the “work” of interpreting an accent different from their own?
    - Some Americans use “TA accent” as an excuse for poor performance in class even if there is no problem
- ❖ Body language
  - Student body language might be different from yours
    - In some cultures, raising left hand is a problem due to it being used only for the toilet)
    - American students are not used to “formal” teachers who never smile; they perceive it as unfriendly
- ❖ Classroom atmosphere may be less formal than you expect
  - Americans seem to lack respect toward teachers? (note: disagreement with the teacher is NOT an attack on authority)
  - Americans sometimes use the instructor’s first name
  - American students dress informally
- ❖ Student expectations are different in America
  - Americans expect make up exams (and extra credit)
  - Americans expect grading curves / grade inflation
  - Foreign teachers are used to the “all knowing” teacher in some cultures (many Americans reject or are bored by unilateral transmission)
  - Foreign teachers are used to students asking questions if they don’t understand (many Americans will instead give up)

# Possible Cultural Bridges

- ❖ Try to identify and understand the culture divides above – such understanding is itself the bridge
- ❖ Tell the class about yourself; students will care more
- ❖ Talk about your culture and cultural differences; students will be interested (“celebrate difference”)
- ❖ Use midterm evaluations: find out from your students what you can be doing to improve
- ❖ Read “American Ways” by Gary Althen or “The American Ways” by Maryanne Datesman.