

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY
Psychology 204, Fall 2012

Stephan Mayer
218 Severance
Office Hours: MW 4:30-5:00
or by appointment

Course Description

Cultural Psychology provides a survey of this rapidly growing field of study. Specifically, the course will examine the contributions this field of study has made to the different subfields of psychology (i.e., cognitive, developmental, social, personality, clinical, and environmental psychology). As you'll see, the theories and research findings in this field challenge many of the assumptions in these subfields. For instance, when examining how fundamental is the fundamental attribution error, you'll see that this bias is not as fundamental as many social psychologists once thought. Additionally, as you'll see, on a very basic level this field of study extends these subfields by illustrating how important it is to test theories and hypotheses in different cultures. It is only in this way that the universality of theories and hypotheses can be established. To understand how to conduct cross-cultural research, then, is critical for the advancement of psychological science.

But what do we mean by the concept of universality? Are there different levels of universality? How do psychologists test how our thoughts, feelings, and actions are universal or dependent upon the specific culture we've grown up in? How do cultures vary from one another? How have cultures changed over time? Or, considering other questions addressed in this field of study, what does it mean to be a friend? How does the concept of one's self differ from culture to culture? Broadly speaking, how might individuals from different cultures fundamentally see the world in different ways? How might the very nature of our lives, our desires and goals, our basic understanding of how the social and physical world works, be impacted by the cultures we've been raised in? These are only a few of the questions we'll be exploring in this course.

Regarding the nature of this class, this course is primarily a lecture course, although demonstrations, films, and discussions will take place during our meeting times. For this course to be a success, each person needs to: 1) faithfully read assigned chapter(s) and article(s); 2) be physically present and intellectually attentive in class; 3) consistently reflect on the material outside of class; and 4) attend office hours to discuss and clarify the material. *Please note:* I ask that you not use laptop computers or other electronic devices (such as smart phones) during class time. While some use laptops solely to take notes, the temptation to do otherwise is great and it distracts other students. If you have a particular need for an exception, please let me know.

Considering the goals of this course, first and foremost, I believe that learning should be fun. By fun, however, I don't mean that it should be easy, but hopefully involving, challenging, and meaningful. I've tried to accomplish this goal in several different ways. First, during the semester you will be required to write five brief papers on a topic of your choice. These papers will enable you to answer and reflect on questions that are most meaningful to yourself. A second goal is for you to learn the depth and breadth of this material. On three exams, I will provide you with questions that I think are important for you to grapple with. These questions will come in the form of essay questions and multiple-choice questions that are representative of the ideas and findings in this field. As for the essay questions, before each exam, I will provide you with a set of essay questions from which I will select two that will be in the test. In this way, for each section of the class you will be answering questions that either you or I feel are important.

Reaction Papers

Elaborating on the paper assignment, the intent of these papers is to encourage you to think about some aspect of the class that you find interesting. What I'd like you to do is to take a topic or issue addressed in class or in the readings during a specified time period, and write a brief paper about the topic/issue and your reaction to it. More specifically, these papers should be no longer than 2 pages (double-spaced, font 12, normal margins). Initially discuss the topic/issue

you are interested in. Let me know that you understand the topic/issue you will be reacting to. Then in the remainder of the paper share your thoughts about the topic/issue. Did it lead you to think of things in new ways? In what ways did you find the topic/issue interesting? In what ways did you find the topic/issue to miss the point? If so, how? Examining the class schedule, you will see when these papers are due. *No late work will be accepted.* Each paper will be worth 20 points.

Exams

There will be three exams during the semester. Each exam will consist of two essays and twenty-five multiple-choice questions. Each essay will be worth 25 points and each multiple-choice question 2 points for a total score of 100 for each exam. The exam dates are:

| | |
|----------|-----------------------|
| Exam I | Monday, October 1 |
| Exam II | Monday, November 5 |
| Exam III | Wednesday, December 5 |

Required Readings

Steven J. Heine (2012, 2nd ed.). *Cultural Psychology*. W.W. Norton. New York/London

Articles (see class schedule)

Assignment of Grades

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|------|---|
| 392-400 | A+ | 351-359 | B+ | 311-319 | C+ | 271-279 | D+ | <240 | F |
| 369-391 | A | 329-350 | B | 289-310 | C | 249-270 | D | | |
| 360-368 | A- | 320-328 | B- | 280-288 | C- | 240-248 | D- | | |

Class Schedule

Week 1

W 9/5 **Overview of the Course**

Week 2

M 9/10 **Why Study Culture?**

Reading: Ch 1

W 9/12 **The Meanings of Culture**

Reading: Ch 2

****First Reaction Paper due Friday by 4:30****

Week 3

M 9/17 **The Psychological Foundations of Culture**

Reading: Ch 3

W 9/19 **The Search for Universals and Diversity**

Reading: Ch 4

****Second Reaction Paper due Friday by 4:30****

Week 4

M 9/24 **Research Strategies and Other Issues**

W 9/26 Yom Kippur – no class

Week 5

M 10/1 **Exam I**

W 10/3 **Cognition and Perception**

Reading: Ch 8

Week 6

M 10/8 **The Self**

Reading: Ch 6

W 10/10 **Ancient Futures**

****Third Reaction Paper due Friday by 4:30****

Week 7

M 10/15 **Personality**

W 10/17 **Motivation**

Reading: Ch 7

Week 8: Fall Break

Week 9

M 10/29 **Development, Socialization, and Morality**

Reading: Ch 5

Tweed & Lehman (2002). Learning considered within a cultural context:
Confucian and Socratic approaches.

W 10/31 **Morality, Religion, & Justice**

Reading: Ch 13

Week 10

M 11/5
W 11/7

Exam II

Living in Multicultural Worlds

Reading: Ch 10

Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu (2008). Multicultural experiences enhances creativity.

Week 11

M 11/12
W 11/14

Culture, Health, & Abnormal Psychology

Reading: Ch 11

Culture, Health, & Abnormal Psychology

Reading: Ch 12

Fourth Reaction Paper due Friday by 4:30

Week 12

M 11/19
W 11/21

Culture, Health, & Abnormal Psychology

Reading: Keel & Klump (2003). Are eating disorders culture-bound syndromes? Implications for conceptualizing their etiology.

Emotions

Reading: Ch 14

Crocker (2008). From egosystem to ecosystem: Implications for relationships, learning, and well-being.

Neff (2008). Self-compassion: Moving beyond the pitfalls of a separate self-concept.

Fifth Reaction Paper due Friday by 4:30

Week 13

M 11/26
W 11/28

Friends, Lovers, & Working with Others

Reading: Ch 9

Are We Inherently Aggressive and Warlike?

Week 14

M 12/3

Reconciling Human & Environmental Systems

Reading: Frantz & Mayer (2009). The emergency of climate change: Why are we failing to take action?

W 12/5

Exam III

Week 15

M 12/10
W 12/12

Questions, Questions, Questions

A Retrospective View