

**Psychology and Culture**  
**Spring 2013**  
**Tentative syllabus**

**Professor:**

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office hours: before and after class and by appointment

**Required textbooks:**

1. Berry, J.W., Poortinga, Y.H., Pandey, J., Dasen, P., Saraswathi, T.S., Segall, M., & Kagitcibasi, C. (1996). *The Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Vol. 1-3 (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

**Additional textbooks:**

1. Matsumoto, D. (2001). *The Handbook of Culture and Psychology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
2. Castillo, Richard J. (1997) *Culture and Mental Illness: A Client-Centered Approach*. Brooks/Cole.

**Resources:**

1. Resources downloaded into electronic system.
2. Recommended Internet resources:
  - ~ Academic Journal for Psychoanalysis, culture and society:  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_for\\_the\\_pschoanalysis\\_of\\_culture\\_and\\_society/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_for_the_pschoanalysis_of_culture_and_society/)
  - ~ Cultural Psychology links by subtopics:  
<http://www.socialpsychology.org/cultural.htm>
  - ~ On-line readings on psychology and culture:  
[http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~culture/contents\\_brief.htm](http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~culture/contents_brief.htm)
- 3 Other useful resources:
  - ~ Cultures: <http://www.cultures.com/>
  - ~ International Journal of Intercultural Relations:  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01471767>
  - ~ Pop culture :  
<http://www.fccj.edu/campuses/deerwood/dwclibrary/popcultureweb.html>

**Course description:**

The social sciences address human behavior in varying realms: as individuals and in groups, as members of distinct cultures and societies, and within political, economic, social and historic contexts. In each, there is debate about how much of human behavior is the consequence of nature or nurture. Yet any meaningful consideration must include both biological *and* social influences. In this course, while not forgetting that guiding principle, we will focus primarily on behavior within its cultural context. Behaviors and their meanings often differ from one culture to another and many of the problems that occur in intercultural encounters are attributable to different cultural assumption and practices, which can easily result in misinterpretation. We will examine the role culture plays in forming individual and group behavior, from cultural differences in emotional expression, to culturally bounded systems of classifications, to intellectual tests, to traditional rituals, to multiple and distinct interpretations of the culture “text.”

**Course goals**

1. To provide students with opportunities to discuss together different cultural meanings of a variety of behaviors
2. To provide students with a fresh, critical and interdisciplinary analysis of self-identity and intercultural exchanges by incorporating insights and perspectives from the spectrum of the social sciences.
3. To encourage students to understand behavior in a broad psychological and socio-cultural perspective, to appreciate the importance of culture in understanding the Self.

### Course requirements

1. **Participation in class and on-line discussions.** Discussion questions will be based on the assigned readings, your comprehension of the course materials and requirements, or other specific directions from the instructor. Questions for group discussion based on the results of your forum activities will be downloaded into e-learning system before each videoconference. You will also have a possibility to continue discussion via on-line.
2. **Exams.** There will be four regular exams during the semester and one final cumulative exam. The exams will be based on lectures and readings, and will likely vary in format (i.e., mostly multiple choice, some short answer, maybe an essay question or two, etc.). All regular quizzes worth 20 points and will be placed into e-learning system. There will be no makeup quizzes in this class, and missed quizzes will be counted as a zero.
3. **Final exam** will be cumulative and include both multiple-choice and essay questions.
4. **Attendance** is mandatory. Absences, late arrivals, and early departures are recorded and will reduce your grade. All absences are equal; none are “excused.” You are expected to come to class on time, having read the assigned materials, and prepared to discuss them. Bring a copy of the assigned readings and your syllabus to each class.
5. **Interview development & Life –History Project.** Individual life histories are extremely helpful in understanding the ways in which cultural values and norms influence individual development across the life span. Students will be expected to complete an Interview Development & Life –History Project (IDL) during the second half of the semester. The IDLP will ultimately consist of a final paper. The goal of this project is to get an idea of the role culture and society play in shaping human behaviours.

### Steps of completing IDLP:

1. Compose 20-25 questions about individual’s life-history . Focus questions on sources of happiness, concerns, relationships, life satisfaction, and major stresses, important cultural norms and values that have influenced their lives. Every class meeting will end with a variety of possible questions, which you might include into your interviews. You might compose your own ones or choose those which match the goal of your research – first draft
2. Find two volunteers of similar age and gender, ideally – with similar marital and social status (not University student) – from Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Ask them to discuss their life experiences with you
3. Conduct an interview, using prepared items

4. Write a description of a life history and find out the main factors that influenced life changes, main life events, provoked unusual behaviours, etc. – second draft
5. Prepare a brief (4-6 pages) description of your results - third draft
6. Present the result of your mutual research project during the last week of regular classes

**Your final paper will have the following structure:**

1. Title page with the names of the authors
2. Description of two cases
3. Comparison of life – histories and analysis of cultural influences on individual's behaviour
4. Brief conclusion
5. Reference list

**Grading**

Grades will be assigned on the basis of the following criteria: four regular quizzes (20 points each, 80 points total); class participation (50 points total); IDLP assignment (80 points); and the TDP final paper (50 points). Course grades will be calculated as a percentage, by the number of points earned in the class divided by the maximum number then multiplied by 100. Course grades will then be assigned as follows:

A = 97-100 %  
A- = 90 –96 %  
B+ = 85 – 89%  
B = 80-84%  
B- = 75-79%  
C+ = 69 – 74%  
C = 60 – 68%  
C- = 50 – 59%  
D = 45 – 49%  
F = less than 44%

Grades will be rounded up to the nearest whole number in order to determine the assignment of course grades. For example, if a student receives an 89.51% in the course, then they will receive an 'A-' for this course. If the student receives an 89.49% in the course, then this constitutes a 'B+' for the course.

No exceptions will be made with this grading policy.

**Extra Credit Up to 10 points**

Extra Credit can be earned in a variety of ways up to 10 extra points total. If you make especially valuable contributions to class discussion, or if you make especially valuable contributions to the email discussion, you may earn extra points. Or you can get extra credit for a particularly terrific project. This might include a special presentation, if you are interested. In general, if you do something creative, special, contributive, and above-and-beyond the course requirements, you may earn extra credit.

**Course Policies**

- ~ *Deadlines.* Deadlines are firm. Extensions for assignments and/or exams will only be granted in cases of extenuating circumstances. All work must be completed by the end of the course.
- ~ *Disruptive Behaviour.* The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the right of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Student behaviour that disrupts the classroom will not be tolerated. Disruptive behaviour includes speech and behaviour that are clearly disrespectful of either the instructor or other students. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, physically or verbally abusive behaviour, interruptions of the instructor or other students, failure to adhere to the instructor's rules or instructions, vulgar or obscene language, clear disregard by the student of the instructor's lecture (such as reading a newspaper or writing personal notes to other classmates), slurs and other forms of intimidation. Student conduct which disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated, and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from the classroom.
- ~ *Cheating and Plagiarism.* Academic dishonesty in any form (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, lying) will result in an 'F' for the course.

**!!!** Your grade is neither a measurement of your personal worth nor an assessment of what we think of you. It is simply an evaluation of your performance in this course, nothing more and nothing less!!!

#### **Tentative class, assignment schedule**

This schedule is subject to change and it is your responsibility to stay informed of any adjustments, which will be announced in class. The assigned readings, unless otherwise noted, are from the required textbooks. Other required readings will be distributed by email or in class.

#### **Tentative class topics:**

1. Conceptualization of culture.
2. The socioeconomic dimensions of culture
3. Theoretical concepts of understanding behavior. Conceptualization of cultural psychology
4. Research in the area of cultural psychology: cross-cultural and intercultural studies. Validity of intercultural studies. Temporal and Ecological validity of the results.
5. Socialization and formal education experience in behavioral formation
6. Religion and religious practices in behavior formation
7. Cultural differences in perception and problem solving
8. Cultural differences in emotional expression.
9. Cultural differences in information processing. Cultural biased intelligence tests.
10. Altered states of consciousness and rituals in traditional cultures.
11. Cultures in contact: intergroup relations. How to live together being different: effective intercultural communications. Difficulties and benefits of international marriages.
12. Culture and "model of mind" formation.
13. Cultural hegemony
14. Culture and health. Mental health: individual or social problem? Traditional healing and shamanism. Outcomes of traditional healing. Interaction between traditional healing and official medicine
15. Interpreting popular culture: audience reception theory
16. The roles of the mass media in creating a dominant culture

