

Soc 169C

Cross-Cultural Communication

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People move in and out of, around, and between various cultures— ethnic, national, regional, gender, racial, socioeconomic, political, and more— throughout our lives. Some of this movement occurs on a daily basis, in subtle ways that we take for granted. The relatively memorable cross-cultural experiences stand out, because they challenge our deeply-felt assumptions about behavior and meanings. In either case, we usually do not systematically analyze or reflect on our cultural choreographies.

Furthermore, people tend to avoid voluntarily immersing themselves in the kind of challenging social situations that are best at prompting us to examine our core values, identities, and assumptions. Yet such situations are essential for developing empathy— the ability to recognize and understand other people’s experiences— and for self-awareness. And now, in this era of globalization, growing ethnocentric nationalisms, and increasing inequality, cross-cultural understanding, when combined with empathy and compassion, promises to deliver us with open minds and open hearts.

“Cross-cultural communication” invites students out into the field, where they participate in the social world of a particular group that is culturally distinct from themselves. There, they practice a contemplative form of participant observation with the aid of a diverse curriculum. This curriculum covers the practice of fieldwork in addition to substantive readings on the intersections of culture and various dimensions of social life, including class, race/ethnicity, health and illness, the police, politics, nationalism, gender ideologies, and marketing sex appeal. While exploring these topics, we will reflect on and analyze our personal experiences and their connections to these social structures, institutions, and cultures.

Goals of this course include: 1) describing and analyzing patterned social and cultural differences; 2) reflecting on personal experience of cultural difference; 3) engaging with a distinct group’s social world to meaningfully experience cross-cultural communication; 4) developing empathy and understanding people who appear different from us; and 5) developing self-awareness.

Note: This class can be taken for 3 or 4 units.

Grade Breakdown for 4 Units:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Group Presentations	10%
Proposal of Cultural Group	5%
Cultural Self-Analysis Paper	10%
Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection	10%
Deep Description of Cultural Group	15%
Project Presentation	5%
Final Paper	30%

Grade Breakdown for 3 Units:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Group Presentations	10%
Proposal of Cultural Group	5%
Option #1: Cultural Self-Analysis Paper	20%
-OR-	
Option #2: Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection	20%
Deep Description of Cultural Group	15%
Project Presentation	5%
Final Paper	30%

Note: this course includes material that may be emotionally-difficult and disturbing. Reactions, including, but not limited to, discomfort, anxiety, anger, sadness, disgust, guilt, and stress to course material is not grounds for exemption from, or customization of, policies pertaining to coursework, participation, assignments, and exams et cetera.

Participation and Attendance

This is a seminar style class, so attendance is mandatory; missing more than one class will result in a penalty of one letter grade for every absence. Please come to class prepared to discuss the week's reading and/or assignment. "Participation" does not mean simply speaking out a lot. The style, content, and thoughtfulness of your participation matter. A grade of "A" requires your attention (i.e. not surfing the web, on your phone too much, or talking on the side), good listening, supportive attitude, and speaking up more than once or twice during the semester.

This class is a seminar that asks you to engage with the material and to be ready to share your experiences. Please be mindful of group dynamics so that everybody feels comfortable to speak up. We want to cultivate a supportive atmosphere so people feel comfortable sharing. Keeping up with weekly readings and field work is also important for meaningful participation.

Attention! Students who miss any classes during the first two weeks may be dropped or otherwise not allowed into the class. Also, participation credit cannot be made-up under any circumstances, even if you have a legitimate reason (and evidence) for missing class.

Assignments

NO EXTENSIONS PERMITTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS! Detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted on our bCourses website (except for the Cultural Group Proposal, which includes all the details for the assignment). All assignments must be submitted to bCourses by the deadline (usually 11:59 on Friday). Any late assignment will be penalized a full grade (e.g. an A becomes a B) when submitted past the deadline, and another grade for every day it is late (the alternative is an automatic grade of zero). Please do not ask for an extension.¹ Do not exceed page limits!

¹ If you have had an emergency situation, you may successfully request an extension only if you provide supporting evidence with your request.

NOTE: You should submit your assignment at least 24 hours before the deadline in order to avoid any problems. Exceptions to this policy will not be made for any reason, including technical errors (if you encounter an error, take a screen shot of it and email me your assignment immediately).

Cultural Group Proposal

The project for this course requires participation in a “cultural group” that meets separately from our class throughout the semester. Starting from the first week of class you should work with me to find an appropriate service opportunity, club, organization or some other type of group that will allow you to: 1) engage relatively regularly with the *same group of people*, community, or neighborhood; 2) provide you a space to interact with people who are significantly different from you (e.g. a religious person joins an atheist group or a politically-liberal person joins a conservative group); and 3) give you some exposure to a “subculture” in the Bay Area. You cannot use housemates or one of your classes as your group.

The better your group fits the parameters of the class (i.e. it requires you to push your boundaries around cultural difference) the more likely you are to get a good grade and have a good experience in the class; it will be difficult to get an “A” if your group does push your boundaries through cultural difference.

The Assignment (also on bCourses)

Your proposal is your plan for your project. First, identify the cultural group you are interested in. Be specific! For example, the name of a specific organization or group (e.g. “Food Not Bombs”), rather than a type of group (such as “a Berkeley community service organization”). In other words, do enough research and thinking so you have some specific details about the group. Describe the group.

The more different the group is from you in at least one cultural area, the better (up to a point). Your participation in the group should push you out of your comfort zone somewhat. *You will know a given group is a good candidate if the thought of hanging out with them makes you feel uncomfortable.*

Second, discuss why you expect this group to provide interesting results for your project. What about it intrigues you? How is it different from your own cultural background? How is it similar? What do you hope to learn?

Third, briefly discuss what you plan to do with your cultural group. How will you participate and interact with them? What problems, challenges, or issues might arise, if any? Keep in mind that you should participate every week, and that you should be able to interact, like some kind of talking or discussion at least some of the time (i.e. it should not be something like a lecture, where there is little interaction).

This paper should be about two pages long. Do not exceed two pages. This is due on Friday night in the third week of the semester.

IMPORTANT!! Do not join or participate in a group that you feel is dangerous. Work with the instructor to find a field opportunity that feels safe but also makes you uncomfortable.

Group Presentations

Students will prepare a creative and interactive group presentation on one of the substantive topics (weeks 5-11). The presentation should last at least 30 minutes, and everyone must participate in some capacity during the presentation. We will form groups early in the semester. Each presentation will receive a group grade based on: 1) preparation and thoughtfulness; 2) creativity, performance, and interaction; and 3) content and meaningful insight. Anybody who does not present for any reason, including missing class, will receive a “zero.”

Presenters should check-in with the instructor a few days before the presentation to go over their plan. Groups should know the assigned readings well and should integrate them into their presentation of related material that they bring in from outside the class, such as videos, games or quizzes, or other readings (students often combine videos with interactive games). Groups should also lead the class in discussing the material.

In order to receive a grade, each group must email the instructor after the presentation with a breakdown of what each group member did to prepare. A good division of labor that makes use of each member’s strength’s and distributes the work as evenly as possible is recommended.

Self-Analysis Paper

How does your personal culture(s) affect your current values, beliefs, and ways of communication? This paper is designed to allow you an opportunity to examine how your own cultural and social identities and history affect your identity. Your paper will be evaluated based on insightfulness, depth of reflection, detailed descriptions/examples, and your analytical approach. 4-5 pages.

Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection

This assignment compliments the self-analysis essay by requiring you to select a person from your cultural group to interview in order to learn about how culture shapes identity. Prepare questions to ask your interviewee, and take notes of the interview. After the interview, write an analytical reflection paper. What did you learn about yourself in your interview of someone with such a different cultural and personal history? What are the key differences/similarities and what do these comparisons say about your own culture and identity? 4-5 pages.

Deep Description of Cultural Group

Observe key cultural aspects of your group so you can analyze them for the final paper. This also gives you a chance to receive feedback on your observations. Your deep description provides details and examples of the rules, norms, habits, ideologies, communication patterns, values, codes, rituals, behavior, social processes, discursive formations, and meanings of the group’s culture. You will also describe how members of the group use that culture. Use pseudonyms—not the real names—for your participants. About 4 pages for three units and 6 pages for four units.

Project Presentations

In the last weeks of class, students will present their cross-cultural projects, focusing on how their culture compares to the culture of the group they have been studying. This is meant to be a fun way for people to learn from our class's diversity and each other's experiences with cultural difference. Anybody who does not present will receive a grade of "zero," with no chance of recovering the lost points.

Final Paper and Field Work

The final paper is broken down into three assignments: 1) a proposal due in the third week of the course; 2) a deep description due in the middle of the course; and 3) a final paper due during finals week.

You will be required to participate in this group on a weekly basis. Alternative schedules for this field work can be worked out, but hours spent on this service project must equal at least 2 hours per week. You should write a journal of your experiences with the group. These field notes should be written immediately after your field work. People taking the course for 3 units should write at least one double-spaced page a week while people taking the course for 4 units should write at least two pages per week. Students should plan to begin field work and writing field notes by week three and continue through week 15 (a total of 10 weeks of notes is required). You will submit your notes part way through the semester and again with the final paper. It is important to write fields notes every week, not all at once before they are due.

The final paper should be about 12 pages long for 4 units and 8 pages for 3-units. This is a formal academic paper that discusses what you learned from this experience and analyzes the cultural group in relation to course themes. It also includes a reflective comparison of your culture with the group's culture and considers the role of cross-cultural communication in the cultural field.

Due dates

Week 3: Proposal of Cultural Group
Week 6: Cultural Self-Analysis Paper
Week 9: Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection
Week 12: Deep Description of Cultural Group
Monday, December 11th at 11:59pm: Final Paper
Periodic: Group Presentations on Substantive Topics

Guidelines and Resources

Course Materials

All our readings will be available on bCourses, under "files," or through links on this syllabus.

Recommended Optional Reading

Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Weiss, Robert. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Office Hours and Email

Office hours are important and I encourage you to make use of them. I ask students to email me to arrange an appointment in order to accommodate everybody's schedule. Note that I am usually only on campus Tuesdays and Thursdays this semester.

My email address is: j_kaiser@berkeley.edu. Please allow at least 24 hours for a reply. I usually do not use email over the weekend, on holidays, or after hours.

Formatting

All work must be formatted correctly. Familiarize yourself with MLA style formatting. Refer to The Purdue Owl Writing Lab.² Then, note the following variations that we use in our course's modified MLA format style:

- single space* the header at the top-left of your first page (name, course and units, assignment, due date);
- center your creative title above the start of your text;
- no title page;
- single space* block quotations;
- 1" margins;
- doubled-spacing (except for the header and block quotations);
- page numbers;
- 12-point Times New Roman font;
- staple pages together;
- left-side justification (but not right-side);
- no contractions.

Your assignments will be graded on how well they meet the course and assignment requirements, including content, delivery, and format.

Student Learning Center (SLC)

The SLC provides peer writing tutors. You are expected to make use of their services. You do not need an appointment. Find them in the Chavez Center (<http://slc.berkeley.edu>).

Disability Accommodations

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class please inform the instructor. Students who need academic accommodations should contact the Disability Students Program, 260 Cesar Chavez Center.

NOTE: Plagiarism is the presentation of another's words and/or ideas as one's own. It is grounds not only for automatic failure, but also for administrative disciplinary action. This also applies for other forms of academic dishonesty (a.k.a. cheating). Please see the Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct, Section III B, Academic Violations, and Section IV, Disciplinary Procedures.

² <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Course Schedule

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Refer to bCourses for the current version (look in “files”).

-----Week 1-----

Thursday, 8/24: Introduction to Course

Think about what cultural group you want to join
Think about what substantive topic you want to present

-----Week 2-----

Tuesday, 8/29: Choosing a “Cultural Group”

Miner, Horace. June 1956. “Body Ritual among the Nacirema,” *American Anthropologist*, 58 (5).

Weed, Julie. “Guides Learn to Tame the Exotic American.” <https://nyti.ms/2IBAZf6>

*Discuss the Cultural Group Proposal

Thursday, 8/31: Entering the Ethnographic Field

Emerson, Robert et al. “Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research” (1-20). In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Next week we meet in separate sections; come only to your assigned day!

-----Week 3 (9/5&9/7)-----

Proposal of Cultural Group Due!!!

Come only to your assigned day this week

Approaches to Studying Culture

Swidler, Ann. *Talk of Love*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. “Introduction” (1-6) and “Finding Culture” (11-23).

Today we organize for group presentations. Come prepared with your top choices (choose from weeks 5-11) so I can assign you to a group that will present that week’s topic.

-----Week 4 (9/12&9/14)-----

Observing Culture in Interaction and in Biography

Tannen, Deborah. 1984. “The Pragmatics of Cross-Cultural Communication,” *Applied Linguistics*. 5 (3): 189-195.

C. Wright Mills. *The Promise*.

*Discuss the Cultural Self-Analysis Paper

-----Week 5 (9/19&9/21)-----

Political Cultures

Irwin, Neil and Josh Katz. March 12, 2016. "The Geography of Trumpism."

Jones, Robert. "The Collapse of American Identity." <https://nyti.ms/2qsGY81>

Vavreck, Lynn. "Ordering Vindaloo or Hunting for Venison: How Cosmopolitanism Shapes the Vote." <https://nyti.ms/2m2hFtJ>

-----Week 6 (9/26&9/28)-----

Cultural Self-Analysis Paper due!!!

Race and the Criminalizing Injustice System

Anderson, Carol. "Ferguson isn't about black rage against cops. It's white rage against progress." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ferguson-wasnt-black-rage-against-cops-it-was-white-rage-against-progress/2014/08/29/3055e3f4-2d75-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33_story.html

Campisi, Charles. "The Myth of the Trigger-Happy Cop."

Bromwich, Jonah. "White and Black Police Officers Are Sharply Divided About Race." <https://nyti.ms/2kf15Cy>

-----Week 7 (10/3&10/5)-----

Culture, Inequality, and Health

Wilkinson and Pickett. "Physical Health and Life Expectancy." In *The Spirit Level*.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Roseto Mystery." In *Outliers*.

*Discuss the Interview Reflection assignment

-----Week 8 (10/10&10/12)-----

Ethnocentric Nationalisms

Taub, Amanda. "How a Sleepy German Suburb Explains Europe's Rising Far-Right Movements." <https://nyti.ms/2mHnZU4>

Nossiter, Adam. "Le Pen Leds Far-Right Fight to Make France 'More French'". <https://nyti.ms/2pFV1Xq>

-----Week 9 (10/17&10/19)-----

Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection due!!!

Empathy and the Social Construction of Gender

Quinn, Beth. "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: the Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching'". *Gender and Society*, Vol 16, No 3, (June 2002), 386-402

*Discuss the Deep Description assignment

-----Week 10 (10/24&10/26)-----

Culture of Poverty

Lewis, Oscar. 1961. "Introduction." In *The Children of Sanchez*. New York: Vintage Books, 1961. (xxiii-xliii).

Cohen, Patricia. 2010. "Culture of Poverty Makes a Comeback." *The New York Times*.

-----Week 11 (10/31&11/2)-----

Deep Description of Cultural Group due!!!

Marketing Sex Appeal

Nelson, Michelle R. and Hye-Jin Paek. "Cross-Cultural Differences in Sexual Advertising Content in a Transnational Women's Magazine," *Sex Roles*. 53 (5/6): September 2005, 371-383.

Frith, Katherine, Ping Shaw, and Hong Cheng. (March 2005) "The Construction of Beauty: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Women's Magazine Advertising," *Journal of Communication*. 55 (1): 56-70.

-----Week 12 (11/7&11/9)-----

Cultural Project Presentations

-----Week 13 (11/14&11/16)-----

Cultural Project Presentations

-----Week 14 (11/21&23)-----

No Class!

-----Week 15 (11/28&11/30)-----

Cultural Project Presentations

Final Paper due by 11:59pm on Monday, December 11th!!!