

Soc 169C

Cross-Cultural Communication

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UC Berkeley
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Online

People embody, use, and move between many types of cultures—ethnicity, nation, gender and sexuality, race, class, love, and many more—in their daily lives. Some of these cultural dynamics occur on a daily basis, in subtle and subconscious ways that we take for granted. The relatively memorable cross-cultural experiences often stand out because they challenge our deeply-felt assumptions about what things mean. In either case, we usually do not systematically analyze or reflect on our cultural choreographies. And these unquestioned assumptions, ideologies, and identities can divide us and reproduce inequality.

People tend to avoid voluntarily immersing themselves in the kind of challenging social situations that prompt us to examine our core values, identities, and assumptions, some of which divide people along lines of “difference.” Yet such situations are essential for developing empathy and self-awareness of one's own ideological rationalization. In this era of retrograde ethnocentric nationalisms and evolving inequalities, direct interaction with our assumptions, privileges, and “cultural others” can lead to social and psychological transformation.

“Cross-cultural communication” invites students out into the field, where they participate in the social world of a particular culture that challenges their own assumptions and values. There, they practice a reflexive form of participant observation with the aid of a supporting curriculum. Lectures cover the practice of cross-cultural fieldwork, how social psychological processes shape values, beliefs, and behavior, how people use culture to rationalize inequality and privilege, and solutions for channeling the power of these processes to promote positive transformation.

Additionally, we explore, through lectures and discussions, the social construction of contested cultural spaces and the institutions and social structures that they animate. Specifically, we focus on ethnocentric nationalism, race, debates over abortion, political identity, social distancing, gun ownership, and marketing sex appeal. While exploring these topics, we will analyze our own experiences in relation to these social issues in our study of culture, self, and society.

Goals of this course include: 1) ability to describe and analyze social and cultural patterns; 2) ability to reflect on personal experience of cultural difference; 3) successfully engaging with one's “cultural others”; 4) developing empathy and minimizing ideological rationalization; and 5) developing self-awareness of one's own socially-constructed cultural subjectivity.

Although prior coursework in sociology is recommended, there are no prerequisites for this course.

Grading

Attendance and Participation	15%
Topic Presentation	10%
Project Proposal	5%
Cultural Self-Analysis Paper	10%
Analytical Memo	15%
Field Notes	15%
Final Paper	30%

Seminar participation

This course is organized as a seminar. Seminars depend on the engaged and active participation of their members. Please bear in mind that the quality of that participation will be more important than quantity. If internet connectivity keeps you from attending class, you will need to communicate with me at least 24 hours before any given absence so that we can develop an alternative contribution to the class's learning experience. Missing more than two classes (in either synchronic or in a negotiated alternative form) will affect your grade. If you are synchronically present, you will be expected to participate in class discussions. Please be mindful of group dynamics so that everybody feels comfortable to speak up.

NOTE: students who miss two classes in the first two weeks may be dropped from the class.

Video policy: This is a seminar discussion, not a large lecture, so I ask that everybody turn their video on. Good communication is an important part of seminar discussions, and visual cues facilitate communication. Turning your video on or off affects the group. Feel free to turn it off when you need to for whatever reason (like you need to take a break), as long as it stays on most of the time. At the minimum, turn your video on when speaking and always during breakout room discussions. Please email me if having your video on is going to be a problem for any reason.

If you are self-conscious about seeing your own video or you find it distracting, know that you can turn off "self view" by clicking on your image/box and choosing that option from the list that pops up. If you have a concern about your personal space, you might consider: 1) positioning the camera so that only a wall is visible in the background; 2) adjusting the lighting so that you are less visible (backlit/dark); 3) using a virtual background.

WARNING: Do not record our meetings! It is illegal to record without notifying and getting consent from everybody in your recording.

Equipment Resources: If you need equipment (laptop, webcam, microphone) in order to participate in our Zoom meetings, you may borrow them through the Student Technology Equity Program (STEP): <https://bit.ly/32eaimn>

Assignments

Policy for Submitting Assignments: detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted on our bCourses website. All assignments must be submitted to bCourses by the deadline. Late

assignments may not be accepted, and any late assignment that is accepted will be penalized a 2/3 of a grade (e.g. A → B+) for each 24-hour period that it is late (MAX penalty is three grades), beginning the minute after the deadline.

Although you may have a good reason for asking for an exemption from this policy, keep in mind that other students may have even more difficult circumstances but do not feel entitled or comfortable enough to ask. So, to avoid requests that might be perceived as unfair to your classmates, please do not ask for an extension.¹

NOTE: You should **submit your assignment *before the deadline*** in order to avoid any problems. Technical problems with bCourses are extremely rare, but if you are having a technical issue, take a screen shot of the error and email the instructor your assignment right away, before the deadline. If you fail to submit your work on time, it will be counted as late. Exceptions to the late policy will not be made for technical issues, so please do not ask.²

Do not email your assignments to the instructor unless you have a problem uploading your assignment to bCourses, in which case you must email by the deadline or it will be considered late. Below is a brief description of each assignment. You will find detailed descriptions on bCourses, which you should read carefully.

The following description of each assignment is a simple overview. The detailed instructions are available on bCourses/assignments.

Project Proposal

This short paper gives you a chance to reflect on your identity and values to figure out which culture you want to study for your project. Page length: 2 pages

Topic Presentation

Students will prepare a creative and interactive group presentation on a social issue that involves conflicting cultural perspectives. These topics are marked with an "*" in the schedule below.

Cultural 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. Page length: 5 pages

¹ If you have had an unforeseen emergency situation (e.g. serious illness, medical condition, family illness, care giving crisis) you may successfully request an extension if you provide supporting evidence with your request.

² The exception to this policy is an unusual and documented emergency beyond the student's control (e.g. serious illness, medical condition, family illness or caregiving situation). If you have had an unforeseen emergency situation, you may request an exception or extension *if you provide adequate supporting evidence with your request*. Note that personal explanation alone is not adequate.

Analytical Memo

This is a five-page paper designed to help you describe and analyze your fieldwork data to identify themes that you will use in your final paper.

Project Presentations

On the final two days of class, students will share their experiences and projects by giving a semi-formal presentation. This is a chance to discuss each student's experience in depth and reflect as a group on what we have learned. This is also meant to be a fun way for people to learn from our class's diversity and each other's experiences with cultural difference.

Fieldwork and Field Notes

This project involves interaction with your chosen culture/group. This interaction, or "fieldwork", may take several forms, including participation online and research. We will discuss in detail on the first day of class. This fieldwork must equal at least two hours per week for 3 units or three hours per week for 4 units. Students begin field work by the third week of class and continue for the length of the course.

You will keep a journal of your experiences and observations. These field notes are the foundation for your final paper and should be written immediately after your fieldwork.

Students taking the course for 3 units must write at least 250 words for every hour of field work; students taking 4 units must write 400 words per week. These notes must be typed (single spaced) and uploaded to bCourses by 11:59pm every Sunday. Each submission must contain all of your fieldnote entries to date.

Final Paper

This paper is the culmination of your semester-long project. It gives you a chance to process what you learned from the course and analyze your chosen cultural community in relation to course themes and your own subjectivity. It includes a reflective comparison of your culture with the community's culture and considers the role of cross-cultural communication in the cultural field. There is no final exam for this course, because the structure and content of the course requires assessment by final paper, and the final paper is designed to assess students' work in all areas of the course. Page length: 10 pages (3 units) or 12 pages (4 units).

Guidelines and Resources

Course Materials

All our readings will be available on bCourses, under "files," or through links on the syllabus (always use the syllabus on bCourses).

Office Hours and Email

Office hours are important and I encourage you to make use of them. Please email me to schedule an appointment, and we will find a time that works for both of us. My email address is: j_kaiser@berkeley.edu. I usually do not use email over the weekend, on holidays, or after hours. Use my email, not bCourses to send me a message. Do not reply to announcements on bCourses; email me instead.

Formatting

All work must be formatted correctly. Familiarize yourself with MLA style formatting. Refer to The Purdue Owl Writing Lab.³ Then, note the following variations that we use in our course's modified MLA format style (see example at bCourses/files):

header should be in the top left corner and *single spaced* (don't include professor's name)
put your creative title **in bold** and centered above your first paragraph;
do not use a title page;
single space block quotations;
use 1" margins;
doubled-spacing (except for block quotations and field notes);
use page numbers;
use 12-point Times New Roman font

Your assignments will be graded on how well they meet these, and other requirements, including content and delivery (see each assignment on bCourses for detailed information).

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.

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>).

Accessibility Accommodations (DSP)

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class please inform the instructor on the first day. This can be done over email. Students who have questions about academic accommodations should contact the Disability Students Program (DSP), 260 Cesar Chavez Center.

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 that DSP accommodations are not retroactive. DSP students whose accommodations grant extra time on take-home assignments must email the instructor at least 24 hours before an assignment is due if they wish to use those accommodations on that assignment. This must be done for each assignment. Once we agree on your DSP deadline it becomes a firm deadline that cannot be extended further. Extensions will not be granted retroactively.

Course Schedule

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

³ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

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

Thursday, August 27
Introduction to the Course

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

September 1&3
Studying Culture

Swidler, Ann. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies."

Tannen, Deborah. "The Pragmatics of Cross-Cultural Communication."

Ganguli, Prabarna. 2018. "Empathy and Bias Are Often More Intertwined than We Might Think." <https://massivesci.com/articles/empathy-bias-produce-groups-emotions/>

In-class: Hofstede, Geert. "Cultural Dimensions" and "Country Comparison Tool".

-----Week 3-----

September 8&10
Culture/Power

Moon, Dawne. *Sex, God, and Politics*. "Introduction."

Fiske. "Envy Up, Scorn Down: How Status Divides Us" (OPTIONAL).

Project Proposal due by 11:59pm Friday

-----Week 4-----

September 15&17
Ethnographic Methodology

Emerson, Robert et al. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research."

Begin fieldwork this week

-----Week 5-----

September 22&24
Social Constructionism

Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckman. *The Social Construction of Reality*. "The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life."

Omi and Winant. "Racial Formation."

-----Week 6-----

September 29&October 1

Subjectivity in Fieldwork

Interview with Deeyah Khan.

<https://www.vox.com/world/2019/1/14/18151799/extremism-white-supremacy-jihadism-deeyah-khan>

Hochschild. "Emotion work" (OPTIONAL).

In-class viewing and discussion of Deeyah Khan's film, *White Right: Meeting the Enemy*

-----**Week 7**-----

Oct 6&8

***Abortion**

Luker, Kristin. *The Politics of Motherhood*. "Motherhood and Morality in America."

Astor, Maggie. "Trump Pushes Young Republicans Away. Abortion Pulls Them Back."

<https://nyti.ms/2SIcaQa>

-----**Week 8**-----

October 13&15

***Ethnocentric Nationalism**

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

Gettleman, Jeffrey. "At Border of Two Nuclear-Armed Nations: Machine Guns, Anxiety, and Dancing." <https://nyti.ms/2RMPGMS>

-----**Week 9**-----

October 20&22

***Distancing during Covid**

Aratani, Lauren. "How Did Facemasks Become a Political Issue in America?"

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/29/face-masks-us-politics-coronavirus>

Bouie, Jamelle. "The Lockdown Protesters Have a Twisted Conception of Liberty"

<https://nyti.ms/3dHBgHh>

-----**Week 10**-----

October 27&29

*Lu, Runging and Yanhying Sheng. 2020. "From Fear to Hate: How Covid-19 Sparks Racial Animus in the United States."

Cultural Self-Analysis Paper due by 11:59pm this Friday

-----**Week 11**-----

November 3&5

***Policing and the Maintenance of Group Boundaries**

Gamal, Fanna. 2016. "The Racial Politics of Protection: a Critical Race Examination of Police Protection." *California Law Review*. Vol. 104, No. 4 (August).

-----Week 11-----

November 10&12

***Political Cultures of Gun Ownership**

Pogue, James. "Arm the Left!"

<https://harpers.org/archive/2020/04/good-guys-with-guns-socialist-gun-club/>

-----Week 12-----

November 17&19

Project Presentations

Analytical Memo due by 11:59pm this Friday

-----Week 13-----

November 24&26

No class

-----Week 14-----

December 1&3

Project Presentations

Final Paper due by 11:59pm Monday, December 14.