

# Soc 169C

## Cross-Cultural Communication

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We inhabit, embody, use, and move between many types of cultures—ethnicity, nation, region, gender and sex, race, class, prestige, and status, food, fun, business, education, justice/injustice, sports, music, art, politics, media, love, and many more— in our 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 don't systematically analyze or reflect on our cultural choreographies. And these unquestioned assumptions can divide us, especially when they take the form of ideology.

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— the ability to recognize and understand other people’s experiences— and for self-awareness. In this era of retrograde ethnocentric nationalisms and growing inequality, cross-cultural understanding through empathy and compassion in direct interaction with our “cultural others” helps us overcome divisions and touch the spiritual elation of oneness.

“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 supporting 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, police, politics, nationalism, gender, and marketing sex appeal. While exploring these topics, we will analyze our own experiences in relation 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.

**Process of dividing into sections**

Early in the semester, the class will separate into one group that meets only Tuesdays and another that meets only Thursdays. Students will be assigned a section and will attend only that section (one day per week). Students are expected to keep the time that our course meets (5pm-6:30pm) free on both days in the event that both sections come together. We have a process for assigning students to sections, so please do not ask to be assigned to a particular day.

**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, or otherwise disrupting), good listening, supportive attitude, and contributing more than once or twice during the semester. *Always bring paper and pen for in-class writing.*

This seminar invites you to engage with the material and to be ready to share your personal 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 essential for meaningful participation. Participation credit cannot be made up under any circumstances, even if you have a legitimate reason (and evidence) for missing class.

*Attention!* Students who miss any classes during the first two weeks may be dropped.

If you must miss a class for an athletic or other event, you must email the instructor within 48 hours of the class in order to avoid penalty to your attendance grade, even if you have already provided a schedule of your events.

### **Assignments**

***NO EXTENSIONS PERMITTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS!*** Detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted on our bCourses website. All assignments must be submitted to bCourses by the deadline in a “doc” or “pdf” file. Late assignments may not be accepted, and any late assignment that is accepted will be penalized a full grade (e.g. A → B) for each 24-hour period that it is late (MAX penalty is two grades).

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 an awkward situation, please do not ask for an extension.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE: You should **submit your assignment at least 12 hours 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 almost any reason, including technical errors, so please do not ask.<sup>2</sup>

This course has a reader, Anuj Ramakrishnan ([anuj\\_ramakrishnan@berkeley.edu](mailto:anuj_ramakrishnan@berkeley.edu)). Do not email your assignments to him or to the instructor, unless you have a problem uploading your assignment to bCourses, in which case you must email your assignment directly to the reader by the deadline or it will be considered late. Make an appointment for office hours with the instructor if you wish to discuss the assignments or course material. Email the reader if you have a question regarding your grade on an assignment.

### **Cultural-Group Field Work**

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: 1) allow you to engage 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 liberal person joins a conservative group); and 3) give you some exposure to a “subculture” in the Bay Area. (Your group should push your

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The one exception to this policy is a verifiable and documented emergency beyond the student’s control (e.g. serious illness, medical condition, family illness, care giving crisis). If you have had an unforeseen emergency situation, you may successfully request an exception or extension if you provide adequate supporting evidence with your request.

boundaries around cultural difference. It should consist of people whose beliefs, values, behaviors (culture) contradict or at least challenge your own, and with whom you disagree on some fundamental level. In other words, this is not just a chance to “try something new.”

*IMPORTANT NOTE: You cannot use housemates, friends, family, or one of your classes as your cultural group. Your group cannot include anybody whom you already know. Your group must be an actual group that is comprised of at least a core membership of the same individuals who meet regularly; it cannot be a group comprised of different people each week or a friend or acquaintance with whom you hang out and/or visit other people or “groups” of people. National difference alone does not satisfy this requirement. Ideally, your group will be different from you nationally/ethnically AND in at least one other significant cultural dimension.*

The better your group fits these parameters 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.

***IMPORTANT!!*** Do not join or participate in a group that you feel is dangerous (physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually etc). 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 3-10). The presentation should last at least 30 minutes, and everyone must participate in some capacity during the presentation. A good division of labor that makes use of each member’s strength’s and distributes the work as evenly as possible is recommended. 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. Be sure to represent and compare the various cultural perspectives, assumptions, values, etc., involved in your topic. Topics and readings designated for group presentations are marked with an “\*”.

*Anybody who does not present for any reason, including missing class, will receive a “zero.”*

Presenters must check-in with the instructor a few days before the presentation by emailing a brief outline of their plan, and failing to do so will cause each member to lose points. Groups should know the assigned readings and should integrate them into their presentation, including related material that they bring in from outside the class, such as videos, games or quizzes, or other readings, and personal experience. Groups should also provide questions to stimulate discussion following the presentation (or integrate discussion into it).

NOTE: It is your responsibility *to be prepared*; plan ahead so you can successfully connect your device to the projector *so you’re ready once class begins*. Do not expect the instructor to do this for you.

### **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.

### **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?

### **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.

### **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**

Your big project for this class consists of four assignments: 1) a project proposal; 2) a deep description paper; 3) a final paper; and 4) field notes to be completed with every field session.

This project necessitates weekly participation in your cultural group. Participant observation must equal at least 2 hours per week, every week. You should write a journal of your experiences and observations in the field. These field notes are the foundation of your project and should be written immediately after your field work. People taking the course for 3 units must write at least one double-spaced page per week for full credit while people taking the course for 4 units must write at least two double-spaced pages per week. These notes must be typed up and uploaded to bCourses by Friday at 11:59pm each week. Failure to submit adequate field notes will hurt your final grade.

Students begin field work and notes by week four and continue through week 15, doing one session each week, for a total of 11 weeks. You will submit your notes every week throughout the semester. *It is important to write field notes every week, rather than all at once before they*

*are due.* You must have a separate entry in your field work journals for each date you participated/observed your group. Clearly label each session with the date and time of your field work. When submitting them, be sure to put them all in one document every time; each week, upload the document with all your field notes, ordered from most recent to oldest. Failing to keep up with your field notes will hurt your final grade.

The final paper should be about 12 pages long for 4 units and 9 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 and your own subjectivity. 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.

## **Guidelines and Resources**

### **Course Materials**

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

### **Recommended Optional Reading**

Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 and that my office hours are 2:00-4:00 Thursdays, but that we can arrange a time that works for you if you cannot make these hours. We will also decide the location for our meeting over email (it might be in a café).

My email address is: [j\\_kaiser@berkeley.edu](mailto: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. Use my email, not Courses 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.<sup>3</sup> 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, and include: your name, section day and number of units, assignment, due date;

**bold your creative title** and center it between the header and your 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph;

no title page;

*single space* block quotations;

1" margins;

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

doubled-spacing (except for the header and block quotations);  
page numbers;  
12-point Times New Roman font;  
left-side justification (but not right-side)

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

**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**

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.

### **Wellness Resources**

Berkeley offers several types of counseling services. You can call to talk to someone for help or to make an appointment: 642-9494. There is also on-campus drop-in counseling that does not require an appointment: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling/lets-talk>. You can also drop in at the Tang center if you need immediate and urgent support (first 5 sessions are free). Those hours are Monday-Friday 10am-5pm. Please make use of these great resources available to us!

Mindfulness and meditation can also really help with stress. Berkeley offers free mindfulness classes! <https://www.facebook.com/Mindfulnessatberkeley/> There is also a meditation and prayer room in Eshleman Hall, open Monday-Friday 8am-9pm. Another option is a tranquil stroll through the quieter parts of campus or up in Strawberry Trail.

### **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 (1/22&1/24)**-----  
Top three preferences for presentation week due Friday by 11:59pm!

### **Tuesday** **Introduction to Course**

## **Thursday**

### **Conceptualizing (Across) Culture and Choosing a Cultural Group**

Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema."

Hofstede, Geert. "Dimensions of Culture."

--><https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/>

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## **Week 2 (1/29&1/31)**

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## **Tuesday**

### **Cultural Subjectivity and Perception of Cultural Difference**

C. Wright Mills. "The Promise."

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

## **Thursday**

### **Participant Observation**

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

Once you have been assigned to either Tuesday or Thursday section, be sure to upload your top three choices for presentation topic/week to bCourses (in "assignments"). If you do not submit your preferences, a week will be assigned to you.

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

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## **Week 3 (2/5&2/7)**

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Come only to your assigned day this week  
Proposal of Cultural Group due Friday by 11:59pm

### **Social Psychological Techniques for Cross-Cultural Participation**

Interview with Deeyah Khan

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

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## **Week 4 (2/12&2/14)**

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Attend your cultural group this week  
First field notes due Friday (and every week thereafter)

### **\*Ethnocentric Nationalism**

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

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



-----Week 5 (2/19&2/21)-----

**\*Immigration**

Blitzer, J. "Trapped"

--><https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/01/the-teens-trapped-between-a-gang-and-the-law>

-----Week 6 (2/26&2/28)-----

**\*The Culture of Poverty Ideology**

Cohen, Patricia. "Culture of Poverty Makes a Comeback."

Lewis, Oscar. *The Children of Sanchez*. "Introduction."

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

Cultural Self-Analysis Paper due Friday

**BaFa BaFa! (attendance is necessary for this cross-cultural game)**

-----Week 8 (3/12&3/14)-----

**\*Multiethnic Subjectivity**

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands, La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. Selected chapters.

-----Week 9 (3/19&3/21)-----

**\*Sexual Harassment**

Quinn, Beth. "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching'"

-----Week 10 (3/26&3/28)-----

**Spring Break!!!**

-----Week 11 (4/2&4/4)-----

Interview Reflection due Friday

**\*Marketing Sex Appeal**

Nelson, Michelle R. and Hye-Jin Paek. "Cross-Cultural Differences in Sexual Advertising Content in a Transnational Women's Magazine,"

Frith, Katherine, Ping Shaw, and Hong Cheng. "The Construction of Beauty: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Women's Magazine Advertising,"

-----Week 12 (4/9&4/11)-----

**Cultural Project Presentations**

-----Week 13 (4/16&4/18)-----

**Cultural Project Presentations**

-----Week 14 (4/23&4/25)-----

Deep-Description of Cultural Group due Friday

## **Cultural Project Presentations**

-----Week 15 (4/30&5/2)-----

### **Cultural Project Presentations**

\*Final Paper is due by 11:59pm on Monday, May 13th. Late submissions may not be accepted, and if accepted, will be assessed a penalty according to course policy (see above).