

Soc 169C

Cross-Cultural Communication

John Kaiser, PhD
UC Berkeley
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We 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.

This course can be taken for 3 or 4 units:

Grading

Attendance and Participation	10%
Social Issues Presentation	10%
Proposal of Cultural Group	5%
Cultural Self-Analysis Paper	10%
Field Notes	15%
Deep Description of Cultural Group	15%

Final Paper

35%

IMPORTANT: 3-unit v. 4-unit workload

Students taking the course for 3 units must write at least 250 words of field notes for every week of fieldwork and a 10-page final paper. Students taking the course for 4 units must write at least 500 words of field notes for every week of field work and a 12-page final paper. Additionally, the deep-description paper must be two pages longer for 4 units (6 pages instead of 4).

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.

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. You are free to leave the classroom whenever you need to do so for your mental health.

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 1/3 of a grade (e.g. A → A-) for each 24-hour period that it is late (MAX penalty is three grades), beginning the mintue 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 an awkward situation and requests that might be perceived as unfair to your classmates, please do not ask for an extension.¹

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 technical issues, so please do not ask.²

This course has a Reader. Do not email your assignments to the reader 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. Only contact the reader if you have a question regarding your grade on an assignment. Contact the instructor if you wish to discuss the assignments or course material.

Below is a brief description of each assignment. You will find detailed descriptions on bCourses, which you should read carefully and reference as you work.

Cultural Group Proposal

You will write a two-page proposal stating which “cultural group” you are joining. The main project for this course requires participation in a cultural group that meets separately from our class throughout the semester. In this proposal, you will describe the group you plan to join for the semester. Starting from the first week of class, you should work on finding an appropriate group (see bCourses/assignments/Proposal). This proposal is due by Friday of week three, and you must begin participating with your group by week four.

Social Issues Presentation

Students will prepare a creative and interactive group presentation on one of the substantive topics, which are marked with an “*” on the schedule (weeks 4-11). We will form groups early in the semester. The group must check in with me the day before and email me their presentation (usually on PowerPoint or similar).

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.

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 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. *Regional power outages may be grounds for requesting an extension.*

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. This paper must be 4 pages for 3 units and 5 pages for 4 units.

Project Presentations

In the last weeks of class, students will share their cross-cultural projects. This is a chance to devote time to discussing fieldwork and how our culture compares to the culture of the groups we 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.

Field Work and Final Paper

Final Paper: students taking the course for 3 units must write at least 250 words of field notes for every week of fieldwork and a 10-page final paper. Students taking the course for 4 units must write at least 500 words of field notes for every week of field work and a 12-page final paper.

The final paper should be 12 pages long for 4 units and 10 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 includes a reflective comparison of your culture with the group's culture and considers the role of cross-cultural communication in the cultural field.

Field Work: this project necessitates weekly participation in your cultural group. Participant observation must equal at least 2 hours per week, every week (for both 3 and 4 units). You must keep a journal of your experiences and observations. Students begin field work in week four and continue through week 15, doing one session each week (except for week 14, which is a holiday), for a total of 11 weeks.

Field notes are the foundation of participant observation projects and should be written immediately after your field work. To receive maximum extra credit for 3 units, you must write at least 250 words per session. To receive maximum extra credit for 4 units, you must write at least 500 words per session. These notes must be typed (single spaced) and uploaded to bCourses by 11:59 Friday each week. Each submission must contain all of your fieldnote entries to date. Begin writing field notes immediately after your first field work session (week four) and continue writing after each session through week 15, for a total of 11 entries (week 14 is a holiday).

Guidelines and Resources

Course Materials

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

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. My office hours are 2:00-4:00 Wednesdays in my office, 468 Barrows. You must email me to arrange an appointment. Note that we might be able to arrange a time that works for you if you cannot make these hours.

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. 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.³ Then, note the following variations that we use in our course’s modified MLA format style (see example at bCourses/files):

a single-spaced header at the top-left of your first page (only include the header on your first page) must include only:

your name, section day and number of units

put your creative title **in bold** and center it between the header and your 1st paragraph;

do not use a title page;

single space block quotations;

use 1” margins;

doubled-spacing (except for the header, 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.

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.

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

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)**-----

Introduction to the Course

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

-----**Week 2 (1/27&1/29)**-----

Come only to your assigned day this week!

Conceptualizing Culture and Doing Field Work

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

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

-----**Week 3 (2/3&2/5)**-----

Proposal of Cultural Group due Friday by 11:59pm

Approaches to Cross-Cultural Engagement

Interview with Deeyah Khan.

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

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

-----Week 4 (2/10&2/12)-----

You should be attending your cultural group by now

***Ethnocentric Nationalism**

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

-----Week 5 (2/17&2/19)-----

Holiday, no class

-----Week 6 (2/24&2/26)-----

BaFa BaFa (attendance is required for this activity)

-----Week 7 (3/2&3/4)-----

***Sexual Harassment**

Quinn, Beth. "Sexual Harassment and Masculinity: The Power and Meaning of 'Girl Watching'" (Thursday's presentation moved to 10/24 due to power outage)

-----Week 8 (3/9&3/11)-----

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

***Immigration**

Blitzer, J. "Trapped"

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

-----Week 9 (3/16&3/18)-----

***The Culture of Poverty: Ideology vs. Theory**

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

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

-----Week 10 (3/23&3/25)-----

Spring Break

-----Week 11 (3/30&4/1)-----

***Abortion**

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

-----Week 12 (4/6&4/8)-----

***Multicultural Subjectivity**

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

-----Week 13 (4/13&4/15)-----

Deep-Description of Cultural Group due Friday by 11:59pm

***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 14 (4/20&4/22)-----

Cultural Project Presentations

-----Week 15 (4/27&4/29)-----

Cultural Project Presentations

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