

Sociology 169C

Cross-Cultural Communication

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UC Berkeley
Fall 2023
Monday and Wednesday 5:00pm-6:30pm
3106 Etcheverry

People embody and animate 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 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	20%
Project Proposal	5%
Topic Presentation	10%
Cultural Self-Analysis	10%
Deep-description	15%
Field Notes	10%
Final Paper	30%

Attendance and 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. Missing more than two classes may affect your grade. It is your responsibility to make sure you have signed the attendance sheet. When you are present, you will be expected to participate in class discussions. Please be mindful of group dynamics so that everybody feels comfortable to participate and has the space to participate

NOTE: you must be present on the day of your presentation or you will not receive credit for it (see below).

Assignments

Late policy: The due date is the *last possible time* that you may submit an assignment without penalty, so you should turn it in before then. You may turn in assignments past the deadline (up to a point), but they will be subject to a late penalty: 10% of the assignment's total possible points will be deducted every 24 hours it is past the due date (e.g. a score of 10 becomes a 9 if submitted within 24 hours after the deadline), with a maximum penalty of 30%.

One-time extension: If you have a legitimate need for a one-time extension of up to three days, email me before the deadline. If an extension occurs, indicate your extended due date in the bCourses comments box when you turn your document in. The Reader will apply the late penalty if you do not include that information.

Technical problems with internet, bCourses, etc., do not constitute grounds for exception to this policy. If you cannot submit your assignment for some reason on bCourses, you must email it to me before the deadline to avoid the late penalty, and then upload it to bCourses ASAP (assignments will not be graded until they appear on bCourses). It is the student's responsibility to check that their document loaded correctly to bCourses. Once the deadline has passed, assignments may not be resubmitted.

Project Proposal: This short paper gives you a chance to reflect on your identity and values to figure out which cultural group you want to join for your project.

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. Students will be assigned to topics. Let the instructor know in the first week of class if you will not be able to attend class on a particular day. Once the schedule is set, you will have to attend class on the day of your topic presentation or you will not receive credit for it.

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.

Deep-description Paper: This paper gives you a chance to analyze your fieldwork for significant themes. You will describe three aspects of the group's culture that you find significant, and you will provide specific examples from your fieldnotes to illustrate those themes.

Fieldwork and Fieldnotes: This project involves in-person interaction with your chosen culture/group. We will discuss in detail on the first day of class. This fieldwork must equal at least two hours per week for 3 units and three hours per week for 4 units. Students begin field work by week 4 and continue through week 15. A total of 10 weeks of qualifying field notes is required for full credit.

You will keep a journal of your experiences and observations. These fieldnotes are the foundation for your final paper and should be written immediately after your fieldwork each week. Fieldnotes for each session must be completed each week. Students taking the course for 3 units must write at least 500 words per week; students taking 4 units must write at least 750 words per week. Fieldnotes may not be written retroactively for weeks that have passed. See instructions at [bCourses/files](#) for details.

Final Paper: This is 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.

Project Presentation: This is meant to be a structured time 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. This counts towards your participation grade.

Reading: You are expected to have completed each week's reading as preparation for class attendance and participation. Always read analytically and take notes as you go. Come to class

with questions and observations about what you found interesting, significant, puzzling, etc. If you do not read carefully and keep up, you might feel frustrated or disappointed with the course. When page numbers are listed next to a reading, you are only responsible for those pages.

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: My office hours are Fridays 4:00pm-6:00pm. If you cannot make that time, let me know; we might find a time that works for both of our schedules. Sign up [here](#). My email address is: j_kaiser@berkeley.edu. I usually do not use email over the weekend, on holidays, or after hours. Please use my email, not bCourses to contact me. Do not reply to announcements on bCourses; email me instead.

Readers and Grading: This course has two Readers who will grade assignments.

- Sarah Ito sjito@berkeley.edu
- Maddison Duffy mlduffy@berkeley.edu

If you have a question about your grade on an assignment, please email the person who graded it.

Formatting: All work should be formatted according to these guidelines:

- do not use a title page;
- a header containing the following information should be located in the top left corner of the first page and single spaced: your name; course; number of units; due date
- put your creative title **in bold** and centered above your first paragraph;
- *single space* block quotations;
- use 1” margins;
- doubled-spacing (except for block quotations and the header);
- page numbers, centered on the bottom;
- 12-point Times New Roman font

Your assignments will be graded on how well they meet these, and other requirements, including instructions for content, execution, 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 encouraged 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, be sure that DSP has sent the instructor your letter. If your accommodations include extensions on assignments and you wish to make use of your accommodation for a particular assignment, you need to email the instructor before the deadline for that assignment. Accommodations are not granted retroactively. Non-DSP students who need academic accommodations should contact the Disability Students Program, 260 Cesar Chavez Center.

Since some of our assignments are due on Sunday you will automatically receive a 24 hour extension at the minimum (you still need to email me). When I come back to work, I will reply to your request. Extensions of more than three days require direct communication from your DSP advisor to me to confirm the need for a long extension.

Once your DSP deadline is determined, it will be subject to the course policy for submitting assignments: no additional extensions will be allowed and if you submit your assignment after your DSP deadline it will be subject to the course policy for late assignments. When you turn in your paper, indicate your DSP deadline in the comments section (e.g. DSP deadline: 4/20).

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, broadly put, is the presentation of another's words, answers, and/or ideas as one's own.¹ This includes the use of artificial intelligence. If you are suspected of academic dishonesty, you will be required to with me to account for the assignment/exam in question. It is grounds not only for automatic failure, but also for administrative disciplinary action at the University level. 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.

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-----

August 23

Introduction to the Course

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

August 28 and 30

Choosing a Cultural Group and Ethnographic Methodology

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

Emerson et al. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research."

Thorne, Barrie. "Learning from Kids."

¹ "another's" includes both human and non-human generative sources.

Bruneau, et al. "Parochial Empathy."
Ganguli, Prabarna. "Empathy and Bias Are Often More Intertwined than We Might Think." <https://massivesci.com/articles/empathy-bias-produce-groups-emotions/>
Plieger. "The negative impact of xenophobia on compassion with suffering out-group members is attenuated by trait empathy."

Project Proposal due Sunday

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

September 4 (no class) and September 6

Conceptualizing and Studying Culture

Eliasoph and Lichterman. "Culture in Interaction" (p. 735-746 and 773-776).
Sattorovich and Doncheva (Procedia of Philosophical and Pedagogical Sciences). "Cross-cultural and ethnic psychology as a social psychological problem."
Tannen, Deborah. "The Pragmatics of Cross-Cultural Communication."

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

September 11 and 13

Subjectivity and Relationality in Fieldwork

Field-Springer. "Reflexive Embodied Ethnography with Applied Sensibilities": Methodological Reflections on Involved Qualitative Research."
Meleady, Seger, and Vermue. "Evidence of a Dynamic Association between Intergroup Contact and Intercultural Competence."
Interview with Deeyah Khan. <https://bit.ly/3aXnMqH>

Begin fieldwork this week

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

September 18 and 20

***Ethnocentric Nationalism**

Taub, Amanda. "How a Sleepy German Suburb Explains Europe's Rising Far-Right Movements." <https://nyti.ms/2nr18jZ>
Blow, Charles. "How to Divide the Working Class." <https://nyti.ms/3JbaslG>
Gettleman, Jeffrey. "At Border of Two Nuclear-Armed Nations: Machine Guns, Anxiety, and Dancing." <https://nyti.ms/2RMPGMS>

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

September 25 and 27

*** Political Economy**

Deneen, Fukuyama, McClosky, and West. "Is Liberalism Worth Saving?"

-----Week 7-----

October 2 and 4

***Competition**

McNulty, Tess. "Both Sides Now: Domination and abuse on the high school debate circuit."

<https://bit.ly/3Rc0kdu>

Markovits, Daniel. "How Life Became an Endless, Terrible Competition." <https://bit.ly/30h77YF>

Cultural Self-Analysis paper due Sunday

-----Week 8-----

October 9 and 11

*** Labor Relations**

Ray and Qayum. "Travelling Cultures of Servitude."

-----Week 9-----

October 16 and 18

***Gun Ownership**

Pogue, James. "Arm the Left!"

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

Harmon, Josephine. "The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement Reshaped gun politics."

<https://wapo.st/3QSXbib>

-----Week 10-----

October 23 and 25

***Abortion**

Luker, Kristin. "Motherhood and Morality in America."

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

October 30 and November 1

Project Presentations and Ethnography Workshop

Relevant Fieldnotes and analytical memos

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

November 6 and 8

Project Presentations and Ethnography Workshop

Relevant Fieldnotes and analytical memos

Deep-description due Sunday

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

November 13 and 15

Project Presentations Ethnography Workshop

Relevant Fieldnotes and analytical memos

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

November 20 and 22

No Class

-----Week 15-----

November 27 and 29

Project Presentations Ethnography Workshop

Relevant Fieldnotes and analytical memos

Final Paper due by 11:59pm, Monday, December 11. Late submissions may not be accepted, and if accepted, will be subject to the course policy on late assignments.