Most of us move in and out, around, and between various cultures throughout our lives. Some of this movement occurs on a daily basis, in subtle ways that we take for granted. The more remarkable cross-cultural experiences are more obvious, because they challenge our assumptions about behavior and meanings. In either case, we usually do not systematically analyze and reflect on our cultural choreographies in daily life. 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, or the ability to recognize and understand people’s experiences, and cross-cultural empathy is the foundation for inter-being, especially in the era of globalization and growing ethnocentric nationalisms.

“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. Students practice a reflective form of ethnographic participant observation with the aid of a diverse curriculum. This curriculum covers the practice of fieldwork in addition to substantive texts on the intersections of culture and family life, class, race, social relationships, the workplace, politics, education, gender, romance, and religion. 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; and 4) developing empathy and deeply understanding both ourselves and people who appear different from us.

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

**Grade Breakdown for 4 Unit Class:**

- Attendance and Participation: 15%
- Group Presentations: 10%
- Proposal of Cultural Subgroup: 5%
- Cultural Self-Analysis Paper: 15%
- Deep Description of Cultural Subgroup: 10%
- Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection: 15%
- Cultural Self-Sharing Presentation: 5%
- Cultural Project Final Paper: 25%
Grade Breakdown for 3 Unit Class:

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

Participation and Attendance

Class Attendance is mandatory; missing more than one class will result in a penalty to your grade. Attendance is a condition for doing well, but also requires good participation while present. Please come to class prepared to discuss the week’s reading and/or assignment. Your participation during class is crucial to collective learning. “Participation” does not mean simply speaking out a lot. The content, quality, and depth of your participation are more important than how many times a week you speak.

This class is a seminar that asks you to engage with the material and to be ready to share about how your experiences relate to the class material. Please be mindful of group dynamics so that everybody feels comfortable to speak up. Keeping up with the weekly readings and field work is a condition of possibility for meaningful participation. There will be relatively short, in-class writing and collaboration opportunities to help you.

In-class work cannot be made-up under any circumstances, even if you have a legitimate reason (and evidence) for missing class.

Attention! Students who miss any of the first three weeks may be dropped or otherwise not allowed into the class.

Assignments

NO EXTENSIONS PERMITTED FOR ASSIGNMENTS! Instructions for each assignment will be handed out in class and posted on our BCourses website. All assignments must be printed out and submitted in class. Any late assignments will only be accepted if submitted as a PDF attached to an email to the instructor within one day of the due date and will be penalized a full grade (e.g. an A becomes a B). If you miss this grace period, you will be unable to submit your assignment and you will be given a 0 on it. Please be sure to turn things in on time and before the stated due date/time and please do not ask for an extension.

Group Presentations

Students will prepare a creative and interactive group presentation on one of the week’s topics. 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; 2) creativity, performance, and interaction; and 3) content and meaningful insight.
Self-Analysis Paper
This assignment is a 4-5-page paper on how your personal culture(s) affects 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 that is of a different cultural background than yourself and interview them to learn about these differences and how they affect identity. Upon completion of the interview, a 4-5-page reflection should be written that reflects on the interview. What do you learn about yourself in your interview of someone with such a different cultural and personal history? What are key differences/similarities and what do these comparisons say about your own culture and identity?

Self-Sharing Presentations
In the last week of class, we will have a cultural celebration when students bring in something (activity, food, music, game, tradition, etc.) that they feel represents their cultural heritage or cultural identity. You will be required to introduce the cultural artifact, explain its meaning to you and your cultural identity. This celebration is meant to be fun, but also a chance for people to experience, engage, and learn from our class’s diversity.

Project Final Paper
A cornerstone of this course is participation in a cultural subgroup throughout the semester. Starting from the second week of class, you should work with me to find an appropriate service opportunity or cultural subgroup that would allow you to: 1) engage relatively regularly with the same community or neighborhood; 2) provide you a space to interact with people who are significantly different from you; and 3) give you some exposure to a subculture in the Bay Area.

The 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 subgroup on a weekly or biweekly basis (weekly standard is held for the 4-unit class, whereas the biweekly standard is held for the 3-unit class). Alternative schedules can be worked out, but hours spent on this service project must equal at least 2 hours per week. Please see me if you have questions about what an appropriate subculture would be.

The final paper will be a 10-12-page formal paper (8-10 pages for the 3-unit class) that discusses what you learned from this experience and how you see at least three of the course’s themes in the cultural subgroup. It should include reflection that compares your culture(s) with the group’s and considers the role of cross-cultural communication the cultural field.

**Due dates**
Variable: Group Presentations
Week 3, Thursday: Proposal of Cultural Subgroup
Week 6: Cultural Self-Analysis Paper due
Week 10: Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection  
Week 13: Deep Description of Cultural Subgroup  
Week 15: Cultural Self-Sharing Presentation  
May 8: Cultural Project Final Paper

Guidelines and Resources

Office Hours
Office hours are an integral part of college learning, and I encourage you to make use of them. Come with questions about course material or any relevant topic for discussion. I ask students to email me to arrange an appointment. This way, we can find a time that works for everybody who wants to meet with me. 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.

Formatting
All work must be formatted correctly. Familiarize yourself with MLA style formatting. Refer to The Purdue Owl Writing Lab. 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, assignment, due date);  
- center your creative title above the start of your text;  
- no title page;  
- use *two spaces* between sentences;  
- *single space* block quotations;  
- 1” margins;  
- doubled-spacing;  
- pagination;  
- 12-point Times New Roman font;  
- staple pages together;  
- no contractions.

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, broadly put, 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.

1 https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/
Course Schedule
This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

--------Week 1--------
Tuesday, 1/17: Introduction to Course

Thursday, 1/19: Culture
C. Wright Mills. The Promise.

--------Week 2--------
Tuesday, 1/24 Survey of Cultures and Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Thursday, 1/26 Communication and Cultural Capital

Handout: Proposal of Cultural Subgroup
Next week we meet in separate sections/days

--------Week 3 (1.31&2.2)--------
Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

***Proposal of Cultural Subgroup Due***
Begin divided Tuesday-Thursday class meetings
Handout: Cultural Self-Analysis Paper
--------Week 4 (2.7&2.9)--------

History and Cultural Patterns; Participant Observation


--------Week 5 (2.14&2.16)--------

Race and Culture; Participant Observation


--------Week 6 (2.21&2.23)--------

Interviewing

Handout: Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection
***Cultural Self-Analysis Paper due***

--------Week 7 (2.28&3.2)--------

Education and Culture; Participant Observation


--------Week 8 3.7&3.9--------

Gender and Culture; Participant Observation


--------Week 9 (3.14&3.16)--------

**Class and Culture of Poverty; Participant Observation**


--------Week 10 (3.21&3.23)--------

**Religion and Culture; Participant Observation**


(Handout: Deep Description of Cultural Subgroup)

***Cross-Cultural Interview Reflection due***

--------Week 11 (3.28&3.30)--------

**Spring break, no class**

--------Week 12 (4.4&4.6)--------

**Social and Cultural Capital; Participant Observation**


--------Week 13 (4.11&4.13)--------

**Political Life and culture**


***Deep Description of Cultural Subgroup due***
Economic Life: Social Media and Workplaces


Cultural Self-Sharing Presentations

Final Paper due by 2pm Monday, May 8th in my box in 410 Barrows. No electronic or late submissions will be accepted.