

Psychology 410: Cultural Psychology

Dr. Shinobu Kitayama

This course reviews major empirical and theoretical research that can be assembled to define an emerging field of cultural psychology. Cultural psychology is a study of the ways in which systems of meanings or the organization of social categories shape, maintain, and transform social realities and thus, attendant psychological processes and experience. It is called cultural because such meaning systems are an integral part of human culture. The workings of given cultural meaning systems become most transparent when they are contrasted with the workings of other, divergent meaning systems. Thus, studying cross-cultural variations in many domains of human psychological, social behaviors and processes can be extremely informative in understanding the very nature of meaning systems. The present course therefore examines in detail cultural variations in a wide range of substantive areas of psychology including cognition, values, social behavior, emotion, and motivation.

Textbook: Cross-cultural perspectives: Nebraska Symposium. 1990. University of Nebraska Press

Course packet: Available at the EMU copying center

Evaluation: Two exams (Midterm [30%] and Final [30 %]); both emphasizing study questions distributed in class meetings)
Term paper (40%; 10 pages with double space; due on Feb 25)

In your term paper, you are to address one of the main themes of this course, as listed in this syllabus (e.g., Category and experience; Emotion; Motivation, etc.), and integrate the materials discussed in both readings and lectures with additional materials you locate in the library. You may also incorporate into your paper your personal experience with foreign cultures if you have any. The writing of the paper must follow the convention of scientific writing. (If you don't know this convention yet, follow the format of the Markus & Kitayama paper in the course packet.) The paper will be graded in terms of (i) the clarity and quality of writing, (ii) the quality of arguments presented, (iii) the breadth of the scope, (iv) the quality of additional research as reflected in the paper, and (v) other identifiable signs of effort. The paper must be typed with double space and is due at the beginning of the class on February 25. Keep a Xerox copy and submit an original. Late papers will be penalized with a half letter grade for each day.

Office: 309 Straub

Phone: 346-4905

Office hours: Monday & Friday, 1-2:30

Approaches to culture (Jan 7,9)

Jahoda, G. Our forgotten ancestors

Three approaches to culture

Biology and culture

Cultural psychology: what is it?

Category and experience (Jan 14, 16)

Cole, M. Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline?

Category, essentialism, and the laws of sympathetic magic

Culturally constructed things: functions of meaning systems

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: I. Color perception

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: II. Inference and reasoning

Cultural values (Jan 21, 23)

Triandis, H. Cross-cultural studies of individualism and collectivism

Markus & Kitayama, Culture and the self (pp. 224-230)

Four elementary forms of sociality

Value dimensions

Culture and the self

Social representation of cultural values

Value and social behavior

Cognition (Jan 28, 30)

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. Culture and the self (pp230-234)

Abstract thinking and concrete thinking

Counter-factual reasoning

Social perception and social inference

Moral reasoning

Feb 4: TBA; 6: Midterm exam

Emotion (Feb 11, 13)

Wierzbicka, A. Human emotions: Universal or culture-specific?

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. Culture and the self (pp235-239)

Emotion, social category, and experience

What's basic about basic emotions?

Indigenous emotion categories

Motivation (Feb 18,20)

Stigler, J., & Perry, M. Mathematics learning in Japanese, Chinese, and American classrooms

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. Culture and the self (pp240-248)

Achievement motivation reconsidered

Causal attribution of success and failure: Is the self-serving (and, often, self-defeating) bias universal?

Culture and achievement: three cases (Asians, Asian Americans, and African Americans)

Socialization (Feb 25, 27)

Kagitcibasi, C. Family and socialization in cross-cultural perspective: A model of change

Berry, J. W. Psychology of acculturation

Culture and personality reconsidered

Personal autonomy and social organization

Culture and temperament: Japan versus the US

Ethnic Conflict (Mar 3, 5)

Lakoff Metaphor and war: The metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf

Ethnocentrism

Distributive justice: "Universalistic" social exchange versus "socially situated" obligation

The frustration-aggression-displacement hypothesis revisited

Folkways of aggression (Americans, Chinese, and Ilongots)

Psychopathology (Mar10, 12)

Dragons, J. Normal and abnormal behavior in cross-cultural perspective: Specifying the nature of their relationship.

Kleinman, A. Psychiatry of culture and the culture of psychiatry

Cultural variation in psychopathology

Depression and somatization

Psychopathology: social category or disease?

Final exam: Mar 18, 10:15 - 12:15