Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology

George Mason University  Fall 2011  76658  PSYC 379 001
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CLASS MEETS: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00-10:15 am Room: Robinson Hall B203 Graduate TA: Bethany Rallis brallis@gmu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Tue, Thursday 10:15-10:45 am and by appointments

PURPOSE: To introduce the field of cross-cultural psychology and its contemporary applications. Develop a broader, global perception of contemporary psychology. Explain current psychological knowledge and its applications from a cross-cultural perspective. Provide a useful set of critical-thinking tools with which to analyze and evaluate psychology of various ethnic, national, and religious groups. Help develop psychological knowledge necessary for a successful professional.

REQUIREMENTS:

- The final grade will be based on four exams and one term paper (a written homework assignment). The exams—September 22, October 20, November 17, and December 15 (final)—will consist of short-answer and multiple-choice questions. Practice questions are available on the web.
- The term paper (written assignment) is due: December 1 or earlier. Paper copies only please. The topics for the written assignment are on the syllabus. You will have to choose one topic from the list. You can suggest your own topic but it must be approved by the professor before November 17th.

Grading. Tests 1, 2, and 3 are worth 25 points (maximum) each. Test 4 is 15 points (max). To receive an:

- A+ you must earn at least 97 points, A you must earn at least 93 points,
- A- you must earn at least 90 points, B+ you must earn at least 88 points, B you must earn at least 83 points, B- you must earn at least 80 points, C+ you must earn at least 78 points, C you must earn at least 73 points, C- you must earn at least 70 points, D you must earn at least 60 points. An A+ grade may not be earned by extra credit work.


For the term paper, select one of the exercises: 4.2. on page 117; 5.3 on page 146; 6.2. on page 168; 8.1. on page 218; 9.1. on page 251; 10.3. on page 275; 11.1. on page 295; 12.1 on page 308. Your term paper is graded according to the following general criteria (specific requirements are in the assignments and they may differ): Format: 2,000 words or more, single or double-spaced. Turn in the original and keep a copy for your files. Style: Make an introduction, in which you describe briefly the goal of your paper. Generalize your thoughts in a conclusion. Break up your paper in several paragraphs. Each paragraph should represent a particular idea, explanation, or description. Validity: You have to use facts to support your ideas and suggestions. The assignment should contain references (include name, year, title of article or book, journal title; city/state and publisher if you cite a book; include an Internet address if you are referring to the Web). You are welcome to suggest a topic for your original term paper. Talk to your professor to confirm.

Student members of the George Mason University must follow the provisions of the Honor Code. They pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. All work submitted to fulfill course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appears on it. Except with permission of the instructor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work previously prepared by another student, and except with permission of the instructor no paper or work of any type submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement of any course in the Department of Psychology. No assistance is to be obtained from commercial organizations, which sell or lease research help or written papers. With respect to all written work as appropriate, proper footnotes and attribution are required. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office." Last day to add: September 6; Last day to drop: September 30
Course description and schedule


Topic 3. Critical Thinking in Cross-Cultural Psychology. The Evaluative Bias of Language: To describe is to prescribe. Differentiating Dichotomous Variables and Continuous Variables: Black and white, or shades of gray? The Similarity-Uniqueness Paradox: All phenomena are both similar and different. The Barnum Effect: “One Size-Fits-All” descriptions. The Assimilation Bias: Viewing the world through schema-colored glasses. The Representativeness Bias: Fits and misses of categorization. The Availability Bias: The persuasive power of vivid events. The Fundamental Attribution Error: Underestimating the impact of external influences. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: When expectations create reality. Correlation Does Not Prove Causation: Confusing “what” with “why.” Bi-Directional Causation and Multiple Causation: Causal loops and compound pathways. The Naturalistic Fallacy: Blurring the line between “is” and “should”. The Belief Perseverance Effect: “Don't confuse me with the facts!” “To metaphink or not to metaphink?” Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

Test 1. September 22


Test 2. October 20


Test 3. November 17


Test 4. Final. December 15 (according to the official schedule, the exam starts @ 7:30 am)