

Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology

George Mason University Spring 2012 PSYC 379 001

Eric B. Shiraev, Ph.D. E-Mail: eshiraev@gmu.edu

CLASS MEETS: Tuesdays 4:30-7:10 p.m. Room: Innovation Hall 105

Graduate Teaching Assistants: Susan VanDerhei and Allison Sleeman

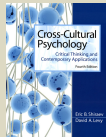
OFFICE HOURS: Tue: 4:00-4:30 pm; Thursday: 3:30-4:30 pm and by appointments

PURPOSE: To introduce the field of cross-cultural psychology and its contemporary applications. Develop a broader, global perception of contemporary psychology. Discuss current psychological research 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 in developing psychological skills 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—**February 14, March 20, April 17, and May 15 (the final)**—will consist of short-answer and multiple-choice questions. Practice questions are available on the web (Blackboard).
- The term paper (written assignment) is due: **May 1** or earlier. No deadline extension. Paper copies only please. The topics for the written assignment appear on the syllabus at the bottom of this page. You will have to choose one topic from the list. You can suggest your own topic but the professor must approve it before April 3rd.

Grading. Tests 1, 2, and 3 are worth 25 points (maximum) each. Test 4 is 15 points (max.). Paper is 10 points (max). To receive a(n): 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.



Textbook: Shiraev, E. & Levy, D. (2009) *Cross-Cultural Psychology, 4/e*: Allyn & Bacon. A web-based study guide: <http://www.ericshiraev.com/5.html> Links, practice questions, and lecture slides are available on this site. **Lecture notes, slides, reading materials, and links are posted on the Backboard (check frequently!)**

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): **General recommendations.** Format: 2,500 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. 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 an original topic for your term paper. Confirm with professor before April 3.**

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: January 31; Last day to drop: February 24

Course description and schedule

Session 1. Topic 1. Understanding Cross-Cultural Psychology. What is cross-cultural psychology? Basic definitions: Culture, cultural psychology, race, nationality, and ethnicity. Empirical examination of culture. Power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Collectivism and individualism. Different views on cross-cultural psychology. Evolutionary approach. Sociological approach. Ecocultural approach. The Cultural Mixtures approach: A new cross-cultural psychology in the 21st century. The Integrative approach. Indigenous psychology. Ethnocentrism. Multiculturalism. A brief history of cross-cultural psychology. Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

Topic 2. Methodology of Cross-Cultural Research. Goals of cross-cultural research. Quantitative research in cross-cultural psychology. Looking for linkages and differences. Qualitative approach in cross-cultural psychology. Major steps for preparation of a cross-cultural study. Sample selection. Observation in cross-cultural psychology. Survey methods. Experimental studies. Content-Analysis. Focus-group methodology. Meta-Analysis: Research of research. A hidden obstacle of cross-cultural studies: Test translation. Comparing two phenomena: Some important principles. On similarities and differences: Some critical thinking applications. Cultural dichotomies: There are fewer/more differences than one might think. Avoiding bias of generalizations. Know more about cultures you examine! Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

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 misfits 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 metathink or not to metathink?" Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

Test 1. February 14

Session 2. Topic 4. Cognition: Sensation and Perception. States of Consciousness. Sensation and perception: Basic principles. Sensation and the brain: Basic universal pathways. How culture influences what we perceive. How people perceive depictions. How do people scan pictures? Perception of depth. Are people equally misled by visual illusions? Some cultural patterns of drawing pictures. Perception of color. Other senses. Perception of time. Perception of the beautiful. Perception of music. Consciousness and culture. Sleep and cultural significance of dreams. Beyond Altered States of Consciousness. Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Topic 5. Intelligence. Defining intelligence. Ethnic differences in IQ scores. Explaining group differences in test scores: Intelligence and intelligent behavior. Do biological factors contribute to intelligence? Incompatibility of tests: Cultural biases. A word about "cultural literacy". Environment and intelligence. Socioeconomic factors. The family factor. 'Natural selection' and IQ scores? Cultural values of cognition. General Cognition: What is 'underneath' intelligence? Cognitive skills, school grades, and educational systems. Culture, tests, and motivation. IQ, culture, and social justice. And in the end, moral values. Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

Topic 6. Emotion. When we laugh we are happy: Similarities of emotional experience. You cannot explain pain if you have never been hurt: Differences in emotional experience. Emotions: Different or universal? Physiological Arousal. The meaning of preceding events. Emotion as an evaluation. We are expected to feel in a particular way. How people assess emotional experience. When emotions signal a challenge: Cross-cultural research on stress. Expression of emotion. When emotion hurts: Cross-cultural studies of anger. Emotion and inclination to act. Emotion and judgment. Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Test 2. March 20

Session 3. Topic 7. Motivation. A glance into evolution. Social science: See the society first. Drive and arousal: Two universal mechanisms of motivation. The power of the unconscious: Psychoanalysis. Humanistic theories. Learning and motivation: Cognitive theories. A carrot and a beef tongue: Hunger and food preference. When hunger causes distress: Eating Disorders. Victory and harmony: Achievement motivation. Aggressive motivation and violence. Culture and sexuality. Sexual and Gender Identity disorders. Sex and sexuality: Some cross-cultural similarities. Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

Topic 8. Human Development and Socialization. Development and socialization: Definitions. Quality of life and the child's development. Norms, customs, and child-care. Parental values and expectations. Erik H. Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development. Jean Piaget: Stages of cognitive development. Stages of moral development according to Kohlberg. Developmental stages. Life before birth: Prenatal period. First steps: Infancy. Discovering the world: Childhood. Major rehearsals: Adolescence. Adulthood. Late Adulthood. Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Topic 9. Psychological Disorders. American background: DSM-IV. Two views on culture and psychopathology. Culture-Bound Syndromes. Central and peripheral symptoms. Anxiety disorders. Schizophrenia. Depressive Disorders. Culture and suicide. Personality Disorders. Substance abuse. Psychodiagnostic biases. Psychotherapy. Culture match. Other topics discussed in class. Video and electronic materials.

Test 3. April 17

Session 4. Topic 10. Social Perception and Social Cognition. Values. Western and non-Western values. Striving for consistency: The Cognitive Balance theory. Avoiding inconsistency: Cognitive dissonance. Prejudice: Is it inevitable? Stereotypes in daily life Psychological Dogmatism. Social Attribution. Attribution as locus of control. Explaining the behavior of others. Attribution of success and failure. Self-Perception. Do social norms affect the way we see our own body weight? Duty and fairness in individualist and collectivist cultures. Stereotypes and the power of generalizations. Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Topic 11. Social Interaction: Basic definitions and Concepts. Universal interaction: roles, norms, and territorial behavior. Direct contacts and communication. Conformity. Is conformity universal across cultures? Following orders: Obedience. Social Influence. Compliance. Feeling good about some views. Groupthink. Is social loafing universal? Cooperation and Competition. Leaders: Born or bred? Leadership styles. Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Topic 12. Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology: Some Highlights. Medical decisions and counseling decisions. Cross-cultural psychology and business decisions. Working with immigrants. Acculturative stress. Education. Culture, behavior, and the law. Working and serving abroad. Multiculturalism and religion: A campus context. Video and electronic materials. Conclusion.

Test 4, Final. May 15