

PSYC 379 Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology

George Mason University Spring 2006

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

CLASS MEETS: Tuesdays 4:30-7:10 p.m. Room: Krug Hall 210

OFFICE HOURS: Tue; 4:00-4:30; 10:00-10:30 Thompson Hall 131, 703-993-1349

PURPOSE: To introduce the field of cross-cultural psychology and its contemporary applications. To develop a broader point of view on psychology. To explain contemporary psychological knowledge and its applications from a cross-cultural perspective. To provide students with a useful set of critical-thinking tools with which to analyze and evaluate psychology of various ethnic, national, and religious groups. To help develop professional skills necessary for any successful professional.

REQUIREMENTS:

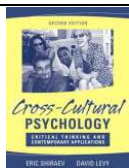
- The final grade will be based on five exams and one term paper (a written homework assignment). The exams—**February 7, February 28, April 4, April 25, May 9 (the final)**—will consist of short-answer and multiple-choice questions.
- The term paper (written assignment) is due: April 25th or earlier. The topics for the written assignment and further instructions will be handed out in class. You will have to choose one topic.

GRADING:

The exams: **100 points (20 points each)**; the term paper: **10 points**. One extra point is added to your total point score if you turn in your paper before the deadline. Three points are deducted if the paper submitted late. No papers are accepted after 05/02. Make-up tests (if you could not take an exam at the scheduled time and for a legitimate reason) will be administered on April 4 and April 25. You can take only one make-up test and one point is deducted automatically for a make-up exam. You must follow the University honor policy.

To receive a(n):

A+ you must earn at least 107 points **A** you must earn at least 103 p. **A-** you must earn at least 100 p. **B+** you must earn at least 97 points **B** you must earn at least 93 p. **B-** you must earn at least 90 p. **C+** you must earn at least 87 points **C** you must earn at least 83 p. **C-** you must earn at least 80 p. **D** you must earn at least 70 points



Textbook: Shiraev, E. & Levy, D. (2004) *Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. **Website to accompany the textbook:**

<http://classweb.gmu.edu/eshiraev>

For the term paper, select **one** of the exercises: **4.3. on page 124 ; 5.3 on page 155; 6.2. on page 177; 8.1. on page 234; 9.1. on page 265; 10.3. on page 292; 11.1. on page 315; 12.1 on page 323**

Your term paper is graded according to the following general criteria (specific requirements are in the assignments and they may differ): **Format:** 1,500 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. Use psychological terms. Generalize your thoughts in a conclusion. **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). **Reasoning:** Break up you paper in several paragraphs. Each paragraph should represent a particular idea, explanation, or description.

Last day to add: February 7th; Last day to drop: February 24th 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.

Course description and schedule

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. Sociobiological approach. Sociological approach. Ecocultural approach. The Cultural Mixtures approach: A new cross-cultural psychology in the 21st century? The Integrative approach. Indigenous psychology. What is ethnocentrism? What is multiculturalism? A brief history of cross-cultural psychology. Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Topic 2. Methodology of Cross-Cultural Research. Goals of cross-cultural research. Quantitative research in cross-cultural psychology. Measures of central tendency. Quantitative approach: Measurement scales. Looking for linkages and differences. Correlation and *t*-test. 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 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 materials.

Test 1. February 7

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 materials.

Test 2. February 28

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.

Topic 7. Motivation. Sociobiology: 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 materials.

Test 3. April 4

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. Environment, culture, and mental health. Schizophrenia. Depressive Disorders. Culture and suicide. Anxiety Disorders. Dementia. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AHDH). Personality Disorders. Is substance abuse culturally bound? Psychodiagnostic biases. Psychotherapy. Culture match? Other topics discussed in class. Video materials.

Test 4. April 25

Topic 10. Social Perception and Social Cognition. The nature of attitude. Values. Western and non-Western values. Striving for consistency: The Cognitive Balance theory. Avoiding inconsistency: Cognitive dissonance. 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. Cross-cultural psychology and medical decisions. Prejudice: Is it inevitable? Cross-cultural psychology and negotiations. Stereotypes in daily life. Acculturative stress. Culture and cognitive tests. Race and perception of political candidates. Immigration and immigrants. Cross-cultural psychology and human rights. Culture, ethnicity and views on equality. Discrimination and minority status. Multiculturalism and religion: A campus context. Conclusion.

Test 5, Final. May 9