LOC 214:
Culture and Cognition

Instructor: bethany ojalehto, PhD, Psychology (bethanyojalehto@u.northwestern.edu)

Class time and location: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30 – 1:50pm, Annenberg 303

TA: Gulnaz Saiyed, PhD student, Learning Sciences, SESP

TA office hours: Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30, Annenberg 305 (or by appointment)

Instructor office hours: Thursdays, 4:00 - 5:00pm, Swift 219 (or by appointment)

Winter 2017 (11-week course): January 3 – March 15

Course Description: In this course, we will explore the cultural ground of cognition. How do cultural environments structure and orient our conceptual knowledge, and how do these cognitive processes feedback into cultural systems? Key topics include conceptual development, knowledge organization, causal reasoning, moral psychology, and environmental psychology. Jointly, the topics are integrated through a focus on social and ecological thought. We will engage in cultural artifact analyses, field experiences, and research inquiries. By the end of the course, you will have a deeper knowledge of concepts, culture, and their interaction, and you will be aware of the broader cultural frameworks that shape these very scientific inquiries.

Completion of an introductory course in the social and behavioral sciences (such as LOC 211-0 Introduction to Organization Theory and Practice or PSYCH 110 Introduction to Psychology) is a recommended prerequisite for this course. Students are expected to be comfortable reading and assessing journal articles, which requires some knowledge of statistics and research methods. If you are unfamiliar with reading journal articles, please visit me in the first week of class to discuss this together.

Goals: Our goals for learning in this course are ambitious, but all students can realize them given appropriate time and effort. By the end of the quarter, you should be able to:

- Understand the importance of culture for cognition across development and several domains of conceptual knowledge
- Articulate multiple theoretical perspectives on what culture is and how it may influence cognition
- Appreciate canonical debates about psychological universality versus diversity
- Reflect on the significance of within-group and between-group cultural patterns
- Be equipped to consider how individual cognition feeds back into cultural systems

Course Organization and Learning System

Readings are the core of this course and foundation for class discussion. There will be 1-2 assigned readings for each class: most of these will be academic papers, but there will also be real-world applications of these ideas from the media. Readings will be posted on Canvas in advance. The key elements of learning include (1) reading responses and inquiries; (2)
discussion coordination; (3) in-class activities and engaged participation; and (4) a final project.

1) Reading responses and inquiries: For each set of readings, you will be asked to (a) write a concise reading response (between 200 - 400 words) to the root discussion question for that day (assigned by me); and (b) generate 2 individual inquiries or discussion points that incorporate your own experiences and interests with key ideas from the readings. Your individual inquiries may take the form of a question, critique, anecdote, picture, poem, interview, cultural artifact, show-and-tell, simulated conversation, etc. Whenever the format allows, these should be made available online. Additionally, (c) you are expected to read the individual inquiries of your peers and be prepared to engage with at least one peer comment in class. You need not post a response to your peers online, but do be prepared to discuss in class.

Together, the reading responses, individual inquiries, and peer dialogue will structure class conversation. Responses and individual inquiries/discussion points should be posted on Canvas by 2pm on the day before class (with the exception of our second class on January 4, when responses are due by 9am that day). Timely posting ensures that your peers and I can devote appropriate consideration to your contributions prior to class.

2) Class activity coordination: In small groups of 2-3, each of you will coordinate a 20(ish)-minute class activity for one academic reading during the course. The purpose of the class activity is to create an opportunity to engage with the key research ideas in a new way. These activities are open-ended but must be directly relevant to the research topic. For instance, you might coordinate a class debate, enact a new version of the psychological study with your peers as participants, instigate an art or map-making project, bring us outside the classroom for a (brief) field experience, conduct a storytelling exercise, invite us to act out a hypothetical cultural event, present a culturally relevant form of media, or create a game that builds on the key principles of the research. At some point during the activity, you should summarize the core ideas of the academic reading and explain how your activity engages with those ideas. Connecting the activity with the research ideas will be critical to your grade.

Treat this as an opportunity to extend the ideas from our collective reading experience in new directions. Surprising or controversial activities are likely to be especially stimulating. Sign ups will occur on the first day of class.

3) In-class activities: Each class session will involve in-class activities designed to address the focal topic from new vantage points. In-class quiz: Every class session will include a quiz on the readings. These are designed to jog critical thinking about the readings and foster active reading outside class. Mock study participation: Class sessions will sometimes include participation in mock studies, the results of which will be jointly analyzed for an interpretation of “our” (the classes’) cultural cognitive processes (and variations therein). Other activities: Class sessions may periodically include other activities such as field trips, debates, multimedia, artistic or literary explorations, and guest lectures.

4) Final project: Cultural artifact analysis. Every cultural community produces objects, artifacts, institutions, and practices that are reflective of its values and common-sense perspectives on the world. What is the nature of these differences in material cultures and
why might they be important to understand? You will choose a product (broadly defined) and analyze it from a cultural psychological perspective. Your proposed topic for artifact analysis is due in class on January 25. Final projects will include a written report and a presentation. Presentations will begin on March 6. The final written project is due March 13.

Learning and Grading: The primary goal of this course is learning and inquiry, and my grading system reflects this. Your engagement, curiosity, and contributions to the intellectual environment of our course are key to learning and will also be key to your grade. In order to share these qualities with us, you will need to come to class well prepared each day. Reflecting this, your overall grade will be based on reading responses (27%), class activity coordination (20%), in-class activities (13% quizzes; 15% other) and the final project (25%). You are required to uphold the standards of academic integrity (see www.northwestern.edu/provost/docs/Academic%20Integrity%20Guide%202016.pdf).

Grading feedback: Learning is most productive when we receive continual feedback. Accordingly, grades will be posted for your reading responses, class activity coordination, and in-class activities on Canvas each week. If you have questions about your progress in this course, please see me or the TA in a timely manner to discuss these questions. Timely = within 1 week of receiving your grade for the item in question.

Grading scale: Grade cut-offs will be as follows: 98-100% (A+); 92-97% (A); 90-91% (A-); 88-89% (B+); 82-87% (B); 80-81% (B-); 78-79% (C+); 72-77% (C); 70-71% (C-); 68-69% (D+); 62-67% (D); 60-61% (D-); 59% and below (F).

Attendance and participation. Regular attendance is essential. If you must miss a class session, your absence should be coordinated with the TA in advance to arrange your contributions to the class discussion and activities for that session. If your absence and contributions are coordinated in advance, no points will be lost. Otherwise, class discussions and activities missed due to absence will receive a 0. In extenuating circumstances, make-up assignments may be submitted within 5 days of the missed class, but these will receive an automatic grade reduction of 13%. Make-up assignments will not be considered more than 7 days after the missed class.

Miscellaneous. Late assignments will receive a 13% grade reduction for each day following the due date. There will be no extra credit or re-grading. If you would like to review your grade on any item, you may do so within 7 days of receiving the grade.

Technology Policy: I ask that you take notes by hand rather than computer. This method has been shown to enhance learning and also fosters richer classroom conversation. Only if necessary, laptops may be used to access a reading or give a presentation. Any other use (including email) is inappropriate. It distracts others and detracts from our learning collaboration. Phones and other such devices should be silenced and stowed during class.

Disability Statement: I strive to create a conducive learning environment for everyone. If you have a request for accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calendar of Class Sessions and Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 1: Hello</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 3: What is culture?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - MLK DAY, NO CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 5: Culture as universal cognitive domains</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 6: Culture as epistemologies, Indigenous &amp; Western</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January-February</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 8: Culture as social interaction</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>February</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 10: Cultural learning &amp; The Word Gap</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>February</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 12: Psychological pluralism</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>February</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 14: Environmental morality</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>February-March</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meeting 16: Ecological thought &amp; action</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – Final project presentations part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – Final project presentations part 3 (if needed) (12:30–1:50, Annenberg 303)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Final written project due</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT 1: Why culture matters

Meeting 1: Hello ✦ Tuesday, January 3

Introductions

Meeting 2: Why culture matters ✦ Wednesday, January 4


*Note:* Your reading response and individual inquiries should be posted on Canvas by 9am today, Wednesday Jan. 4th (from now on, they will be due by 2pm the day before class).

Meeting 3: What is Culture? ✦ Monday, January 9


UNIT 2. Perspectives on culture and cognition

Meeting 4: Culture as metaphysics, East & West ✦ Wednesday, January 11


Meeting 5: Culture as universal cognitive domains ✦ Wednesday, January 18


Meeting 6: Culture as epistemologies, Indigenous & Western ✦ Monday, January 23


Meeting 7: Culture as language, a debated universal ✦ Wednesday, January 25


Meeting 8: Culture as social interaction  ◆ Monday, January 30


UNIT 3. Cultural cognition: What does it mean for social worlds?

Meeting 9: Self & society  ◆ Wednesday, February 1


Meeting 10: Cultural learning & The Word Gap  ◆ Monday, February 6

Guest Lecture: Gulnaz Saiyed, PhD Candidate, Learning Sciences, SESP


Meeting 11: Mind & culture  ◆ Wednesday, February 8


Meeting 12: Psychological pluralism  ◆ Monday, February 13


Meeting 13: Is morality universal?  ◆ Wednesday, February 15

Guest Lecture: Kalonji Nzinga, PhD Candidate, SESP

**UNIT 4. Cultural cognition – What does it mean for the environment?**

**MEETING 14: Environmental morality ✡ Monday, February 20**


**MEETING 15: Sacred values & cultural environments ✡ Wednesday, February 22**

**Guest Lecture:** Sonya Sachdeva, PhD, *Research Social Scientist, US Forest Service*


**MEETING 16: Ecological thought & action ✡ Monday, February 27**


**MEETING 17: Social & ecological community across cultures ✡ Wednesday, March 1**

**Guest Lecture:** Eli Suzukovich III, PhD, Lecturer, *Environmental Policy and Culture Program & Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University*


**MEETING 18: Final presentations, Part 1 ✡ Monday, March 6**

**MEETING 19: Final presentations, Part 2 ✡ Wednesday, March 8**

**MEETING 20: Final presentations, Part 3 ✡ Wednesday, March 15 (3:00-5:00)**