

**CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY, PSYC 242****MTWR, 1:00 – 3:00****White Gravenor, 213****Instructor:** Yulia Chentsova Dutton  
**Email:** yec2@georgetown.edu**Office:** White Gravenor Hall, 306C  
**Office Hours:** Mon, Tue: 11-noon; I will announce some additional post-hour office hours as my schedule permits

*“People who are independent of time, place, and circumstance do not now and have not ever existed, and by the very nature of things could not exist” (Geertz, 1975).*

Human beings do not develop and function in a cultural vacuum. Cultural psychology is the field of study that focuses on the cultural constitution of psychological phenomena. In this course, we will consider current theories and research on culture, race, and ethnicity and will examine evidence suggesting psychological processes are culture- and context-dependent. Students will gain a better understanding of the ways in which sociocultural contexts influence psychological processes, such as self, agency, motivation, emotion, cognition, and relationships, learn about empirical methods in cultural psychology, and achieve a better appreciation of diversity within and outside of the United States. Class meetings will be comprised of lecture, discussion and activities.

In this course, there will be a special emphasis on: reflecting critically on the ethical and social responsibilities of global citizenship; recognizing the intellectual and personal challenges often implicit in cultural misunderstandings; engaging in debate with respect; and building empathy and open-mindedness.

**Course goals**

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Recognize and challenge your assumptions about “basic human nature,” and “the natural way to do things.”
- Identify and predict variations in human thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors across cultures and “subcultures.”
- Understand your own values, experiences and actions as contextualized by the cultural meanings and practices in which you engage.
- Appreciate culturally sensitive research methods and have understanding of the main challenges and advantages of the scientific study of culture.
- Be able to think critically about psychological research (mainstream and cross-cultural)

This course addresses the following Department of Psychology learning goals:

Goal 1: Foundational Knowledge	1. Development of the discipline 2. Development of the individual 3. The ecological context of human development
Goal 2: Epistemological Foundations	1. Appreciating the use of different tools of inquiry 2. Use of different tools of inquiry 3. Communicating scientific understanding in oral and written form 4. Engagement with psychological inquiry
Goal 3: Application of Psychology	Goal 4: Values in Psychology

## Required Readings

Heine, S. (2015). *Cultural Psychology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York: W. W. Norton.

Additional articles will be distributed via citations (you can download them using Google Scholar) or PDF files:

- Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2012). What makes online content viral? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 192-205.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52(6), 613-629.
- Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., Oyserman, D., & Stone, J. M. (2008). Of warrior chiefs and Indian princesses: The psychological consequences of American Indian mascots. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 30(3), 208-218.
- Stephens, N. M., Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., Johnson, C. S., & Covarrubias, R. (2012). Unseen disadvantage: How American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(6), 1178-1197.
- Levenson, R. W., Soto, J., & Pole, N. (2007). Emotion, biology, and culture. *Handbook of cultural psychology*, 780-796.
- Snibbe, A., (2006) [Choice and suffering in San Francisco](http://alanaconner.com/writing/), *Static*, 3. Available at <http://alanaconner.com/writing/>
- Cohen, A. B. (2009). Many forms of culture. *The American Psychologist*, 64(3), 194-204.

### Course website

Canvas site will be used as the course website. Here you will find general course information, announcements, information about exams and papers, the course grade book, and forums for asking questions and for discussing course-related issues with your peers and the instructor. PowerPoint slides will not be posted in their entirety. In some cases, only an outline will be posted. Announcements to the class will be sent through Canvas. Please make sure you are able to receive emails (i.e., if your email inbox is full, it will bounce messages). It is your responsibility to check for Canvas announcements often to make sure that you do not miss anything. I will not grant extensions to students who miss an assignment posted on Canvas.

### Course requirements and policies

It is each student's responsibility to become familiar with this syllabus and be aware of the course policies, scheduled assignments and exams.

Attendance. Students are expected to attend all class meetings. If, for whatever reason, you are unable to attend class it is your responsibility to obtain material you missed from other students.

Preparation. Before each class meeting, students are expected to have read the course readings for that week. Meaningful class participation will require that you read and think about the material before class.

Active participation. The purpose of this course is to encourage thinking about race, ethnicity, and culture. In order to achieve this goal, students must take active roles in their education. Students are expected to think and participate actively during class discussion and class activities.

Student conduct. This course is intended to serve as an open forum in which students can feel safe to contribute diverse points of view, beliefs, and opinions, and learn to respect and be tolerant for the practices and viewpoints of other cultures and groups. Students are expected to listen to and interact with each other in a respectful manner, and maintain open minds to the differences among themselves.

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, and indeed simply as good scholars and citizens, you are required to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of this course. You are expected to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council

website. As faculty, I too am obligated to uphold the Honor System, and will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

Without regard to motive, student conduct that is academically dishonest, evidences lack of academic integrity or trustworthiness, or unfairly impinges upon the intellectual rights and privileges of others is prohibited. A non-exhaustive list of prohibited conduct includes: Cheating on Exams and Other Assignments, Committing Plagiarism, Using False Citations, and Submitting Work for Multiple Purposes. For details, visit <http://www.georgetown.edu/honor>. Violations of this code may result in disciplinary action.

Communication via email and office hours. Although I will do my best to respond to urgent emails that demand an immediate response (e.g., a request for an extension) and emails that show intellectual engagement with the course (e.g., questions, links), I will not respond as quickly to emails that do not fall into those categories. If you have questions or comments for me, please post your questions on the Canvas Q&A discussion forum, anonymously if you wish, check the syllabus for answers, catch me after class or come to my office hours. Email use has changed a lot in the past decade, and we often email in situations where it is not necessary (no communication is needed, as is the case with you informing me you will not be in class or asking me whether the exams will be cumulative) or not effective (e.g., what is really needed is a face-to-face meeting). I strongly prefer to spend my time interacting with you face-to-face and getting to know you rather than responding to these types of emails.

I will be available during my office hours on the first-come, first-served basis. You are encouraged to attend office hours to consult with me on any aspect of the course or your studies or interests in psychology, and to provide feedback about your experiences in the course. I will email the class if I need to cancel office hours or if I schedule additional office hours. Please contact me to schedule alternative appointments if you are unable to come in during my office hour slots.

Special circumstances. We all learn in different ways and with varying degrees of success. If you have a disability, or believe you might, and would like to receive accommodations in this course, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center ([arc@georgetwon.edu](mailto:arc@georgetwon.edu)) to register as a student with a disability, or for an evaluation referral. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies. The Center is located on the third floor of the Leavey center, Suite 335, you may access their website at <http://ldss.georgetown.edu>. If your situation falls outside official categories, you should discuss it with the instructor.

## **Grading**

Grades will be given based on the quality of your coursework, the extent to which the coursework adheres to the goals of the class, and the time it was submitted.

Grades will be based on the following criteria (Total 100 points):

- 2) Ethnographic interview paper (Total = 15 points)
- 2) In-class activities/short written quizzes (Total = 15 points)
- 3) Attendance, active participation, and professionalism (1- points)
- 4) Two non-cumulative midterm examinations and one final exam (15 points each for the midterms; 30 points for the final; Total = 60 points)

Up to 3 extra credit points can be earned by participating in research. If you object to participating in research and would like to write an extra-credit paper to earn extra-credit, you must inform me in writing. Late requests will not be accommodated. See Canvas announcement for instructions on signing up for SONA.

Percent	Grade
100-93%	A
92.9-90	A-
89.9-87	B+
86.9-83	B
82.9-80	B-
79.9-77	C+

Percent	Grade
76.9-73	C
72.9-70	C-
69.9-67	D+
66.9-63	D
62.9-60	D-
59.9 or less	F

Ethnographic interview paper: For the ethnographic interview you will be asked to interview a person who is culturally different from you (e.g., age, ethnic background, socioeconomic status). You will prepare a set of questions prior to meeting with your interviewee. During the interview, you will keep notes, which will be handed in with your paper. Based on your interview, you will identify a potential cultural difference that you are curious about and propose a way to study this difference. You will write a 5-6 page paper about your interview, and your ideas based on the interview. More information about the ethnographic interview and content of this paper will be provided in class. The style for psychology papers is described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition*. This manual is available at the reference desk of the Lauinger library. You will be asked to briefly present the observations described in your paper.

Paper extension policy and late papers. I will grant paper extensions in cases of acute physical or mental illness or family emergencies. I will also grant extensions to student athletes traveling for competition. Falling behind in your work or having too many assignments will not be considered a valid reason for an extension. Late papers will be penalized 2 points/day late (out of 15 points). That is, a paper that is 4 days late will earn you a maximum of 7 points.

Activities/short written assignments. There will be eight brief activities/written quiz assignments that will be administered in class (typically, although not always, they will be administered during the first 15-20 minutes of class). Their timing will not be announced in advance. These activities may include brief group projects, thought questions, or brief essays. Your two lowest activity grades will be dropped. The remaining activities will be worth a total of 12% of the final grade. You will not be able to make up missed activities. Coming to class more than a few minutes late on activity days may compromise your activity grade for that day.

Attendance, active participation, and professionalism. Class attendance and participation (which includes active engagement, questions asked in class or on a discussion board, and participation in the small- and large-group discussions) will be important in this class. In addition, my basic assumption is that all Georgetown students conduct themselves in a professional manner. At the start of the semester, all students will be assigned attendance, participation, and professional conduct points that will count toward the final grade (**8%** of the final grade). Students can lose these points for: 1) failing to come to class on a regular basis, 2) failing to actively participate (please talk to me if you find it difficult to speak up in class), 3) failing to read the syllabus and repeatedly asking questions that are answered on the syllabus, such as dates or class policies; and 4) disruptive or distracted behavior in class (e.g., repeatedly coming to class late, responding to chats and emails while in class).

I will regularly take attendance in this class. If you miss **3 or fewer** class meetings, you will receive full credit for your attendance. Additional absences will affect your grade. Because this policy is designed to account for occasional emergencies or illnesses, you do not need to contact me regarding your individual absences.

Examinations. There will be two non-cumulative midterm exams, **15%** each, and one cumulative final exam, **30%**. Each midterm exam will include material covered up to the date of that exam, including the Heine text, additional readings, lectures, and group activities. Any material covered in class or assigned to you as a reading may appear on these exams. The exams will include multiple choice questions and short answer essays.

Make-up exams. Excused make-up exams will only be considered in the event that a student misses an exam due to a medical or personal emergency. Make-up exams can also be scheduled for athletes in cases of documented travel for competition. Students are expected to speak with me before the exam day to discuss their

circumstances. I reserve the right to ask for documentation of the emergency should the need arise. Unexcused makeup exams will be automatically penalized 20% of the exam grade. In addition, I reserve the right to change the content and format of any make-up exam from the regular exam (e.g., replacing typical format with all essay).

Appealing grades. If you believes that an answer on an exam or a written assignment deserves more credit than was awarded, you may appeal for reconsideration. All such appeals (except for simple errors in adding points) must be submitted to me in writing. A second grading of your work may result in downward as well as upward changes in your grade.

## Tentative Schedule

DATE	TOPIC(S)	READINGS
TBD	<b>Introductions and review of syllabus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is culture?</li> </ul>	
	<b>Cultural psychology - definitions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is cultural psychology? Why is it important to study?</li> </ul> <b>Cultural stability and change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do we remember “Little Red Riding Hood”, but not “Hans my Hedgehog”?</li> </ul>	Chapters 1 and 2 DeWaal (PDF)  Chapter 3 Berger & Milkman
	<b>Methods in cultural psychology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we study culture?</li> </ul>	Chapter 4 Genzuck (PDF)
	<b>Becoming a cultural being</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is culture transmitted from one generation to the next?</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Lewis (PDF)
	<b>Cultural conceptions of self and agency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do people from different cultures define themselves?</li> </ul>	Chapter 6 Markus (PDF)
	***** <b>Midterm 1</b> *****	
	<b>Stirring the melting pot: cultural adaptation, acculturation, and multicultural orientation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What happens when people engage with multiple cultures?</li> </ul>	Chapter 7
	<b>Culture and motivation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What makes people tick?</li> </ul>	Chapter 8
	<b>Cognition and perception</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do people attend to and make sense of the world around them?</li> </ul>	Chapter 9
	<b>Social representations and stereotypes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What’s wrong with Indian mascots, anyway?</li> </ul>	Steel Fryberg Stephens
	<b>Culture, emotions, and well-being</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do we all smile in the same language?</li> </ul>	Chapter 10 Levenson
	<b>Culture and interpersonal relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should people marry someone they don’t know?</li> <li>What do people owe to their mothers?</li> <li></li> </ul> <b>Culture and morality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is it wrong to eat your dog or burn your flag?</li> </ul>	Chapter 11 Pasupathi (PDF)  Chapter 12
	***** <b>Midterm 2</b> *****	

## Tentative Schedule

DATE	TOPIC(S)	READINGS
	<p><b>Mental and physical health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is abnormal behavior?</li> <li>• How does culture promote or endanger our health?</li> </ul>	Chapter 13 Chapter 14
	<p><b>Mental and physical health (cont.)</b></p> <p>Class presentations based on ethnographic papers</p> <p>*****<b>Papers are due in class</b>*****</p>	Watters (PDF)
	<p><b>Within-culture variation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all Americans really individualistic and all Japanese collectivistic?</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Wrap-up session</b></p>	Snibbe Cohen (PDF)
	***** <b>FINAL</b> *****	