

# PSY 344. Psychology and Culture

Thierry Devos

SDSU – Spring 2012

## **Course Objectives**

This course will explore how culture influences human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The relations between culture and psychology are both complex and profound. In contrast to the view that psychological processes are essentially the same everywhere, cultural psychologists examine how psychological processes are inextricably linked to specific social, cultural, and historical contexts.

The goal of the course is to **introduce you to the field of cultural psychology**. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- (1) Understand and apply influential theoretical frameworks in cultural psychology.
- (2) Appreciate the complexity of the interconnections between culture and psychology.
- (3) Think critically about scientific research on culture and psychology.
- (4) Reflect on your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors from a cultural perspective.

In other words, the purpose of this course is to provide an overview of theory and research on psychology and culture. We will be considering a number of complex questions including: What is human nature? What are key dimensions along which cultures vary? How do cultures change or persist over time? What methodologies can we use to study culture in psychology? How do “universal” laws in psychology vary by situation and culture? How do culture and self make each other up? How do various ways of thinking differ across cultures? What are the specific differences and similarities between cultures in areas such as personality, emotion, motivation, child-rearing, or mental health? Does the definition of what is moral or fair vary across cultures? What happens when people move to another culture? The course will be taught from a research perspective. We will identify answers to these questions that are currently being proposed by the research community.

## **Format**

Each class meeting will be devoted to a different topic (see *Schedule of Topics and Examinations*). We will learn about these topics in several ways. Class meetings will include lectures, demonstrations, exercises, discussions, videotapes, and examinations.

## **Blackboard**

You can access the course website on Blackboard:

- <https://blackboard.sdsu.edu> [Course: PSY344-01-Spring2012]

**Slide shows** presented in class will be made available on line **before the lecture** (“Slides” menu). In addition, you will find announcements and useful resources on the website. You should log on to Blackboard at least twice a week.

## **Readings**

The following **textbook** is **required** for this course:

- Heine, S. J. (2012). *Cultural psychology* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: Norton.

The textbook can be purchased at the SDSU Bookstore (Aztec Shops) or at KB Books (5187 College Avenue).

## **Grading**

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

### **Tests & final exam (75% = 3 x 50 pts)**

Three tests and one final exam will be given in class (see *Schedule of Topics and Examinations*). Each test covers about 8 lectures and 5 textbook chapters. Each test is worth 50 pts each and will consist of 50 multiple choice questions (1 correct answer = 1 pt). For each test, a review sheet with key concepts will be provided (the week prior to the test). The format of the final exam is similar to that of the tests (50 multiple choice questions), but the final exam covers all the lectures and textbook chapters (comprehensive exam). Only the 3 best scores (3 tests or 2 tests + final exam) will be taken into account for the final grade. No make-up tests or exams will be given. If you miss a test, your grade will be based on the 2 remaining tests and the final exam. If you took the 3 tests, the final exam is optional.

### **Activities (20% = 40 pts maximum)**

You will be asked to complete class activities (demonstrations, exercises, discussions, etc.). These activities will either be individual or group assignments. These activities will be worth 4 points and will be graded using a Credit / Non Credit scale. There will be approximately 13 activities. If you earn 40 pts or more (adding those up), you will receive the maximum for this component of the grading (40 pts).

### **Research participation (5% = 10 pts)**

As part of your coursework, you will be asked to participate in a research study on a topic relevant to this course. Only responses from students who agree to participate in the study and sign the consent form will be included in the research. Your identity will not be associated with research findings in any way. For completing this assignment, you will receive 10 pts that count toward your overall grade. More details and instructions about this assignment will be provided in class.

### **Grading scale**

In line with University Policies, grades are defined as follows: A (outstanding achievement; available for the highest accomplishment); B (praiseworthy performance; definitely above average); C (average; awarded for satisfactory performance; the most common undergraduate grade); D (minimally passing; less than the typical undergraduate achievement); F (failing). Plus/minus grading is utilized at the discretion of the instructor.

Final grades will be based on an absolute scale (not a curve). Thus your grade will not be affected by how well (or how poorly) other students perform in the course. To compute your percentage grade, you will apply the following formula:

Pct grade = (score1 + score2 + score3 + activities + research participation) / 2

The grading scale will be provided mid-way through the semester.

### ***Attendance***

The class will meet on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 2:00 PM to 3:15 PM in room PG-153. Each student is expected to attend all classes. **Class attendance is essential to learning the material of this course.** Lectures will often cover material not discussed in the textbook.

### ***Classroom Atmosphere***

We should work together to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. I strongly encourage **active participation** in the classroom; you should feel comfortable asking questions and contributing to class discussions. Throughout this course, we will be discussing a variety of socially sensitive and controversial issues, some about which you may have strong feelings and attitudes. Thus, it will be extremely important to keep an open mind, to listen to others' viewpoints, and to tolerate a different opinion than your own. In order to get the most out of this course and to make this class a rich experience for all of us, it is essential that you treat your classmates with respect. I expect everyone to show **respect** for each other and to **refrain from actions that might reduce the quality of students' learning experiences.** Beepers and cell phones should be turned off.

### ***Academic Dishonesty***

**Cheating** on examinations will result in disciplinary actions. Looking at other students' tests, using notes, or any other behavior indicating unauthorized outside assistance constitutes cheating. **Claiming credit** for a class activity that you did not complete is also a form of academic dishonesty and will result in disciplinary actions.

### ***Specific Accommodations***

Students who need accommodation of their disabilities should **contact me privately** to discuss specific accommodations for which they have received authorization. If you have a disability, but have not contacted **Disabled Student Services** at 619-594-6473 (Calpulli Center - Suite 3100), please do so before making an appointment to see me.

### ***Safety - Evacuation***

To be prepared for emergencies, each student is responsible for becoming familiar with the evacuation plan specific to each classroom. The evacuation plan is posted within each classroom and should be examined on the first day of class.

### ***Contact Information***

- Dr. **Thierry Devos**: Office: LSS 273, Phone: (619) 594-6911, Email: [tdevos@sciences.sdsu.edu](mailto:tdevos@sciences.sdsu.edu), Office Hours: By appointment
- **Loan Vu** (Graduate Teaching Assistant): Office: LSN 7M (located in the basement), Email: [ThuyLoan.T.Vu@gmail.com](mailto:ThuyLoan.T.Vu@gmail.com), Office Hours: By appointment
- **Lillian Perez** (Undergraduate Teaching Assistant): Office: LSN 7M (located in the basement), Email: [chel8p@yahoo.com](mailto:chel8p@yahoo.com), Office Hours: By appointment

### **Schedule of Topics and Examinations**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Reading</b>	
January	19 Introduction (1)		
	24 Psychological Universals and Variations (2)	1-31	
	26 Culture and Human Nature (3)	32-58	
	31 Cultural Evolution (4)	59-85	
February	2 Cultural Change and Stability (5)	85-109	
	7 Studying Culture: Methods and Challenges (6)	110-133	
	9 Conducting Cross-Cultural Research (7)	134-151	
	14 Cultural Socialization (8)	152-179	
	16 Transitions and Schooling (9)	179-193	
	21 <b>TEST 1 (Lectures 1-9; Chapters 1-5)</b>		
	23 Self-Views (10)	194-215	
March	28 Self-Consistency and Personality (11)	215-238	
	1 Self-Enhancement and Achievement (12)	239-262	
	6 <b>No class meeting</b>		
	8 Agency and Control (13)	263-284	
	13 Morality and Ethics (14)	491-510	
	15 Moral Violations and Justice (15)	510-527	
	20 Emotions: Universal Aspects (16)	528-551	
	22 Cultural Variations in Emotion (17)	551-556	
		<b>SPRING BREAK</b> (No class meeting)	
	April	3 <b>TEST 2 (Lectures 10-17; Chapters 6, 7, 13, &amp; 14)</b>	
5 Cognition and Perception (18)		285-304	
10 Reasoning and Communication (19)		304-338	
12 Mental Health (20)		458-490, 556-565	
17 Physical Health (21)		423-457	
19 Attraction and Close Relationships (22)		339-367	
24 Group Processes (23)		367-382	
26 Acculturation (24)		383-405	
May	1 Multicultural Minds (25)	405-422	
	3 <b>TEST 3 (Lectures 18-25; Chapters 8-12)</b>		
	8 Review Session		
	15 <b>FINAL EXAM 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM</b>		