

Department: PSYC

Course No.: 275

Credits: 3

Title: Introduction to Multicultural Psychology

Contact: John Rickards

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: PSYC 275, Introduction to Multicultural Psychology, Fall Semester, 3 credits. This course provides a general introduction to cross-cultural and multicultural issues and the role psychology has played in understanding the experiences of diverse groups. PSYC 135 prerequisite.

Course Information:

A. The goal of this course is to address concepts, theories, and research that highlight the importance of race, culture, and ethnicity in the psychological experiences of individuals and groups. Although the course will place primary emphasis on culture as defined by race and ethnicity, particular attention will be paid to the intersection of these concepts with other cultural experiences, such as gender, social class, and sexual orientation.

B. Required Coursework: The course will require 3 exams, 2-3 short quizzes, homework assignments, small group exercises, and WebCT discussion group participation. The homework assignments will include experiential exercises to increase multicultural exposure (e.g. visiting cultural centers, attending cultural events such as a "step show", Asian night, and Latin night, engaging in community activities such as attending a Black church or visiting the Pequot museum, and attending lectures and university sponsored events). Students will write insight papers about their experiences.

C. The major themes, issues, and topics: The course will examine the meaning of culture, race, and ethnicity for individuals and groups. The course objectives are to increase to students' knowledge, awareness, comfort, and sensitivity to multicultural issues and to link these experiences to psychological theories and empirical research.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:

(1) Become articulate: Students will be provided with feedback, guidelines, opportunities, and strategies to effectively communicate and discuss multicultural issues as well as increasing multicultural dialogues. These guidelines provide a foundation for students to critically evaluate and articulate cultural knowledge, research, and experiences.

(2) Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility: The course will move from a basic understanding of terms, concepts, and definitions (e.g. race, ethnicity, culture, discrimination, prejudice, hatred, attitudes, and behavior, etc.) to more complex conceptualizations of race and culture (e.g. racial identity, cultural worldviews, racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, social and historical contexts, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic dynamics, and systems of oppression).

(3) Acquire critical judgment: Students will be exposed to models, theories, and research related to cultural dynamics and systems of oppression. In addition, they will engage in several experiential exercises that will require them to integrate the course material with their experiences.

(4) Acquire moral sensitivity: This course is designed to provide a framework to engage in multicultural dialogues and to increase each student's awareness of his/her own cultural identity as well as increase awareness of and sensitivity to the experiences of those who are culturally and racially different.

(5) Acquire awareness of their era and society: The course will emphasize cultural, social, historical, and contemporary influences that impact the experiences of diverse individuals and groups. Educational videos, popular culture, movies, music, and television shows will be used to highlight the dynamics of race and culture in the United States.

(6) Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: The social construction of race will be emphasized by comparing images, perceptions, and experiences of diverse groups in the United States with groups in other regions of the world.

(7) Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge: This course is design to provide a basic foundation for discussing and understanding multicultural issues and the psychological mechanisms that produce, facilitate, and ameliorate group based discrimination, bias, and prejudice. Students will engage in a number of experiential exercises and self exploration which will serve as a basis for continued exploration and engagement. The course is designed to increase self awareness and sensitivity to issues of diversity, discrimination, and culture.

CA4 Criteria:

(1) Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity: Students will be exposed to a variety of models, theories, and research that explain and demonstrate the diversity of human experiences as well as a context for discussing and understanding systemic and social forces that impact behavior, attitudes, perceptions, and experiences. The course is designed to increase self awareness and self exploration in addition to understanding differences between, among, and within ethnically and racially diverse groups.

(2) Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations: The course will examine historical and contemporary conceptualizations of race, culture, ethnicity and the intersection of these concepts with systems of oppression. The course will provide "hands on" approaches such as discussions, exposure, and self exploration as well as a context for understanding and evaluating these experiences. The integration of research and theory with the experiential components of the course will aid students in becoming critical thinkers and cultural critics.

(3) Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups: The course is designed to move students away from group based generalizations, stereotyping, and anecdotal discussions to integrated and complex conceptualizations of race, culture, multiculturalism, and systems of oppression. While these experiences may be personally challenging for some students, they are designed to ultimately move students to greater multicultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence.

(4) Develop and understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration: Although the course will place primary emphasis on experiences of diverse groups in the United States, comparisons will include historical and contemporary differences in migration and immigration patterns that influence the meaning and expression of culture and behavior. A predominate theme in the course is the recognition that systems of oppression impact groups in both similar and dissimilar ways.

(5) Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above four items: The course will emphasize systems of oppression and the role psychology can and does play in understanding how systems impact individuals and groups. The course emphasizes the importance of social, historic, and systemic structures that shape, define, and influence the meaning of race, culture, and ethnicity for a given individual or group.

Supplementary Information: The proposed course may overlap to some degree with the following courses: SOCI 236 (White Racism), SOCI 240 (Ethnicity and Race), HDFS 201 (Diversity Issues in HDFS), SOCI 125 (Race, Class and Gender), and ANTH 100 (Other People's Worlds); however, the proposed course differs from these courses by emphasizing psychological constructs, theories, and research. The course also differs from other psychology courses such as PSYC 270W (Black Psychology), PSYC241W (Special Topics: Psychological Mechanisms of Bias), and PSYC 240 (Social Psychology) by encompassing experiential and theoretical models that reflect multiple disciplines within psychology (e.g. development, social, and clinical) as well as disciplines in other fields (e.g. sociology, history, anthropology, and women's studies).