

Department: PSYC

Course No.: 276

Credits: 3

Title: Social Psychology of Multiculturalism

Contact: John Rickards

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: PSYC 276, Multiculturalism from a Social. Psychological Perspective, Fall Semester, 3 credits, PSYC 135

Prerequisite. Recommended preparation PSYC 240. Introduction to theoretical perspectives and behavioral research that seek to explain the nature and mechanisms of intergroup relations and the psychology of culture, prejudice, and biased behavior.

Course Information:

A. Students will be exposed to psychological theories and research about how culture influences social perception and behavior, including bias, prejudice and discrimination. The course will use innovative and interactive exercises, as well as popular and educational media tools to facilitate critical thinking, articulate expression, and cultural proficiency.

B. Required Coursework: 3 exams, individual web-based portfolios, class participation, and WebCT participation. The web portfolios will require students to maintain a weekly record of observations, experiences, and insights related to the course material, research demonstrations, and insights related to multicultural experiences and encounters. To guide students in the development of individual portfolios, a

secure “webcast” program will be added to WebCT so that students can communicate with instructors, teaching assistants, and classmates, submit assignments, participate in demonstrations of psychological experiments, and maintain a “blog” for the course. (Note: webcast refers to generation and retrieval of data from Internet-based programs, while blog refers to an Internet-based journal made up of updated entries that are arranged chronologically).

C. The major themes, issues, and topics: An understanding of group based differences, systems of inclusion, exclusion, and oppression, and the psychological and behavioral consequences of stereotypes, bias, discrimination, and prejudice for individuals and groups. Students will be exposed to basic concepts of race, culture, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, as well as more complex theories of intergroup relations, multicultural dynamics, and the mechanisms of bias.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:

(1) Become articulate: Students will learn to engage in multicultural dialogue, develop clear, cogent, and thoughtful discussions through small group exercises, in-class discussions, and maintaining individual portfolios.

(2) Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility: To enliven learning and help crystallize students' understanding, several psychology faculty whose research relates directly to diversity and multiculturalism, such as Drs. John Dovidio (aversive racism), Felicia Pratto (social dominance), Diane Quinn (stigma), and Michelle Williams (racial identity), will be enlisted for use of their laboratories to demonstrate these phenomena.

(3) Acquire critical judgment: Students will acquire cultural proficiency through the use of web portfolios (e.g., exploring own and others' accounts of cross-cultural contacts and interactions), in-class exercises, and WebCT discussions.

(4) Acquire moral sensitivity: Facilitated small group discussions will be used to expose students to peer reactions and the use of appropriate and culturally sensitive language and communication. Self reflection exercises will be used to increase insight and awareness of personal bias, differences between implicit and explicit attitudes, and the impact of prejudice and discrimination for individuals and groups.

(5) Acquire awareness of their era and society: Examples from both popular media (e.g., motion pictures, television programs) and academic media (e.g. educational videos) will be used to increase student engagement and knowledge of the cultural origins, and interpersonal and societal impact of bias, prejudice, and discrimination.

(6) Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: Following class presentations, lectures, and exercises, students will post their reactions to their web portfolios, and in subsequent class periods, engage in facilitated group discussions, while a “triage” lecture period will highlight and integrate relevant concepts with research and theory.

(7) Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge: Students will be able to chart their growth and understanding of cultural dynamics and group

processes by examining their web portfolios over the course of the semester. In addition, assessment of student attitudes toward multicultural stimuli using empirically validated survey and experimental instruments will be given at the beginning, mid-point, and end of the course. Notably, specific level of individual change (or demonstrations thereof) is not the central goal or objective. As supported by research evidence and theory, multiculturalism is a dynamic process that once initiated is generally unceasing (though it may operate with great variability between and even within persons). Thus, the more important objective is initiating students in a process of awareness and appreciation of culture (and its plurality) as a rich, omnipresent and frequently underutilized resource.

CA4 Criteria: (1) Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of communication and creativity: Students will be exposed to psychological and behavioral research that examines and explains the psychological mechanisms of bias, prejudice, and intergroup relations. In addition, students will learn to appreciate, understand, and form explanations for multiculturalism and the need for cultural fluency and proficiency.

(2) Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations: The course will (i) explore the psychosocial origins, operation, and consequences of bias for and against various racial/ethnic groups (especially in the United States) and (ii) examine the components of prejudice, and the dynamics between perpetrators, targets, society at large, and social institutions. (3) Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups: Students will be aided and encouraged to develop action-oriented strategies for critical thinking and communication about group and cultural differences and similarities. (4) Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above three items: The course will integrate psychological research and theories that explain the mechanisms of bias and oppression with real life examples and popular media representations of the concepts discussed in class. Students will have several opportunities to examine their own multicultural growth and knowledge throughout the semester (e.g., web portfolios, class exercises, multicultural assessments). Students will be encouraged to continue such exploration by taking additional multicultural and diversity courses, and extending or applying academic cultural understanding to enrich their lives by engaging in activities that increase exposure to culturally diverse individuals and experiences.

Supplementary Information: The course has some overlap with two current courses in Psychology: PSYC 270W (Black Psychology) and PSYC 241W (Special Topics in Social Psychology: Psychological Mechanisms of Bias). The proposed course differs from PSYC 270W by emphasizing social psychological phenomena of diverse groups rather than focusing exclusively on the experiences of people of African descent. The proposed course is an extension of the PSYC 241W (Special Topics in Social Psychology: Psychological Mechanisms of Bias). If approved, the proposed course will replace the special topics designation currently in place. To my knowledge this course does not substantially overlap with other courses at the University; however, some of the topics may be addressed in courses such as SOCI 125 (Race, Class, and Gender), SOCI 236 (White Racism), and HDFS 201 (Diversity Issues in HDFS).