

# **Human Culture and Cross-cultural Comparisons of Psychological and Behavioural Processes**

## **Course number & Section Psyc 3850B** **Summer semesters I/II**

**Instructor:** Lanna J. Petterson

**Instructor email:** l.petterson@uleth.ca

**Class Time:** 9:00 – 11:50

**Classroom:** AH115

### **Course Description:**

Psychology tends to focus on WEIRD (Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic) samples. This course is designed to help students investigate why this WEIRD-centric focus provides only a partial (and often bias) picture of human psychology and behaviour.

Generally, the course will follow the theme described in *Cultural Psychology: 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Heine, 2015): “Psychological processes are shaped (but not determined) by experiences.” During this course students will be introduced to cultural psychology and the methods employed in cross-cultural psychology. We will investigate the uniqueness of human culture. Additionally will begin to explore the way that culture acts on psychology/behaviour, creates novel selection pressures, and affords opportunities for population change and innovation. Further, we will take a high-level exploration of the way that incorporating a cross-cultural perspective to psychological study can expand our understanding of various aspects of human psychology and behaviour (including personality, emotion, mental and physical health, cognition and perception, attraction and relationships, and morality).

### **Students:**

*Cultural Psychology* is a 3000-level psychology course. As such, the course will be targeted toward students with foundational understanding of general psychology (e.g., students are expected to have completed psyc1000 and at least two 2000-level psychology courses). (Exceptions can be made if students can indicate that they have completed courses that would have provided them with a sufficient background to succeed in the course.) The course will be taught with the assumption that the majority of the class will be comprised of psychology students or students from other disciplines with a strong interest in psychology and behaviour.

Because this is a higher-level psychology course, students are expected to be working toward: understanding and discussing (both in writing and orally) complex and multifaceted conceptual issues; evaluating the logic and findings of empirical sources; developing mature, evidence-based arguments; and applying what has been learned to new situations.

### **Learning Objectives:**

**Material-based learning objectives:**

The course material will follow the theme described in *Cultural Psychology: 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Heine, 2015): “Psychological processes are shaped (but not determined) by experiences.”

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand, identify, and describe the importance of considering multiple cultural contexts when evaluating psychological and behavioural phenomenon;
- Understand, identify, and describe cultural universal and cultural variable psychologies;
- Understand, identify, and describe cultural evolution;
- Recognize methods employed in cultural psychology and the challenges posed in conducting cross-cultural research; and
- Understand, identify, and discuss the relevance of cultural psychology to multiple subfields of psychology.

### **General learning objectives:**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Think critically about a variety of subject matter;
- Create and evaluate an academic arguments, or positions that are based on empirical evidence;
- Apply learned information to novel situations/descriptions; and
- Discuss issues that do not necessarily have a “correct” answer.

### **Readings:**

#### **Text-book:**

- Heine, S. J. (2016). *Cultural Psychology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

*Students are expected to read the assigned chapter for each lesson. These readings will assist students with their understanding of the key points. Heine (2015) generally presents each concept and then describes the supporting evidence. It is valuable for students to understand that the key points are empirically supported. However, for the purposes of this course, students are expected to understand, discuss, and think critically about the key concepts. They are not expected to memorize the specific details of the supporting evidence.*

#### **Required reading:**

- Caldwell, C. A. & Millen, A. E. (2009). Social learning mechanisms and cumulative cultural evolution: Is imitation necessary? *Psychological Science*, 20, 1478-1483.
- Students are required to read academic, peer reviewed articles for their writing assignment. It is the student’s responsibility to find these articles.

## Grading scheme:

Assignment	Weighting
<b>Exam 1</b> <i>May 17<sup>th</sup> – May 19<sup>th</sup></i>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Exam 2</b> <i>May 31<sup>st</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup></i>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Assignment</b> <i>June 14<sup>th</sup> by class time</i>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Exam 3</b> <i>June 15<sup>th</sup> – June 19<sup>th</sup></i>	<b>20%</b>

The following ranges will be employed in assigning grades in this course:

<b>A+</b>	89.5 and above	<b>B+</b>	76.5-79.4	<b>C+</b>	66.5-69.4	<b>D+</b>	56.5-59.4
<b>A</b>	84.5-89.4	<b>B</b>	73.5-76.4	<b>C</b>	63.5-66.4	<b>D</b>	50-56.4
<b>A-</b>	79.5-84.4	<b>B-</b>	69.5-73.4	<b>C-</b>	59.5-63.4	<b>F</b>	49.9 and below

In accordance with the University of Lethbridge Calendar, A = Excellent; B = Good; C = Satisfactory; D = Poor; F = Fail

## Grading Items:

### **Exams:**

Exams will be completed on Moodle in the Testing Centre or in the Accommodated Learning Centre. The first two exams will open on the Thursday and will close Saturday. You will be let out early from class on Thursday to ensure that you have time to complete the exams. The last exam is scheduled during finals week; it will open the preceding Friday and will close on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June. The final exam will not be cumulative, although some concepts will run through the course. Exams will be comprised of multiple-choice questions. Questions will primarily focus on topics that were covered in class, but you may be tested on material exclusively from the text. The exams will focus on key concepts and important terms. However, you will be required to apply the concepts from class to novel situations. As per the University calendar section 9.b.3, *“Students may be expected to apply what has been taught in the course to new situations, to analyze different examples, or to synthesize original responses to questions that remain within the realm of fairness, even though the particular applications, examples or circumstances may not have been explicitly addressed in course lectures and readings.”*

Students who wish to view their exams will need to do so during the week following their exam. Students who have concerns about their grade should discuss these concerns with the instructor during the week after their exam. If a student fails to bring an issue to the attention of the instructor in a timely manner, they grade changes may not be considered. The instructor will allocate time for students to view their exam and will address questions and concerns during these times. The instructor reserves the right to adjust grades up based on student’s response to the exam questions (e.g., if one question is found to be problematic following the exam).

### **The Assignment:**

You will be required to investigate a psychological or behavioural phenomenon using a cross-cultural perspective. You are required to put together a detailed outline. The outline should be organized as though you were going to use to construct an essay, but you are not going to write the essay. You are expected to develop a research topic and address this topic using findings from at least two cultures. In your outline, you must form an argument based on their cross-cultural comparison and explain what conclusions and inferences can be drawn from this comparison.

*The project is designed to provide students with an opportunity to: (1) investigate a topic and develop a research question; (2) form an academic (evidence-based) argument, explain the conclusion that can be drawn based on this argument, and describe what this conclusion means for our broader understanding of the phenomenon.* **Additional information and grading rubrics will be posted online. Students are responsible for reading the additional assignment information before submitting their outline.**

### **Extra Credits for Research Participation:**

This course provides students with an opportunity to get involved as a participant in ongoing research projects. If you volunteer to be a participant, each project usually requires about one hour of your time. In recognition of the value of your data, and in recognition that you are learning something about the discipline of psychology beyond that of the typical classroom environment, an extra credit of 1 to 2% for each study (variable) in which you participate will be added to your final course percentage. MAXIMUM EXTRA CREDIT = 2%. These extra credits are added after all grade cutoffs have been established for course work (see Grading Scheme), such that students who choose not to participate are not disadvantaged.

Directions for Participation: Following add/drop, you will receive an email to your U of L account with your Login name and password. It is IMPORTANT that you keep this information. The first time you login to the Sona System you will use your user name and the password. Once you have signed in you may change your password (recommended). Please go to <http://psychleth.sonasytems.com> and sign in as soon as you receive notification to do so. Studies will then become available on (May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Note: There will be no transfer of credits between courses. If you are registered in another course that offers credits, a second email will be sent to you with a different email and password. Sign up in the course to which you want your credits to be assigned. Further studies and timeslots will be added throughout the semester, please keep checking, but remember that participation is on a first-come basis. Note that there is no guarantee that all students will be able to achieve the maximum credit. The last date to participate in studies is (June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018). If you experience problems with the Sona System, or you have inquiries regarding participation in studies regarding research participation should be directed to Ms. Leanne Wehlage-Ellis at [wehlage@uleth.ca](mailto:wehlage@uleth.ca).

### **Class Regulations:**

Students in this course are subject to the student discipline policy for academic and non-academic offenses in accordance with the *University Calendar*.

The course may cover topics that are sensitive to some people. Counselling services are available for free on campus at AH153 (Anderson Hall) and can be contacted at (403) 317-2845 or [counselling.services@uleth.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uleth.ca)

As per the University calendar section 9.b.4 (p. 87), you are expected to monitor your university email for messages pertaining to this course.

**Lecture notes and in-class discussion:**

- Slides will be posted online before class. Students are encouraged to take additional notes.
- Discussion will be encouraged during class. However, any student that is disrespectful to others will be told to leave immediately.

**Quizzes and assignment due dates:**

- If a student must miss a quiz, with reasonable cause, the student must inform the instructor before or promptly after a quiz. The student will receive a zero on the quiz if the quiz is missed without reasonable cause.
- If a student is unable to turn in an assignment on the due date the student must inform the instructor before the day or promptly after. The student will receive a zero if the missed assignment is unexcused.

*Note:* The instructor reserves the right ask a student who misses due dates to provide official documentation.

- Additional work will not be assigned for those who wish to improve their grades.
- I will not change the weighting of the writing assignments or the tests if you do better on one of them compared to the other(s).

**Course Schedule**

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to adjust the schedule as necessary. Students will be notified of changes.*

***Lecture 1:***

*Reading*

- ⇒ Chapter 1 (pp. 3-29) – What is cultural psychology?
- ⇒ Chapter 2 (pp. 35-59) – Culture and human nature

*Objectives*

To understand what culture is, what cultural psychology is, and what cultural psychology contributes to the general study of psychology.

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***Lecture 2:***

*Reading*

- ⇒ Chapter 3 – Cultural Evolution

### *Objectives*

To understand how important social learning has been to humans and how culture can contribute to shaping human psychology and behaviour. Students will be introduced to the concepts of cultural transmission, meme theory, and cumulative cultural evolution.

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### ***Lecture 3:***

#### *Reading*

⇒ Kirby, Cornish, and Smith (2008). Cumulative cultural evolution in the laboratory: An experimental approach to the origins of structure in human language. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 105, 10681-10686.

⇒ Chapter 4 – Methods for studying culture and psychology

#### *Objectives*

To understand how to search for and navigate an empirical article. To understand the methods used to conduct cross-cultural research.

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### ***Lecture 4:***

#### *Reading*

⇒ Chapter 5 – Development and socialization

#### *Objectives*

To understanding the way that universal psychological and behavioural processes can become shaped in culturally specific ways based on experiences, particularly those during infancy and childhood.

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### ***Lecture 5:***

#### *Reading*

⇒ Chapter 6 – Self and Personality

#### *Objectives*

To understand what independent self-concepts and interdependent self-concepts mean and how they differ. To understand that additional self-concepts vary based on culture, especially between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. To understand some of the difficulties studying personality across cultures.

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### ***Lecture 6:***

#### *Reading*

⇒ Chapter 8 – Motivation

#### *Objectives*

To understand how motivations reflect cultural values and differ between cultures. To understand how feelings of agency differ between cultures and relate to independent and interdependent self-views.

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**Lecture 7:**

*Reading*

⇒ Chapter 9 – Cognition and Perception

*Objectives*

To understand that some aspects of cognition and perception are culturally variable.

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**Lecture 8:**

*Reading*

⇒ Chapter 7 – Living in Multicultural Worlds

*Objectives*

To understand the ways that people adjust when moving between cultures and incorporate multiple world-views. To understand the difficulties that cultural minority group members may experience.

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**Lecture 9:**

*Reading*

⇒ Chapter 10 – Emotions

*Objectives*

To understand some of the controversy regarding the universality of emotions. To understand that some aspects of emotional displays and emotional experiences vary between cultures. To understand that variable aspects of emotion are, at least in part, related to self-concepts and cultural values.

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**Lecture 10:**

*Reading*

⇒ Chapter 13 – Physical Health

⇒ Chapter 14 – Mental Health

*Objective*

To understand that culture can impact the genes. To understand how culture can impact physical health. To understand that physical health treatment differs between cultures. To understand how culture can impact mental health. To understand that some mental health disorders are observed cross culturally. To understand that some mental health disorders are found only in a defined region or are expressed in culturally specific ways. To understand that mental health treatment differs between cultures.

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**Lecture 11:**

*Reading*

⇒ Chapter 12 – Morality, Religion, and Justice

*Objective*

To understand that cross-cultural variation exists in the social importance and purpose of spiritual beliefs. To understand that, although all cultures engage moral reasoning, perspectives on morality differ both within and between cultures. To understand that, although all cultures are concerned with fairness, perceptions of fairness differ between cultures.

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***Lecture 12:***

*Reading*

⇒ Chapter 11 – Interpersonal Attraction and Close Relationships

*Objectives*

To understand that some characteristics will be considered attractive across cultures because they are tied to reproduction. To understand that the nature of interpersonal romantic and non-romantic relationships may vary across cultures.

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