

PSY 213: Cross-Cultural Psychology
Professor Nan Sussman
Fall 2000

Professor Gustav Jahoda of Scotland was writing, in 1970, about the state of psychological research when he said that psychology reminded him

".....of Parson Thwackum in *Tom Jones* (Henry Fielding's humorous novel of 1749 about a commoner being raised among the English nobility) who said, "When I mention religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion, and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England." This might well be suitably transposed as "When I mention a psychological subject, I mean a subject from a western industrialized culture; and not only from a western industrialized culture, but an American; and not only an American, but a college student." No doubt this is unfair, reflecting as it does the amount of work that has been done in the United States. Nonetheless, the excessive concentration on such an odd (as far as humanity at large is concerned) population makes one wonder about the range of application of the "laws" experimentally derived in this manner (Jahoda, G. (1970). A cross-cultural perspective in Psychology. Advancement of Science, 27, 1 - 14).

Overview

The readings, discussions, projects and papers in this course will lead us to better understand culture's influence on behavior and thought -- the purview of psychology. You may be surprised at the pervasive influence of culture especially at a time in the history of psychology when so much of our behavior is thought to influenced by genetic makeup and neuro-processes. We will discuss the disciplinary perspectives in studying culture and the vocabulary used to define the field; explore the methodology used by cross-cultural psychologists; look at culture's influence on perception, cognition, education, social behavior; analyze the effect of culture on group interaction and individual behavior and the consequences of moving between cultures; and apply our knowledge to two domains in which culture impinges, that of work and health.

Reaching me

My office is in 4S-230 and I have office hours on Tuesdays from 4:30 - 6:30 (before class) and Thursdays from 12 - 1. You can always reach me by phone (982-3763), email (sussman@postbox.csi.cuny.edu), or message in my box in the PSAS office.

Course method

This is a course which will require careful reading, analysis, and class participation. You will be an integral part of the weekly meetings - your ideas, thoughts, critiques. In order to be an active participant, you must read the materials prior to each class. You will benefit and the class will benefit. The main text is Brislin, R. (1999). Understanding culture's influence on behavior

2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. It is in the bookstore. A second book is recommended although required chapters will be on reserve in the library -

Lonner and Malpass (eds.), Psychology and Culture. Other required readings have also been placed on reserve in the library.

There are also many interesting films which explore culture and behavior. I will periodically recommend them, some of which can be viewed in the media center of the library. More on this later.

Requirements

Three factors will be proportionately weighted to determine your grade in this class:

1. Preparation for and participation in class discussions -- 10%

Attendance and participation in the class is critical to achieving learning goals in this class. Both my policy and those of the college limit absences to 15% of class hours - for this course, more than 4 absences will result in a grade of WU. Save your absences for illness and true emergencies.

I will assume that you have read the assigned reading prior to the appropriate class. Class time then will be apportioned to review, the addition of new material, and discussion. All of these objectives have prior reading as a foundation. You will not benefit as much from class without the readings and you will not be able to fully participate in classroom discussions.

2. Two out-of-class assignments: -- 50%

a. Cultural Media Analysis: You will investigate and analyze cross-cultural events reported in national or international newspapers or magazines. You will find 3 current newspaper or magazine reports which in some clear and meaningful way involve problems, misunderstandings or tensions based upon cultural differences in values, cognitions or behaviors. For each of the three reports, devote at least one page to cultural analysis of the articles and to explaining the origins of the difficulties using psychological concepts discussed in class. Be sure that copies of the articles accompany your paper.

Remember to use APA-style prose which is clear and non-sexist. The paper should be 3 - 5 pages typed, double-spaced, and free of errors.

b. Cross-Cultural Interview: Interview someone older than 15 years of age who represents a cultural or ethnic group that is different from your own. The interview is to emphasize but not be limited to, major problems, differences, that the person is experiencing in the US or with the dominant US culture. The context could be employment, education, transaction of business in public, friendships and dating, health care etc. The interview should last approximately one hour. Place your comments in the context of the literature you have read and discussions in class. Your written report, 3 - 5 pages, should summarize the key results of the interview plus your cultural analysis of the situation. Be prepared to discuss both the content of the interview, your analysis and the methodology of recording personal narratives.

3. Final Exam: -- 40%

Sussman, N.M. (2000). The dynamic of self-identity and cultural repatriation: Why home is not so sweet. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4, 355-373.

11. Culture and work

Brislin, 8

Newman, W. H. (1972). Cultural assumptions underlying U.S. management concepts. In J.L. Massie & J. Laytjes (eds.), Management in an international context. New York: Harper & Row.
Sussman, N.M. (1986). Re-entry research and training: Methods and implications. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10, 235-254.

12. Culture and health

Brislin, 10; Lonner, 40, 41, 42

Iloa, L.M. (1990). Culture and health. In R.W. Brislin (ed.), Applied Cross-cultural Psychology, pp. 278-301. Newbury, CA: Sage.

Draguns, J.G. (1990). Applications of cross-cultural psychology in the field of mental health In R.W. Brislin (ed.), Applied Cross-cultural Psychology, pp. 302-324.

13. Cross-cultural training

Brislin, 2 plus pp. 227-238.

Bhawuk, D.P.S., & Triandis, H.C. (1996). The role of culture theory in the study of culture and intercultural training. In D. Landis & R.S. Bhagat (Eds.), Handbook of Intercultural Training, 2nd ed., pp. 17-34. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

14. Remaining mini-seminars

Final exam

* Segall, M.H., Dasen, P.R., Berry, J.W., & Poortinga, Y.H. (1999). Human behavior in global perspective (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.