

ANTH 104 Orientation to U.S. Culture

Spring Semester 2009

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Keep this syllabus! It has all instructions, schedules, and deadlines!

Course Description: This two-credit elective cross-cultural class may be taken by both lower-division (freshman, sophomore) and upper-division (junior, senior, and graduate) students from everywhere, including the USA. The intent of the course is to give students of all levels the opportunity to examine their identities in the context of an international, intercultural community. Our identities are shaped in context, and only in the context of cross-cultural comparison can we come to realize our personal and cultural definitions of "Self" and "Other." Through lectures, small and large group discussions, journaling and other writing, we will examine the framework of American culture and compare it to other world cultures.

General Do's and Don'ts

Do come prepared, interested, and ready to talk and listen.

Don't be late. It's rude, rude, rude, especially after the Cultural Autobiography phase of the class begins.

Do let me know if you you plan to be absent. If you're ill and it appears you will miss a few classes, let me know.

Do invite your interested friends to sit in on the occasional class.

Course Readings

Through E-Reserve in the Mansfield Library. Here's how to access the readings:

1. Go to UM home page
2. On A-Z Index, select L, and then Choose Library, Mansfield.
3. The Library home page has a blue box at the top with a list of options beginning with "Advanced Search" and ending with "Course Reserves and ERes." Click on that last Course Reserves link.
4. On the following page, below the blue box, there is a drop-down menu listing courses. Click on [ANTH 104.01](#).
5. If you are asked for a password at any time, the password for our class is [anth104](#).
6. On the last page you need, you will find a list of the readings. They are all PDF's. You can read them online if you wish, or download them either all at once, or one at a time as you need them.

Please read your assigned readings in time for the Small Group Discussion listed below in the Class Schedule.

Week 2: Harmony and the Dream

Week 4: Transcending Cultural Barriers

Week 5: The Problem of American Exceptionalism

Week 7: White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Week 8: History of Single Life

Course Requirements

- Reading list, above, as scheduled on next page.
- Journals, every week. Schedule and assignments following.
- Cultural Autobiography, instructions following.
- Attendance is required. We're on the honor system; I may take roll a few times to make sure I know everyone's name, but after I get to know you, I don't bother. I'm just aware of who's here. The occasional absence will do no harm, but your grade will be seriously impacted if you make a habit of missing class.

Class Schedule

Following is the schedule for the first 9 weeks of the semester. The five weeks after Spring Break will be spent on Cultural Autobiographies.

Tuesday	Thursday
January 27 Introduction to the class	January 29 Introduction to each other
February 3 Lecture: Individualism and Collectivism	February 5 (<i>please have reading done before class</i>) Small group discussions, individualism and collectivism Reading: Harmony and the Dream
February 10 All-class discussion, individualism and collectivism	February 12 Happy Birthday, Abraham Lincoln Lecture: High- and Low-Context Cultures
February 17 (<i>please do reading before class</i>) Small group discussions, high and low context Reading: Transcending Cultural Barriers....	February 19 All-class discussion, high and low context cultures
February 24 Lecture: American Exceptionalism	February 26 (<i>please have reading done before class</i>) Small group discussions, American exceptionalism Reading: The Problem of American Exceptionalism
March 3 All-class discussion, American Exceptionalism	March 5 Lecture: White Privilege
March 10 (<i>please do reading before class</i>) Small group discussions, white privilege Lecture: White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible....	March 12 All-class discussion, white privilege
March 17 Happy St. Patrick's Day! Lecture: Cross-Cultural Relationships & the Other	March 19 (<i>please do reading before class</i>) Small-group discussions, cross-cultural relationships Reading: History of Single Life
March 24 All-class discussion, cross-cultural relationships	March 26 To be announced

Journals

Journals are to be sent over email. You may attach word-processed documents to your email, or if that is difficult for you, just type in the body of the email message. You choose which method; I don't care!

Journals are due each Friday. I expect approximately 300-500 words for each journal entry (That's about 2/3 of a typewritten page). Also, please feel free to add personal comments and issues in your journal entries. I will always respond to journal entries, and if you need to use the journal to process some issue for yourself, I will respect that.

Topics are as follows:

Week

1. Introduce yourself to me. Why are you taking the class? What interests you about the study of culture?
Due January 30.
2. Are you from an individualistic or collective culture? Do you think your personality conforms to the normal profile for your culture? Why or why not? *Due February 6.*
3. What did you learn about your small group partners in your discussion of individualism or collectivism? What examples did they offer as examples of their cultural style? *Due February 13.*

4. Are you from a high or low context culture? Do you think the description of cultural context is accurate for your country? Do you have any examples of how you function in your own cultural context? If you are now in a different cultural context from the one you are used to, how does that make you feel? *Due February 20.*
5. How do you think the idea of American Exceptionalism affects Americans' world view? Is it a good thing or a bad thing? Explain your opinion. If you are not American, is there any idea of exceptionalism about your country? *Due February 27.*
6. What was the result of your discussion with small group partners about American exceptionalism? If you're not from the U.S., how does the idea of American exceptionalism conflict with your culture's values (or does it?) If you're American, how are you feeling about these discussions? Please explain. *Due March 6.*
7. If you are white, had you ever thought about the notion that you are privileged just because of your skin color? If you are from a country where most people are not considered "white," but some other race, can you comment on the idea of privilege based on some quality that is not earned. (i.e., in Japan, are Japanese people given some preference?) If you're not "white," can you relate to the McIntosh article? *Due March 13.*
8. What did you discover in your small group discussion about people's experience with, or opinions of, cross-cultural relationships? What insights did you take away from the discussion? *Due March 20.*
9. Looking back at the various group discussions, both small and large, what has been the most interesting or intriguing to you? Discuss. *Due March 27.*

Spring Break will occur between weeks 9 and 10

Journals During Cultural Autobiography Period

10. Think back to the aspects of individualism, collectivism, and high context and low context cultures. What parts of your classmates' cultural autobiographies this week highlight some of those features?
11. Same as week 10.
12. Same as week 10.
13. Same as week 10.
14. Same as week 10.

Cultural Autobiography

The cultural autobiographies are the heart and soul of the class. A cultural autobiography is a reflective, self-analytic story of your past and present (Chang, 1999).

Part I: Power Point Presentation

- The presentation should be a minimum of 10 minutes long (it may be a little longer if you like). You may use photos, art clipped from the Internet, and text to highlight a few (3-5) of the most important influences on your life.
- These influences will have shaped and continue to shape you into the person you are today. You can talk about your family and friends and hobbies. Of if you belong to an organization that is important to you, share that. And...or....you can talk about some of your culture's features, showing us photos of your hometown or interesting places in your country.
- You can use this opportunity to educate us about an important historical aspect of your culture, such as apartheid in South Africa, or the post-WWII constitution in Japan. There is not time for you to speak about all these things, so choose those most important to you. We will probably ask you questions afterward, especially if we have time!

The presentation is, essentially, congruent with the "Narrate" part of the paper assignment (see next page).

Part II: Final paper.

This paper is the written version of your cultural autobiography. It should be 5-10 pages long [double-spaced, 1" margins, 10-12 point font], to be submitted the last week of class. In this paper, you will:

- Narrate your life experiences that you consider of significance in shaping your worldview. You may include typical and/or exceptional events from your childhood, school years, religious life, family life, and so on; and memorable encounters with individuals of various backgrounds.
- Analyze how these experiences have shaped your culture in these ways: (1) standards for thinking, (2) valuing of other individuals, (3) behaving as an individual and a member of society, and (4) evaluating yourself and others.
- Interpret the cultural meanings of these experiences to you. The narration, analysis, and interpretation may or may not be separated in your writing—as you choose, whichever method of organization seems to work best for you.
- Reflect on the process of writing the cultural autobiography. What has this process helped you to discover?

Some random things you need to know:

- In this class, effort counts absolutely. I do not grade writing based on composition criteria. I'm interested in your thinking. The Writing Center, located on the first floor of the Liberal Arts Building, is a good place to get some help in organizing your ideas. I can recognize hard work.
- Your full and committed participation is needed. Your classmates want to know you; they will come to care about you and to depend on your input. Missing class not only impacts your grade, but it is also a failure to meet your obligation to your classmates. Being absent signals "I don't really care about you guys."
- Share as much of yourself with your classmates as your comfort level allows. Be yourself. If you're shy, do your best. If you really love holding the floor, curb the impulse to monopolize conversations. You learn more through your ears than through your mouth.
- While you are encouraged to let conversations develop naturally during the small group sessions, it is a waste of everyone's time to allow the conversation to degenerate to "which bar I got drunk in Friday night." Remember, following each small group day, you and your group mates tell the rest of the class what you learned from your group. Don't waste your opportunities; the semester is short! There are only 5 small group days!
- Don't be afraid to ask. If there is anything you don't understand—a reading, an assignment, a discussion that occurred—come to my office and ask; call me; send me an email. Come by just to say "hi."
- I am not only a cultural specialist who teaches this class, but I am also the campus designated multicultural counselor. My obligation is to mentor you, awaken you, challenge you, and protect you. I am committed to your success, whether you are from over the ocean or your home is in Missoula. You can do well in this course: just fly, and I'll meet you in the air.