

Psychology 246. Cultural Diversity in Human Development Autumn 2002

Tuesdays 4:00 to 7:00, 223 Social Sciences 2
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Office hours Mondays 12-1:30

This seminar focuses on interdisciplinary strands of research, theory, and methods in the study of how children and adults develop mature understanding, practices, and perspectives in the context of their cultural communities. It includes discussion of how we conceive of change in individual lives and in historical time, of the relation between the individual and others, and of units of analysis. We will consider the relations of psychology and other social science disciplines, especially anthropology, and their methods and questions. The seminar will include research employing systematic observations, interviews, standardized testing, participant observation, and other methods, and discuss how methods relate to what a researcher sees.

Topics include:

- Orienting concepts and ways of understanding the cultural nature of human development
- Development as transformation of participation in cultural activities
- Individuals, generations, and dynamic cultural communities
- Childrearing in families and communities
- Developmental transitions in individuals' roles in their communities
- Interdependence and autonomy
- Thinking with the tools and institutions of culture
- Learning through guided participation in cultural endeavors
- Cultural change and relations among communities

The depth of coverage on these topics will depend on the interests of the group; other topics may be added according to group interest.

Readings

Rogoff, The Cultural Nature of Human Development draft (at Bookstore)
Briggs, Never in Anger (at Bookstore)
Comer, Maggie's American Dream (at Bookstore)

Student and Postdoc Projects

To facilitate engagement with the material and to provide evidence of learning, students and postdocs will be responsible for class participation and weekly thought papers. In addition, students will make a presentation in class and devise a term assignment. (Postdocs are welcome to do a presentation and term assignment but are not expected to.) I would like the class to function as a working group, with assignments and discussion tailored to the interests and needs of the students.

Class participation means attendance, participation in discussion, and facilitating other people's learning and participation in discussion. Attendance and participation are essential for such a course, as the material is not to be memorized from a book but to be grappled with through discussion.

Weekly thought papers are 2-page papers based on the week's reading assignment and class discussions (and films), which serve as springboards for advancing ideas. For students, one thought paper will be preparation for your class presentation.

The thought papers are **due at 2 pm on Mondays**, to an envelope next to the door to room 307, so that I can read and respond to them by the next class, and direct the discussion towards your interests.

The thought papers are casual essays of about 2 pages (if typed in double-spaced format — they may be handwritten). They are intended to be reactions, constructive extensions, and integrations of the main ideas of the reading, discussions, and other material. Discuss the most provocative or interesting key idea in the reading from your point of view. Or discuss how an interesting key idea in the current reading relates to something else relevant that you've read or thought about.

Focus on one key idea or two (or three) and explore them in some depth, bringing your own interests and perspective and constructive thinking to elaborate on the issue — do not review or abstract the reading assignment comprehensively. Please be courageous and speculate. Play with the ideas. I'll be looking more for the coherence of the idea than the truth of it. It's fine to write something I'll disagree with; I like a good argument better than agreement for the sake of agreement. Just make your point and your evidence clear, and distinguish speculation from 'fact.' It is appropriate to raise criticisms and concerns with the material, as long as you attempt to go beyond this to suggest ways that the field could proceed.

Topics for a thought paper could include:

- relating the ideas of two different sections of reading to see how one advances the other or calls for adjustment in the other;
- suggesting a study or a method of study that would illuminate a question;
- discussing the history or direction of an idea we are reading about;
- relating the reading to other traditions in psychology or other disciplines;
- connecting what we are reading to evidence that you have from your own research or observations or outside reading; and so on.

The purpose of the thought papers is to get you to engage with at least one interesting key idea in the reading. Because there are no exams, your purpose for reading is to gain depth in some aspects of the assigned materials, sufficient to allow you to elaborate from the material. The point is not to memorize it all but to really think through some of it. Skim the reading that does not communicate anything to you, and focus on the sections that are of greatest interest.

Your ideas can be rough, but press yourself to go beyond what we are reading. The thought papers do not need to be tightly organized; they are a means of communication between you and me and sometimes your classmates. I will respond primarily to the ideas in a conversational way in the margins, but also give you comments on expression when I think they will be helpful. (Please leave 1-inch margins.)

The **class presentation** is on an **empirical study** you are especially interested in that relates to culture and human development. (It can be on the same topic as your term project.) It doesn't need to be a perfect study, but it should be one that you think is worth spending time on. The study needs to be empirical — meaning that it needs to offer systematic evidence to support its conclusions. The evidence can be observations using the methods of any related discipline (e.g., anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, history). In your presentation, briefly discuss the evidence that supports whichever conclusion of the study you want to focus on. In other words, you'll need to be selective and focus on a main conclusion, and present it together with some discussion of the nature of evidence used to support it.

TERM PROJECT: Focused Analysis of Three Studies on a Theme (about 8-10 pages)

This is more formal than a thought paper. It involves a close analysis of the evidence for the conclusions of 3 empirical studies, along with your own ideas on the topic. The topic needs to be clearly related to cultural aspects of human learning/development.

The 3 empirical studies need to be reported in good primary sources of empirical work (not summaries done by others, or other secondary reports). They need to be empirical (showing the reader the data), but the methods can be those traditional to psychology, anthropology, or any other social science field. In other words, you need to read works that display the evidence for you to evaluate to come to your own conclusions. The data can be experimental, observational, archival, ethnographic, interview, questionnaire, survey, etc.

Refer to the methods used to obtain the evidence that the authors build their argument on (and that you, secondhand, are building yours on). Don't summarize the studies in detail, but comment on the evidence that the authors use to support their conclusions, and whether you are convinced. It is appropriate to critique the studies if you are critical of them. But you also need to provide constructive suggestions of how some problems that you raise could be handled better. I would like, when I read your paper, to be able to see clearly

- what research question you found studies on,
- what evidence the authors provided for their conclusions — what did the research participants DO OR SAY, under what conditions, that led the authors to conclude what they did?
- what you think those studies suggest may be answers to that research question, and
- what directions you think may be important for the next steps in addressing that empirical question (This last part is where theoretical and methodological issues would be relevant, in addition to ideas you may have for future research studies. Theoretical and methodological issues should not dominate the paper.)

It is fine to use a format that simply introduces the paper as an examination of three studies on the topic of x and give readers a little overview of the organization; then examine them 1,2,3 with commentary within each study or across them; and conclude with some general comments.

If you're interested in just browsing some journals for ideas, here are some that might yield articles of interest:

Ethos
Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology
Mind, Culture, and Activity
Journal of Culture and Psychology
Anthropology & Education Quarterly

Also, you could use one of the book's references to locate other related materials (look at the original study that I cite, and look at their citations). Or, use one of the studies that I cite as a target article to follow up on in the *Social Science Citation Index* (the reference librarians will be happy to show you how to use that).

On October 29, a **prospectus** is due, identifying the empirical question that your paper will address, and a few relevant empirical references. The prospectus consists of a paragraph or two identifying what topic you are working on and listing a couple of relevant starting references, so I can provide guidance regarding the scope of your topic and probably some references. I will try to help you figure out whether your topic is too narrow for the existing literature (so you can see how you might stretch into related literatures) or whether it is too broad for the scope of this assignment (so you can focus in on a portion of the question). Please identify clearly how the topic relates to *cultural* aspects of human *learning/development*.

Evaluation Guidelines

For each assignment, in addition to giving you feedback in the margins, I will summarize my comments to you with an overall evaluation that is meant to indicate to you how I see the particular piece of work demonstrating learning. I use a scale as follows:

Publishable Germ This work contains the germ of an idea or ideas that could be worked up to submit for publication.

I Learned Something Something in this paper really made me think, made me notice an idea from a different angle, provided a link between something I have thought about and something I haven't, extending how I think about a topic.

Model Graduate Work This paper shows a strong understanding of the topic, and could serve as an example for others to follow.

Good Solid Graduate Work This paper represents the kind of learning that I hope that most of you routinely demonstrate.

OK Graduate Work This paper is fine, but the ideas need to be pushed a bit farther, or expressed more explicitly or clearly, or show more of your own direction.

Something's Missing This work has something to offer, but makes me concerned that you've seriously misunderstood something or not really put yourself into thinking through the material, or just gone through the motions of the assignment without really going into it.

Did You Learn Anything? This work gives me no indication that the student learned anything from the assignment. Often because it's not turned in. Sometimes because what is written gives no evidence of being mentally engaged with the assignment.

In the first weeks, a number of people will get many comments asking them to push their ideas further. That's just part of learning what I want you to do in these assignments. *Overall, across the quarter, most students will probably mostly get feedback of "Good Solid Graduate Work."* (If that weren't the case, it would be a misnomer!) But from week to week, students' papers generally shift around in categories, depending on how interested students are in the material and the tack they take in going beyond it (and what kind of a week they're having!). Some students find it useful after a few weeks to bring 3 or 4 thought papers to me and ask for general suggestions. I'm pleased to do that for anyone interested.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments for Psych 246 Autumn 2002

- Sept 24 Introduction; Cultural heritage project
Bitter Melons (30m film)
- Oct 1 Orienting concepts, assumptions, and point of view
Cultural Nature of Human Development (Chapter 1); *Never in Anger* (1-69)
Thought paper #1 due the day before, on Chapter 1
- Oct 8 Ways of conceptualizing cultural aspects of development;
Individuals, generations, dynamic cultural communities
Cultural Nature of Human Development (Chapters 2 & 3); *Never in Anger* (69-96)
Thought paper #2 due the day before
- Oct 15 Families and communities; Developmental transitions; gender roles
Cultural Nature of Human Development (Chapters 4 and 5)
Never in Anger (96-175, read the rest if you want)
Thought paper #3 due the day before
Bathing Babies (15m film)
- Oct 22 Families, communities, gender roles, interdependence and autonomy
No thought paper due; work on your prospectus for your term assignment
Four families (60m film)
- Oct 29 Interdependence and autonomy; Culture and cognition
Cultural Nature of Human Development (Chapters 6 and 7)
Thought paper #4 due the day before
Prospectus for Term Assignment due in class
Polished Stones (33m film)? or *Navigation* tape?
- Nov 5 Learning through guided participation
Cultural Nature of Human Devel (Ch 8); *Maggie's Am. Dream* (Maggie's story)
Thought paper #5 due the day before
Preschool in Three Cultures (58m film)?; brief *BBC* footage
- Nov 12 Cultural change and relations among communities
Cultural Nature of Human Devel (Ch 9); *Maggie's Am. Dream* (rest of book)
Thought paper #6 due the day before
The Language You Cry In (60 min)
- Nov 19 No class; work on your presentation
Thought paper #7 on your presentation due Friday the 22nd by 3 pm,
to Karrie in 307
- Nov 26 Last day of class. Student presentations
*Please arrange your schedule to be able to stay til 8 this evening
in case we need the time for student presentations.*
- Dec 2-5 **Term assignment** due (earlier is fine)

Psychology 246 (Cultural Diversity in Human Development)
Autumn 2002
Information Please

Name _____ e-mail _____

Phone number _____

Department _____ Year _____

What research areas are you most interested in? _____

What research project are you working on or preparing for now? _____

Do you have background that may be relevant to this course? (e.g., have you worked or lived in a cultural community other than middle-class US?)

What cultural community(s) were you raised in? _____

Do you live with children? (Ages?) _____

I know it's early in the course to answer this, but what topics might be possibilities for your term paper? (Don't worry if they're rough.)

Mid-Quarter Feedback

Your feedback will be helpful for adapting the seminar to your needs for the rest of the quarter. Thanks!

How is this class going for you?

Do you have some suggestions for improvement in the format of the seminar sessions? of the assignments?

Is there something that's working particularly WELL for you?