

Psychology 353: Personality in Cultural Context

Spring 2024, TTH 11:30AM-12:55PM, Sharpless 416

Professor's Info

- Jennifer Lilgendahl (she/her) – You may call me Professor Lilgendahl, Professor, or Jen 😊
- Office: Sharpless 422
- Student office hours (time to meet with me and ask questions): TBA in second week of class (and by appt.) – timeslots will be accessible for electronic sign up ahead of time.
- Email: jlilgend@haverford.edu

Course Description

This course provides an in-depth examination of theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding personality through the lens of cultural context. In the first half of the course, we will take an international and cross-cultural/comparative perspective. Topics to be addressed include cross-cultural variations in the basic structure of personality, the role of cultural differences in personality processes, personality's role in how people engage with multiple cultures, and identity development in immigrant youth. In the second half of the course, we will take an in-depth look at personality within in the context of American culture, particularly as it relates to structural inequities, cultural marginalization and social change. Specifically, we will consider how race, gender/ sexuality, social class, politics, and history inform our understanding of the culture-personality relationship. Throughout the course, personality will be understood from a “whole person” perspective, i.e., as a complex system that develops over time and involves several levels of analysis, including 1) basic traits, 2) contextualized characteristics (e.g., identities, values, and mindsets), and 3) life stories.

Learning Goals

- To develop a working knowledge of the *key concepts, theories, and methods* used in the study of personality in cultural context, along with a command of what the *empirical evidence* has revealed thus far about this relationship.
- To understand and appreciate the value of a *variety of different methodologies* employed to address questions in culture and personality, including experimental, correlational, longitudinal, qualitative and case study approaches.
- To be able to *think critically about culture and personality* – both concepts and empirical evidence – and to engage in and help lead informed class discussions about this work.
- To develop and hone one's *oral and written communication skills* in the context of developing personally meaningful presentation and final project topics.
- To appreciate how the study of personality in cultural context deeply enriches our *understanding of human diversity*; to develop heightened *perspective-taking skills* by considering personality in cultural settings different from our own.
- To develop an appreciation for the potential *applications of the study of personality in cultural context*, in the context of mental health, community-building, education, politics, etc.

Readings

There is no textbook for this course – all readings will be available on Moodle and include primarily empirical journal articles of original studies, along with some review/theoretical articles, and a few popular press and case study readings. It is important to note that as a 300-level seminar, this course will be reading intensive and will require your active engagement with the readings. An important part of your participation will be to complete readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss and evaluate their methods, results, and broader implications. Also, please note that some articles will be very statistically technical; this is simply the nature of the research area. You are not expected to understand everything but rather to do your best to understand as much as possible and come to class with questions!

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the following course requirements, each of which is described in further detail below. First, a grade will be determined mathematically based on the weighting provided below. Grades will be determined using the following scale: 94-100% = 4.0; 90-93% = 3.7; 87-89% = 3.3; 83-86% = 3.0; 80-82% = 2.7; 77-79% = 2.3; 73-76% = 2.0; 70-72% = 1.7; 67-69% = 1.3; 63-66% = 1.0; 60-62% = .7; 59% or below is a failing grade. Clear grading rubrics for each assignment will be provided in class.

- Participation (attendance, preparation, and engagement) –20%
 - Includes contributing your discussion questions
- Personal Reflection Essay – 10%
- Individual Article Presentation – “Hot off the Presses” – 15%
- Midterm essay exam (open book case study) – 20%
- Group-led class (weeks 11-14) – 10%
- Final project (Case Study, Memoir Analysis, or Intervention) – 25%

Participation

As a 300-level, seminar-style course, this course will rely heavily on active student participation in the classroom. Although class will contain some lecture in order to provide necessary background for various topics, my intention is to be in discussion mode the majority of the time. Class time will involve a variety of different types of activities, from traditional discussion, to small group discussion, to in-class exercises and demonstrations. An important part of your grade (20%) will be based on the extent to which you attend and *actively participate* in all of these activities. I fully understand that students vary in their level of comfort with talking in class and my assessment of your participation will certainly bear that in mind. I will make an intentional effort to provide a variety of different ways for students to contribute their voice and be actively engaged in the course. One of the concrete ways your participation will be assessed is through **contributing discussion questions** according to a rotating schedule I will set at the end of the first week of class. This is to promote engagement with the readings and preparation to facilitate robust dialogue in class. The schedule and further detail about writing good discussion questions will be shared in the first week of class.

Personal Reflection Essay

Your first formal assignment in this course will be to write a personal essay (3-4 pages) on your own reflections regarding your cultural background and how you think it shapes your personality and your development thus far in your life. Details about this writing assignment will be provided in the first week and will be due on Moodle by 11:59 pm on Thursday, 2/8.

Individual Presentation: "Hot off the Presses"

For this assignment, each student will present on an article of their choosing. The requirements for your article selection are a) that it is an original empirical study that addresses culture and personality in some way, b) that it was published in 2020 or later, and c) it relates to the topic being covered on that day. The idea here is to use these presentations to get a handle on what are the most recent trends and developments in the empirical literature on culture and personality. The presentation will be 10 minutes with 5 minutes for questions and discussion after. Further details will be provided in class and a schedule will be made based on student preferences and availability regarding scheduling.

Midterm Essay Exam

In the week before Spring Break, you will complete an open-book, open-note essay exam based on a case study that I will provide to you. The purpose of the exam is to demonstrate your knowledge of course material through your analysis of the case study. You will be given the case study prior to the formal exam taking period, during which you can read the case and take notes on it. I will post the essay questions on Moodle on Tuesday, 3/5 by 5 pm and your completed exam will be by 5 pm on Friday, 3/8. You will be required to complete the exam within a two-hour block of time. More details will be provided in class.

Group-led Class

I have intentionally left the last few weeks of the semester open so that students can decide what topics we cover to conclude the semester. Details will be forthcoming, but the general plan I have now is to assign you to small groups and have each group take a day to select a topic, readings, and run the class that day.

Final Project

Your final project for this seminar will involve a choice from among three types of projects: 1) a case study, 2) a memoir analysis, or 3) an intervention proposal. For the case study, you will select a person whom you know (and who is willing to be analyzed) and gather data from that person through a variety of methods that you select in order to analyze their personality as it relates to their cultural background. For the memoir analysis, you will select a published memoir that lends itself to an analysis of the writer's personality as it relates to their cultural background and write an analysis based on your reading of the memoir. For the intervention proposal, you will develop some type of intervention, the goal of which is to draw on culture and personality research to improve the experience of individuals, families or communities in some way. Regardless of which type of project you select, you will be required to incorporate primary empirical literature into your analysis. This project will be developed over a long period of time in the second half of the semester and will involve several steps in which feedback, both from myself and your classmates, will be provided. More details regarding the project timing and requirements will be provided in class.

Course Policies and Expectations

- Attendance: In-person attendance is required for this course. You may miss one class without any consequence at all; beyond that, missing class will have a negative impact on your participation grade unless you notify me ahead of time via email with a legitimate reason to miss class. Legitimate reasons to miss class are feeling sick, being deemed a close contact with someone who has Covid, some types of sanctioned school activities that directly conflict with class (e.g., athletic contests, going to a conference, etc.), and true personal emergencies. You are responsible for staying on top of what has been covered in class if you are not present. If you must miss several classes due to isolating after testing positive for Covid (or any other illness), we will work together to make sure you are able to stay current with the course.
- Conduct and tech use in class: My expectation is that you will come to class having completed the readings (and any other preparations I've asked of you) and ready to participate and be fully engaged during class time. While I do not ban laptops in my classroom, I assume and expect that you will use your laptops appropriately (i.e., for taking notes, looking at the readings) and not for emailing, doing social media, shopping, etc. If that is how you would like to spend your time, please do not come to class!
- Deadlines/late work/extensions: I make decisions about extensions on a case-by-case basis. My position as a professor is that deadlines are serious and provide valuable structure, and that every attempt should be made to meet them. However, flexibility and understanding is also very important in many situations, and I am more than willing to be flexible when you make a pro-active effort to communicate with me about your situation. In this spirit, I encourage you to always communicate with me if you anticipate difficulties with getting your work to me on time. It is always better to communicate earlier rather than later if you are struggling in any way. Timely communication gives me the best opportunity to support you in completing your work and being as successful as possible in this class. At the same time, I encourage you to do your best to meet deadlines whenever possible. It is an important life skill, and will benefit you to be able to check things off your list in a timely fashion. Policies regarding specific assignments are as follows:
 - » Discussion questions: The point of discussion questions is to facilitate class discussion on a particular date. Therefore, I have a rigid policy on these -- I won't give you credit if you don't turn them in on time. If you have a major issue, let me know ahead of time.
 - » Midterm take home exam: The midterm take-home exam has a fairly large window for completion. For this reason, I expect that you will get your exam in by the deadline. Extensions will be granted only in serious circumstances and with timely communication, and if it is turned in late without timely communication your grade will receive a deduction.
 - » Personal reflection essay: Similar to the midterm exam, extensions will be granted only in serious circumstances and with timely communication, and if it is turned in late without timely communication your grade will receive a deduction.

- » Final Paper: Because the final paper is due at the very end of the semester, you will receive a zero on the paper if it is late unless prior arrangements have been made involving your Dean, which is consistent with college policy.
- Email correspondence: I will always do my best to respond to emails as quickly as possible. However, my days and evenings are sometimes extremely busy, so my guarantee is within 24 hours. If something is urgent, you may note that on the subject line!
- Use of AI programs: The use of ANY AI programs (e.g., ChatGPT, etc.) for the purpose of completing ANY assigned work for this course is expressly prohibited. I consider it a serious violation of the Honor Code to use AI as a tool for what should be your own, independent work in this course. This strict policy applies to all assignments. I am especially concerned about this issue with take-home exams (which will include writing open-ended answers to short answer and essay questions), and if I suspect the use of AI I will confront you about it.
- Permissions: All of the materials made available to you in this course, including the syllabus, all handouts, the exams, and the PowerPoint slides, are my intellectual property as the professor of this course and should not be shared with anyone outside the course or posted anywhere without my permission.

Accommodations for Disabilities

I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey. I also recognize that your ability to thrive academically can be impacted by your personal well-being and that stressors may impact you over the course of the semester. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other potential stressors, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources available on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), the Office of Academic Resources, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the GRASE Center, and the Dean's Office. Additional information can be found at <https://www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources>.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and providing equal access to students with a disability. If you have (or think you have) a learning difference or disability – including mental health, medical, or physical impairment – please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at hc-ads@haverford.edu. The Director will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. It is never too late to request accommodations – our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use their accommodations in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully

implement. If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course or if there are ways in which the overall structure of the course and general classroom interactions could be adapted to facilitate full participation, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this accommodation from the Director of Access and Disability Services and then must speak to me. Other class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

Title IX College Statement

Haverford College is committed to fostering a safe and inclusive living and learning environment where all can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence are violations of Haverford's policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Haverford faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the College community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that help and support are available. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct. Please be aware that all Haverford employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the Bi-College Title IX Coordinator: <https://www.haverford.edu/users/ktaylor4>

Information about the College's Sexual Misconduct policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and local resources can be found on the College's website: <https://www.haverford.edu/sexual-misconduct>

Dates	Topics / Activities	Readings
1 - 1/23	Course Overview	
1 - 1/25	Laying the Foundation: History, Definitions, and Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McAdams & Pals (2006) • Kwan & Hermann (2015)
	Personality Traits Across Cultures: Fundamental Empirical Issues	
2 – 1/30	Do the Big Five Traits Generalize to Other Cultures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church (2008) • Grurven et al (2013)
2- 2/1	Collectivism as a Challenge to the Validity of Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church et al (2008) • Valchev et al (2013)
3 – 2/6	Traits and Individual Differences Within Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oishi (2004) • Haas et al (2023)
3 – 2/8	Alternatives to Traits: Cross-Cultural Differences in Characteristic Adaptations and Narratives <i>Personal Essay due by 11:59 pm on 3/8</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lou & Li (2017) • Reese et al (2017)
	Personality and Multicultural Engagement: Dynamic Processes	
4 – 2/13	Reciprocal Relations Between Personality and New Culture Exposure Through Study Abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geeraert et al (2019) • Hofhuis et al (2023)
4 – 2/15	Acculturation and Personality Change in Immigrant Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCrae et al (1998) • Gungor et al (2013)
5 – 2/20	Multicultural Identification: Acculturation Strategies and Bicultural Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nguyen & Benet-Martinez (2007) • Benet-Martinez & Haritatos (2005)
5 – 2/22	Bicultural Identity Integration: Challenges and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navarette & Jenkins (2011) • Saad et al (2013)
	Adolescent Identity Development in Cultural Context – Focus on Immigrant and Cultural Ethnic Minority Youth	
6 – 2/27	Adolescent Identity Development in Cultural Context – Theoretical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grotevant (1987) • Phinney & Baldelomar (2010)
6 – 2/29	Identity and Family in Immigrant Youth – Mexican-American Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuligni & Tsai (2015) • Umana-Taylor et al (2013)
7 – 3/5	Identity and Family in Immigrant Youth – Chinese and South Asian Indian Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoon et al (2017) • Farver et al (2002)
7 – 3/7	<i>No class; midterm exam posted by 5 pm on Tuesday 3/5 and due by 5:00 pm on Fri 3/8</i>	
	Spring Break	
8 – 3/19	Who Belongs? Introducing Master Narratives, Structural Inequality, and Intersectionality to the Study of Culture and Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McLean & Syed (2016) • Cortina et al (2012)
	Race, Class, Identity and Coping in the Cultural Context of U.S. Educational Settings	
8 – 3/21	Black Students, Identity, and Coping – Contending with and Resisting Stereotypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way et al (2013) • Shahid et al (2018)

9 – 3/26	First-Generation College Students Navigating Two Cultural Worlds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covarrubias et al (2019) • Herrmann & Varnum (2018)
9 – 3/28	Academics, Career Class, Race and Identity in College Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aries & Seider (2007) • Syed (2010)
	Narrative Identity and Cultural Master Narratives of Gender and Sexuality	
10 – 4/2	Gender Roles, Ideologies, and Inequalities – Relations with Narrative Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boytos et al (2019) • de la Mata et al (2022)
10 – 4/4	Narrative Approaches to Culture/Identity Dynamics in LGBTQ Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammack & Cohler (2011) • Bradford et al (2019)
	Personality in Cultural Context of Social Change, Activism and Political Polarization	
11 – 4/9	Personality, Activism and Social Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westrate & McLean (2023) • Duncan & Stewart (2007)
11 – 4/11	Personality and Political Polarization in American Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duckitt & Sibley (2010) • Peng (2022)
12 – 4/16	<i>Weeks 12-14 will be student selected and student led topics; peer feedback on final projects ideas</i>	
12 – 4/18	TBA	
13 – 4/23	TBA	
13 – 4/25	TBA	
14 – 4/30	TBA	
14 – 5/2	TBA	
	<i>Final Projects due by noon on Friday, 5/17 for non-seniors; due by 5 pm on Saturday 5/11 for seniors</i>	