Chinese & Western Cross-Cultural Concepts

COURSE DETAILS

Course Designator and Number: COMM320
Number of Credits: 3
Language of Instruction: English
Contact Hours: 45
Instructor: On-Site Faculty

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As political, economic and social integration of China and Western cultures increases in the 21st Century, it is increasingly vital that we attempt to attain a greater mutual understanding between East and West. One path to this goal is to make a comparative study of Chinese and Western core concepts, taking advantage of the growing body of ethnological, sociological, and psychological evidence for cultural differences. Just as “Western culture” is not a monolithic category, so what it means to be “Chinese” is embedded in a larger, Eastern context. This course attempts to present a contrastive analysis of the defining concepts of Chinese and Western culture through the lens of different academic disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, language, semiotics cognitive science, and cross-cultural psychology. The approach is interdisciplinary and comparative, leading students to explore central concepts in Chinese and Western philosophy, values, interpersonal relationships, communication patterns, thinking, and behavioral norms. Emphasis will be on specific examples of various cultural phenomena and will draw on both scientific research and illustrative informal data to generate classroom discussion and open analysis.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Identify key cultural concepts in Chinese and Western cultures, and explain how these concepts manifest themselves in the two cultures
- Become familiar with various sociological and anthropological frameworks for analyzing China-Western cultural differences
- Tease out the different influences of human cognition, language, and culture when analyzing cross-cultural phenomena

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend each class and field-based course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Active participation is essential. Students are to read all assigned materials before each class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. Reading assignments average about 50 pages per class.

Graded assignments include:
- One midterm test; the test will focus on the key concepts and terms of the first half of the semester.
- A short in-class presentation on an independent field study, survey, or interviews, to be determined in consultation with the professor.
- A final essay (1,250 words/5 pages) on a topic related to the independent field study, the topic to be decided on in consultation with the professor.

Required Readings/Materials

Culture Background
- Zimmerling, Ruth. “‘Guilt Cultures‘ vs. ‘Shame Cultures’: Political Implications?” Paper given at the International Conference on Reassessing Democracy: New Approaches to Governance, Citizenship and Multiple Identities in Comparative Research *AK Interkultureller Demokratievergleich*.

Language Differences: the Relationship of Language & Thought
Social & Business Interaction

Cultural Concepts & the Human Body

East-West Differences in Thinking & Cognition
- Chinese Translation of Nisbett book:

Grading

Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Score or percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–100</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83–86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80–82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73–76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Percentage of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent study presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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COURSE CONTENT

Cultural Concepts & Cultural/Philosophical Background

Topic 1: Culturally-specific concepts and related terms; Traditional Chinese philosophy vs. Greek philosophy

Topic 2: Holism vs. reductionism; “guilt culture” vs. “shame culture”; individuals vs. collectives

East-West differences in thinking & cognition

Topic 3: Cross-cultural semiotics; Cognitive differences, east and west

Topic 4: Processing of time and space in China and the West

Language Differences: The Relationship of Language & Thought

Topic 5: “Metaphor systems” in Chinese and English

Topic 6: Sexism and gender defaults in English and Chinese

Social Psychology & Culture

Topic 7: Culture differences in family, relations, hierarchy, class

Topic 8: Business and culture

Cultural Concepts & the Human Body

Topic 9: Concepts of medicine, the human body, health; TCM and Western biomedicine

Topic 10: Non-verbal communication; Proxemics (cultural use of space)
POLICIES

Attendance Policy
Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures
Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty
Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct
The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.