



Study abroad.

## **SYLLABUS**

### **CULTURE AND MENTAL HEALTH IN ARGENTINA**

**Instructor: Victor Savicki**

**Contact Hrs: 52**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**ROSARIO, ARGENTINA**

#### **Course Description**

What constitutes “mental health,” “healing,” “personality,” and even “self” gain their meaning from the cultural context in which they are defined. Studying these concepts while in another culture reveals the necessity of including culture as background for many psychological phenomena. We will survey a set of topics that emphasizes recognition of positive mental health; as well as those that touch upon abnormal psychology and aspects of psychological treatment. Topics may include: personality, definitions of normality, interpersonal communication, psychological treatment, sex and gender, among others. A major emphasis will be the impact of culture on behavior and practices in Argentina.

#### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of the course students will be able use the cross-cultural perspective developed in Argentina a) to differentiate between various definitions of normality, abnormality, adjustment, and mental health and the implications of the different definitions, b) to understand various aspects of positive and maladaptive mental health, c) to describe various theories of psychology and their implications for explaining and treating abnormal behavior, d) to understand positive adjustment in relation to aspects of personal life, such as interpersonal communication, gender relations, etc., e) to explain how cultural differences impact adjustment and mental health, f) to recognize Argentine healing traditions and understand their conceptual link to modern U.S. psychological approaches.

#### **Instructional Methodology:**

Academic Policies

##### 1. Attendance

Attendance at all classes and excursions is required. Much of the class time will be spent in interactional activities and discussion that move beyond the information in the texts. Of course, excursions are vital. Points will be deducted for unexcused absences.

## 2. Written assignments

In all probability, your written assignments will be handwritten. These must be legible. Plan on a bit more time in writing these assignments so that you can exercise care in writing. Also, points will be deducted for late assignments.

### Guidelines for Required Assignments:

#### **Analysis of Home Culture**

In this assignment the object is to get an idea of one's own "home" culture so that you can be more alert to facets in cultures other than your own. A firm understanding of one's home culture also helps to avoid the pitfalls of ethnocentrism.

1. Determine your ethnic origin. This can be done by asking family members and/or by doing a family tree. You should state when (what year) and from where (from what country) your recent ancestors immigrated. Studies have shown that ethnic influences persist up to three generations from the time of immigration. Many of us have quite mixed ethnic heritage. Focus on more recent origins. And focus on what origins your family has emphasized. That is, is there a family preference in defining its origins.
2. Determine how your family of origin has influenced your cultural beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Answer the questions on the next page in relation to what you learned growing up. Families are the greatest transmitters of culture. You have learned how to be a person of your culture, to a large extent, through the efforts of your family. You don't have to go into great detail in answering the questions, but try to capture the essence of what you learned was "appropriate" from your family's point of view.
3. Read chapter 5 The Self in *Psychology Applied to Modern Life*.
4. Compare your understandings about your ethnic origin(s) as gained in Step #2 within the context of the Self chapter (Step #3). Write an analysis of how well some of the information in the chapter you read in Step #3 agrees with your findings from your own family in Step #2. There will probably be points of agreement and disagreement. At the end, write a synthesis of what you have learned from the two sources that briefly describes your home culture (i.e. final summary should be 1-2 pages in length).

Questions to consider in identifying how your family has influenced your cultural identity:

Respond to the following items with brief answers. Be prepared to discuss your answers with others in a small group.

1. Messages I got growing up from my mother about being a member of an ethnic group.
2. Messages I got from my father about being a member of an ethnic group.
3. Messages I got growing up from my extended family about socializing with or belonging to the dominant group or community.
4. Messages I got growing up from my extended family about marrying outside of my ethnic group.
5. Messages I got from my family about surviving in life as an ethnic person.

Other messages, values about specific issues that may have come from your ethnic group/background

6. The foods my group eats
7. My group's favorite music
8. The way my group dances
9. How to dress in my cultural group
10. Child-rearing patterns in my group
11. My group's feelings about older persons
12. The thinking of my cultural group regarding outsiders
13. The role of women in my group
14. The roles of men in my group
15. The sexual values of my cultural group
16. My group's opinion about homosexuals
17. My group's thinking about race
18. How my group engages in racist practices
19. The political preferences of my group
20. Things my group considers as group secrets
21. My group's feelings about its place in society

#### Journal Guidelines:

The goal of writing a journal is to record, over the course, your experiences both in and out of class that have been meaningful to you in regard to your learning about mental health and psychological adjustment (the major theme of the class). The journal becomes a motion picture capturing passing time in words for you to replay as you wish to give you perspective, objectivity, and integration in your present. The journal is meant to increase your awareness of how you experience some of the concepts that we will be learning about in class and how you demonstrate some of those concepts in action. Because the principles we discuss can generalize to almost all human interactions, you can begin to recognize them in your everyday experience as well as in more limited "psychologically oriented" relationships. Please use the journal as an opportunity to expand your awareness of ideas and ways of relating that you judge to be important to you. Ideally, at the end of the term you will be able to look back over your journals and discover that your ways of thinking, perceiving, and behaving have changed significantly in a positive direction. In the future, you may take for granted abilities and knowledge that you now may not even know that you need to learn about. Keeping track of your development in the field of psychology is a life-long process that you can use in a more systematic way by using the journal as one method.

#### **Method of Evaluation (Grading)**

Grades will be based on an accumulation of points for academic tasks completed. A = 375  
B = 275 C = 200 D = 125 F < 124

1. Analysis of home culture paper (50)

See the attached guideline. You should be prepared to discuss your analysis on the *first day of class*. The actual paper is due at the end of the first week of class.

2. Weekly journal (50)

Journal entries should be turned in at the last class session of each week and will be returned at the first session of the following week. See the guidelines attached. Start you journal entries on the plane flight to Argentina.

3. Short essays/discussion questions (weekly) (100)

Attached is a list of discussion questions for each of the required chapters in the Weiten & Lloyd book. Choose two of these questions for each chapter and write a response that includes both the information in the chapters and relevant in-class and out-of-class experiences (e.g. a discussion question on psychotherapy would include a discussion of healing methods based on our excursion to the Music Therapy Center). Due dates will be negotiated to allow inclusion of excursion and other out-of-class activity information.

4. Individual or Group Projects/Presentations (100)

There will be several out-of-class observation and interviewing assignments that will allow students to use Rosario as a learning laboratory. We will discuss these during the first week of the course. Also we will divide responsibility for presenting chapter content from our textbook.

5. Summary Paper (100)

Due at the last class session, this paper should integrate all of the in and out-of-class, formal and informal learning experiences from the class. More than a mere listing of activities, the paper should identify themes, major learnings, and individual changes in attitude, perspective, belief, feeling, and behavior related to the overall theme of the course. Approximately 5-8 pages in length.

**Course Reading**

1. Weiten, W. & Lloyd, M. A. (2003). *Psychology Applied to Modern Life*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.
2. Matsumoto, D. (2000). *Culture and Psychology (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)*. NY: Brooks/Cole

**Course Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>
1	Get acquainted, learning goals, class mission, Class overview, syllabus, expectations	Weiten & Lloyd (W&L) 1, 2 Matsumoto (M) 1.2 Home culture discussion
2	W&L 6, 7 M 3 Communication, Observation assignment	W&L 5, M 3 Cross-cultural communication

3	W&L 15, 16 M 7 Abnormal psych	DSM IV, prepare for Facultad de Psicología UNR excursion
4	Debrief excursion, specific DSM diagnoses	Psychotherapy, Interview assignment
5	Psychotherapy and culture	Observation assignment due and discussion
6	Cultural dimensions and exercise	Culture and self
7	Interview assignment and discussion	Centro Regional de Salud Mental excursion
8	Debrief excursion, Work & I/O Psych, W&L 12, M 5	Ambito de Docência e Investigação em Musicoterapia excursion
9	W&L 3, 4 Stress	M 6 Coping, COPE scale
10	Burnout and occupational stress, assessment	Burnout and occupational stress cultural influences
11	W&L 8, 9, 10 M 8 Gender and communication	W&L 11, 13, 14 M 5 Family life cycle
12	Review class mission and discussion	Final paper and discussion

The final timing of events on this schedule will depend on facts on the ground in Rosario; e.g. availability of speakers, themes and content incorporated into excursions.