



Psychology of Diversity

There is very little difference between one person and another, but what little difference there is, is very important. -- William James

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it. - Talmud

Instructors*

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*We taught this course at different times at Ball State, but shared a syllabus.

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce the application of diversity perspectives to psychological research and practice. Topics such as race, ethnicity, economic status, national origin, disability, gender, sexual identity, age, and religious beliefs will be addressed. The importance of diversity for all psychological subdisciplines will be considered. We will also consider how diversity issues are addressed in other social sciences.

Course Goals and Objectives

The **major goals** of this course are:

- to introduce students to a sampling of theory and research regarding diversity issues in psychology, primarily in terms of issues within the United States
- to encourage the development of a process-oriented approach to multicultural competence.

The readings and topics of this course represent just the tip of the multicultural iceberg. There are dozens of other topics and hundreds of other readings that could have been included in the course. The fact that a given topic/reading is not part of the course does not mean that it is unimportant, just that we are working within a limited time frame.

I challenge you to evaluate critically the readings and to allow yourself to experience the variety of emotional reactions that typically emerge in response to thinking and reading about sometimes difficult and often politically-charged issues. A major theme of this course is awareness of cognitive and affective processes related to our attitudes and beliefs about ourselves and other people. Thus, I encourage you to

- observe, as openly and non-judgmentally as possible, your and others' reactions
- note how those reactions change over time
- learn from those reactions.

Students should adopt a professional attitude in reading this literature. Important for reading any body of literature is learning to give yourself *permission* to have whatever emotional reactions you have (anger, guilt, frustration, boredom, relief, validation, whatever) and to *manage* those emotions (i.e., regarding them as information, not simply as something to vent). Your goal is to not let your emotions interfere with your *learning and comprehension of the author's message*. In other words, you will be expected to engage in a serious, scholarly analysis of this literature, even when it provokes strong feelings in you.

Course Requirements

Much of what you need to know about the class will be posted on the course Blackboard site (<http://my.bsu.edu/>). You are expected to familiarize yourself with that site and to check regularly for announcements and assignments.

Readings will be posted on Blackboard in weekly folders. In those folders will be questions to answer and bring to class on the dated noted in the reading folder. Due dates for readings will be noted on Blackboard. In general, students can expect to complete a set of readings each week.

The required texts are:

Johnson, A. G. (2006). *Privilege, power, and difference* (2nd Ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Rothenberg, P. S. (2007). *Race, class, and gender in the United States* (7th ed.). New York: Worth.

E-mail: If you do not already have a BSU computer username and e-mail account, please go to RB 165 to get one. I will be sending group e-mail messages regularly, so please check your mail. If you use another account (Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.), have your BSU mail forwarded to it. You will also need your BSU computer username to log into our course Blackboard account.

Keep in mind that it is not uncommon for email from Hotmail or Yahoo to be 'caught' by the BSU spam filter. If I do not respond to your email within 2-3 days, resend it or call me. I respond to email quickly whenever possible, but keep in mind that sometimes I am traveling and do not have access to email. Please allow ample time to reach me by email, especially if you have questions about an assignment.

Grading: Grades will be based on the following: attendance, participation in class discussion, pass/marginal/fail answers to discussion questions, and written assignments. It is expected that all students will have completed the readings *before* attending class. If it appears that students are not reading in advance, I reserve the right to administer course examinations.

A total of 310 points are available for this course (see following pages and the summary of points on p. 6 of this document). Grades will be based on the following grading scale:

93% and above, A	91-92% A-	
90% B+	83-89% B	81-82% B-
80% C+	73-79% C	71-72% C-
70% D+	63-69% D	below 63% F

Late papers will be penalized 20% for each class day late. A class day is M-F (e.g., any day BSU holds classes; excludes Sat. and Sun.). Note that answers to discussion questions are due **IN CLASS** on the due date and may not be turned in late without a late pass (see below). If you must miss class, you may turn your answers into the Psychological Science Department Office (NQ 104) before class. Be sure to sign in your assignment.

Each student is allowed 3 "late day" passes. If you are using your pass for an assignment, attach a note indicating this. These can also be used for discussion questions. Note each pass is for **one** day (so a paper that is two days late requires 2 passes). Use these late passes wisely!

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class. I understand that sometimes students get ill or have pressing issues. Therefore, you are allowed a “grace” cushion of 3 days to miss without penalty. *Use these 3 days for when you are sick or have an emergency.* I also will not count attendance the first week of class to allow for drop/adds.

Students also are expected to be on time. Students who arrive 10 minutes or more after class begins will be counted absent. **For each three times** students arrive after class starts (but before 10 after) or leave early, **an absence will be recorded.** Be respectful to your fellow students and arrive on time and plan to stay the entire class period.

If you do miss class, it is solely *your* responsibility to obtain copies of class notes, handouts, and any other oral or written information (e.g., about assignments or scheduling) from classmates. I recommend that you ask at least two other people about the day you missed so you can get multiple perspectives on that day’s class. If you still have questions after you get all materials from classmates, then you certainly may feel free to discuss them with me.

0-3 Absences: 35 points

6-8 Absences: 5 points

4-6 Absences: 20 points

more than 8 absences 0 points

Final Exam: Our final exam is scheduled for May 6 from 2:15-4:15. Attendance for the entire exam period is required. Failure to attend (or leaving early) will result in the loss of 10 attendance points. **No exceptions.**

Formal class meetings will be cancelled on two class days: April 21 and April 30. Those days are reserved for two purposes. One is to compensate for the Museum Visit (see below). The second is to allow students class time to attend **two** diversity-related events on campus.

A list of approved diversity-related events will be listed in the **Course Documents** section on Blackboard. To verify attendance, students will obtain attendance verification at the event; if this is not possible, write a 1-2 paragraph summary of the event. **Verification must be turned in the next class period following the event.** If students wish to attend an event not listed, they must obtain my prior approval. I do appreciate students’ suggestions for events. Failure to attend **two** events will result in the loss of 10 attendance points.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate fully in the class discussion. On average, students should expect to make at least one substantive comment each class session. **25 points** will be assigned for this aspect of the course.

This course requires your personal engagement; you need to be actively involved with the material and with others in class. “Appropriate” participation means a good balance of active, expressive engagement *and* quiet internal engagement (i.e., respectful listening; demonstrating sensitivity to others by not monopolizing; being open to others’ experiences and analyses). Your class participation grade will be based partially on how well you follow these guidelines.

In general, I will be looking for the appropriateness of your overall professional, mature behavior and interpersonal skillfulness during the semester. This skill set is important for students of psychology and will serve you well no matter where you go.

- Ideally, you will be working toward learning to manage your reactions in class, *talking about* them instead of acting them out inappropriately or hurtfully (e.g., saying you are upset about something vs. making a snide comment about it or the messenger of that idea), and displaying flexible but clear interpersonal boundaries.
- Some students talk too often. If this is you, please monitor your contributions and give others a chance. Make sure you are not dominating the discussion.
- If you have a tendency to react stubbornly or defensively in class discussion, to suggest with your words or behaviors that you have nothing new to learn about the psychology of diversity, or to engage in demeaning or disrespectful behavior, you will have some work to do.

Class participation is not graded on the specific *content* of your comments. Instead, it involves your demonstrating a *process* of sincere and active striving for multicultural competence, along with engagement with the class and your own learning.

To give you some more ideas about how to engaged in appropriate discussion, below is a *modified* excerpt from Ponterotto's (1998) article on diversity education. Based on his and other educators' experiences, he summarized personal qualities and behaviors that seem to characterize promising students of diversity.

According to this thinking, people well on the way to diversity competence:

- exercise **openness and curiosity** about the psychology of diversity.
- demonstrate a **willingness** to examine their own socialization history—family and community upbringing, schooling, church, romantic relationships, friendships, and so forth.
- exhibit **courage to self-disclose** their own views, opinions, feelings, and questions in the group and class discussions.
- are **nondefensive** in their interpersonal interactions and **can absorb and consider feedback** regarding their own attitudes and expectations; this may be particularly difficult as we discuss intentional and especially *unintentional* sexist, racist, homophobic, and classist attitudes.
- are characterized by high levels of **resiliency, psychological hardiness, and cognitive complexity**. Studying the psychology of diversity over a semester can be quite intense, and many students will probably feel vulnerable at various points. The **ability to effectively process strong affective states** and to **consider alternate philosophies** of life in an open-minded fashion is extremely helpful.
- display a **commitment** to developing competence **in spite of the many challenges** that are involved in the process. This commitment extends to social justice issues and to a general appreciation for diversity and people from all kinds of life circumstances.
- make **active efforts** to learn more about diversity issues through additional course work, conferences and workshops, and independent reading and research. These students also commit to increasing their **personal contact** across cultures—traveling and establishing more diverse friendships and collegial bases (pp. 50-51).

Teaching scholars (e.g., Neff & Weimer, 1988) have suggested some of the following dimensions of effective class participation. Therefore your grade will be based also on the quality of your participation within these 6 dimensions:

- *Cognitive* (logic, knowledge, creativity)
- *Expressive* (clarity, fluency, conciseness)
- *Affective* (enthusiasm, attention, and demonstrated interest)
- *Preparation* (reflecting in advance on material necessary to participate effectively)
- *Contribution to the process of learning* (relevance, insight, thoughtfulness of participation)
- Reasonable *frequency* of participation

Graded Assignments:

Grading will also be based on the assignments chosen by class members on 1/13/09. Details about each assignment are (or will be) available on Blackboard. (Project Syllabus users can email either of us for copies of the assignments.)

Discussion Questions: On the assigned date, you are to bring to class answers to the discussion questions that accompany each reading. These questions will be posted on Blackboard. A total of 100 points are possible for these written answers. Points will be allocated as follows:

- 0-1 fails: 100 points
- 2 fails: 80 points
- 3-4 fails: 65 points
- 5-6 fails: 40 points
- 7 or more fails: 0 points

Grading for each reading (or set of readings) will be pass/marginal/fail. Answers must meet these criteria to earn a 'pass:' Papers who do not quite meet the standard will be assigned a marginal grade. Note that **TWO marginal** grades equal a **fail**. Here are the criteria:

- Turned in *during class* by due date (no late papers without 'late pass'). Papers with a 'late pass' may be turned in to the Department of Psychological Science office (NQ 104). *Papers placed under my office door will not be accepted. I also do not accept papers that are electronically submitted.*
- Answers must be based on the reading (or set of readings) and show evidence that the student has completed the reading (or set of readings).
- Each question is answered. The answer is thoughtful (i.e., more than a cursory answer). Factual questions (if applicable) must be answered correctly. Answers to opinion questions must show good critical reasoning. Information taken from the reading must be correct.
- Answers will *not* be graded on the opinion stated. That is, your opinion must be stated clearly and thoughtfully, but there is no expectation that you take a certain position (or agree with the author).
- Papers are typewritten and relatively free of grammatical and spelling errors. Please use 11 or 12 point font. Use .5" margins and do not include a title page.

Presentation on Person of Historical or Local Significance. The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize you with people who have made a difference in areas related to diversity. These people made contributions to psychology, our local community, and/or to our national history. Your task is to research the person assigned to you and make a brief presentation to the class. On your assigned due date, you will give a brief (5-minute) presentation to the class describing your psychologist's work/professional life and its relevance to our class. Assigned due dates (by individual students) are posted on Blackboard. A grading rubric is also posted on Blackboard. If you miss your scheduled day (without prior approval), this assignment **cannot** be made up. **This assignment is worth 10 points.**

Cultural Encounter: Students complete a cultural encounter and write about their experiences. They also will discuss their experience in class. The purpose of these cultural encounters is for students to experience what it may feel like to be "different." The idea is to be engaged in activities that are challenging that would not normally be a part of students' experiences. Students write a paper summarizing their experience and explain why they chose it. They are also expected to address what they learned from the experience. Finally, the experience must be related to readings and class discussion. Papers might also address whether the psychological literature adequately represents the actual experience. **This assignment is worth 35 points.**
Proposal Due Date: 2/3/09; Paper Due Date: 2/19/09.

Museum Visit: Students will visit a museum that addresses diversity or has a special exhibit on diversity. Possibilities are the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art or the Crispus Attucks Museum, both in downtown Indianapolis. Students will write a museum guide for future visitors or write a critique of the exhibit. Students might also visit a traditional museum and critique its attention to diversity. **This assignment is worth 35 points. Due Date: 3/19/09.**

Diversity Autobiography: The purpose of this assignment is to write a brief autobiographical sketch that includes an analysis of the students' significant experiences that have, in part, made them the person they are today. The paper should include cumulative experiences of "small things that add up." The analysis will include 3 of the following 5 dimensions of diversity (students' choice):

- Race or ethnicity
- Gender
- Social class
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability

The purpose of this paper is to take a critical, *reflective* look at life so far, rather than simply to report a series of events. The focus should be on analyzing and reflecting on *meanings* of students' experiences, not on a

summary of their life history. Be sure to make links with class material (readings, lecture, discussion), discussing ways in which life experiences do or do not mirror some class themes. **This assignment is worth 35 points. Due date: 4/7/09.**

Creative Project or Diversity Bulletin Board: Students will explore diversity issues through creative or expressive work, particularly *as they experience their journey* toward diversity competence or, working in groups, will create a Diversity Bulletin Board that will be displayed in the classroom and/or the psychology department. The general idea is to convey the importance of diversity to passersby. **This assignment is worth 35 points. Due Date: 4/28/09. Presentations: 4/28/09 & 5/6/09.**

Below are some possible formats for the Creative Project:

- Visual arts (e.g., a song, painting, sculpture, photography collection)
- Literary works (e.g., a story, poem, essay, autobiographical piece [as long as it is substantially different from the Diversity Autobiography assignment])
- Music (e.g., a song with or without lyrics)
- Dramatic arts (e.g., a short play, a monologue)
- Dance

The contribution must be an original work (not for another class, not pre-existing, but something created *specifically for this class*). Grading will certainly **not** be based on the technical or artistic brilliance of the contribution! Instead, the goal is for the students to open themselves up to learning and expressing something related to diversity issues, even if indirectly and abstractly. Grading will be based on (a) sincerity/honesty of your attempt to learn and express yourself through this project, (b) effort/engagement/care you put in (c) appropriate depth/length, and (d) a class presentation about your project.

To summarize, points are assigned as follows. Due dates are noted where applicable.

Assignment	Points	Due Date
Class Attendance	35	n/a
*Including Attendance Diversity Event		Next class day after event**
Class Participation	25	n/a
Class Presentation on Person of Significance	10	Varies by student
Pass/Marginal/Fail Reading Questions	100	See Blackboard
Topic Approval for Cultural Encounter	n/a	2/3
Cultural Encounter	35	2/19
Museum Visit	35	3/19
Diversity Autobiography	35	4/7
Creative Project	35	4/28
Creative Project Presentation	n/a	4/28 & 5/6
Total Points	310	

**Events must be completed by April 21

Important Policies and Resources

All assignments are to be neatly typed. The only exceptions to this requirement will be in-class assignments or others as announced in class. Assignments are to be submitted on paper. **I do not accept electronically submitted assignments.** Be kind to the environment; please use narrow margins and **do not** attach a separate title page or reference page.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Any instance of suspected cheating or plagiarism will be noted by your instructor, and the incident may be pursued according to the procedures outlined in Section VIII of the Student Code, available at <http://www.bsu.edu/sa/srcs/studentcode/>

Students with Disabilities: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. The website www.bsu.edu/dsd for the Office of Disabled Student Development is a great resource, with helpful tips for navigating successfully through school when you have a disability. DSD is located in the Student Center 307 or call (765) 285-5293. TDD users call (765) 285-2206.

Help with study and writing skills: Please note that the **Learning Center** has programs to help you sharpen your writing and study skills. Please stop by and visit them in NQ 323, call 285-3776, or visit the webpage at www.bsu.edu/web/learningcenter/.

General life/school/emotional concerns: Everyone gets stressed out sometimes and many people find that they could use some support to get through tough times. BSU students are entitled to **free, confidential** counseling services through the university's Counseling and Psychological Services Center, located in room 320 of Lucina Hall (phone 5-1736). For an after-hours emergency, please call 765-747-7330 or 765-285-1736. The center offers individual and group counseling, psychiatric consultation, and a number of workshops on various topics related to your life. Their website is <http://www.bsu.edu/students/cpsc/> For a listing of online and in-house resources (including academic resources to help you with things like study skills, time management, and career planning), visit <http://www.bsu.edu/students/cpsc/library/>.

Recording of any kind: Audiotaping, videotaping, photographing, or any other method of recording lectures or classroom discussions of any kind shall be done only with the **prior express permission** of the instructor. Recordings and other material distributed by the instructor shall be restricted to the personal use of the students enrolled in the course.

Observance of Religious Holidays: Ball State University is committed to the support of a pluralistic environment that respects the traditions and beliefs of all its members. Accordingly, should you wish to observe a religious holy day that conflicts with our course schedule, I will work with you to reschedule examinations and assignments or to provide information about missed course material as long as arrangements are made in advance.

Assignment schedule: The due dates for assignments may deviate slightly from the dates on the syllabus but will be announced in class and on Blackboard. **You are responsible for being aware of these changes, even if you are absent when they are announced.**