

Language & Culture
Course Syllabus
ELAN 5040/7040

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Meeting Time: 5:00-7:45
Location: Aderhold 102
Office Hours: By Appt.

Course Goals: To explore the nature of culture and gain an understanding of how one's own and others' assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped by culture; to gain insight into the connections among language, culture, and education; to gain first-hand knowledge with crossing cultural boundaries; to become conversant with classroom materials and techniques dealing with culture and cultural diversity.

*I use the term diverse to represent a wide array of differences including ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, class, sexual orientation and physical/mental abilities among others. Contrary to popular misperceptions, multicultural education includes straight White, middle class, Judeo-Christian students of European descent.

Course Structure: This course will involve a combination of lecture, discussion, and small group activities. We will strive to create a seminar environment through collaborative discussion.

Course Reading:

Noel, J. (2000). *Developing multicultural educators*. New York: Longman.

Valdes, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

A packet of required course readings is available from Bel-Jean Copy Center on Broad Street in Athens. Phone: 706-548-3648.

Academic Honesty Policy: Please note that assignments completed as part of the requirements for this course may not be applied to any other course, and vice-versa. All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. It is the responsibility of all members of the UGA community to develop and maintain a culture of honesty. Please see: <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi>.

Course requirements: Participation/Attendance. Students are expected to complete weekly readings before class and refer to them during class discussions. Students are expected to be fully prepared to substantively contribute to class discussion each week. It is critical that you be present for all sessions. Your grade will be lowered for each missed class, unless a medical excuse is provided. More than two medical excuses will not be allowed. Tardiness will also be figured into your attendance. (20%: 10% participation + 10% attendance.)

Cultural Autobiography: Each student will write a 4-8 page (4 pages undergrads/8 pages grads) cultural autobiography in which you will describe and analyze how you came to be who you are at this point in your life and what contributes to how you view your culture. You will identify salient characteristics in your life, which may include your gender, ethnicity, race, religion, etc. You may also choose to discuss particular people in your life or an event which symbolically reflects your identity. Papers should reference at least three course readings thus far, as discussion unfolds about various concepts of “culture,” as it relates to your own experiences. Papers should be double-spaced and written with 12 pt. font. **Due 2/17**. (20%)

Learning Log: Maintain a Learning Log throughout the course with at least one entry per week. Your entries should reflect what you are learning in the course, issues that are challenging, what you have gleaned from your readings, group discussions, and outside work. This is NOT a summary of the readings. The log will be printed out and turned in inside a folder on **3/3 (midterm)** and **4/28 (final class)**. (20%)

Boundary-Crossing Field Experience: For this element of the course, you will immerse yourself in an unfamiliar cultural environment. The purpose of this assignment is to give you a short firsthand experience with culture shock. There are many possibilities. For example, you might:

1. assist nurses at a hospital or nursing home.
2. attend services for a religious denomination unfamiliar to you.
3. attend social gatherings of a cultural group or association unfamiliar to you (e.g., Chinese Student Association meeting on a university campus, a Saturday language school in an immigrant community, meetings of a gay/lesbian organization, etc.)

You must spend at least four hours in this environment (not necessarily all on the same day). *Communicate to Dr. Sheppard where you plan to engage in this experience prior to fulfilling the requirement.* Keep a record of your experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and begin when you are considering possible locations. Watch especially for reactions such as “I wouldn’t go there!” or other feelings of discomfort. Reflect on how you respond to “foreign” environments. When you are done with this course requirement, reflect on the experience and how it ties in with things we’ve discussed in this course. Your response should be a three to five page paper describing what you did and where you went (including times/dates), how it made you feel, how your “culture shock” experience relates to topics from the course, and what analogies you can draw for the new immigrants’ culture shock. Writing in a descriptive narrative style is encouraged. The paper should be double spaced and written in 12 pt. font. **Due 3/24**. (20%)

Book review Con Respeto: Leading up to week 8, as part of our exploration of the experiences of various ethnic groups in the U.S. you will read *Con Respeto*. This paper should be 4-6 pages in length, 12 pt. font, double-spaced. Please begin with a full citation of the book (in APA format), then provide a BRIEF summary of the book (1-2 pages at

most). Your summary can describe, for instance, the structure of the book or chapters, the main themes, the conclusions, the style, etc. For the remainder of the paper, you will discuss how this book helps illustrate concepts we have addressed in this course. You may want to include brief excerpts, where appropriate. You should also explicitly address how this book may be helpful in preparing you for teaching immigrant students and dealing with their families. **Due 3/3. (20%)**

Contributions to a Safe Space: The content and the structure of this course tends to facilitate discussions concerning differences in cultural and racial identities, personal beliefs, political positions and ideologies. These conversations will likely engender passionate dialogue about issues close to many of our concepts of self and/or styles of teaching. **It is crucial that we each take full responsibility for creating a safe environment in which open and respectful dialogue can occur.** By safe environment I do not mean that we should not actively challenge each other on important issues because I find this to be, when done respectfully, a powerful learning tool. Rather, I mean that the course must be a place in which we can bring our (often differing) beliefs and discuss them without being judged as “naïve” or “ignorant” or pigeon-holed into categories such as “racist,” “p.c.,” or “sexist.” For this to happen, we will all need to work hard to remain respectfully tentative about others’ opinions (and critically self-reflective on our own), realizing that we all hold dear certain points of view and have unique experiences and perspectives on the world. **Remaining respectful of others is not only a request; it is a central requirement of this course. (110%)**

Graduate Students: In addition to the above requirements, each graduate student will lead the whole group discussion of the readings assigned for one class for 45 minutes. This leadership role will include giving the class an overview of the readings for that night via a PowerPoint presentation as well as engaging the class in discussion of the issues in the readings. You might bring in other resources relevant to your topic and/or engage us in activities to illustrate key concepts. Be creative! (20%)

Study of Cultural Group: For this assignment, each graduate student will investigate a different cultural group in order to learn more about the backgrounds and cultures of major ethnic groups immigrating to Georgia. Explicit information will be given to guide you in your research in a separate document. You will write up your findings in a short paper that you will distribute to each member of the class when you present your work in a 20-30 minute presentation. In your presentation, you need to use a visual. Or, you might ask a member of your assigned cultural group to speak to our class to help you out! (10%)

****Graduate students are also expected to participate in class discussions in an exemplary manner. That means contributing often and substantively to the conversation at hand and adding your expertise from your own work/research as relevant to our class.**