Psychology 4020 6.0: Advanced Seminar in Social Psychology

Fall 2014–Winter 2015
Section A: Wednesdays 11:30am–2:30pm in Vanier College 114

Instructor: Dr. Joni Sasaki
Office: Behavioural Science Building 330
Email: jsasaki@yorku.ca
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description
This course will cover advanced research in cultural psychology. By discussing both classic and current research in cultural psychology, we will explore the ways in which culture shapes the self, cognition, motivation, emotion, and social interactions, among other topics. Although it is not required that students in this course have PSYC 3350 (Cultural Psychology) as a prerequisite, it is highly recommended, as it will greatly help in understanding many of the topics in this course. Students will also learn to apply course material to their own original research ideas by producing a formal research proposal.

Course Learning Objectives
By the end of the session, I hope that you will: (1) understand how culture and the mind inevitably make each other up, (2) be able to describe theoretical and empirical evidence demonstrating the importance of culture in psychology, (3) gain firsthand experience with formulating a research question, designing an empirical study, and interpreting predicted results, and (4) be able to apply cultural psychological perspectives to other areas of research. This course also aims to improve broader, concrete skills, including critical thinking, comprehension, communication, and writing.

Grading and Deadlines
Your grade for the course will be based on the following components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaction papers</td>
<td>Due Tuesdays, 5pm</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading discussion</td>
<td>Date assigned in class</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop quizzes</td>
<td>2–3 per semester</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic proposal</td>
<td>Due Nov. 8, 5pm</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Due Dec. 10, 5pm</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods &amp; analysis worksheet</td>
<td>Due Feb. 7, 5pm</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>Last 4 weeks (assigned in class)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full written proposal</td>
<td>Due April 8, 5pm</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My grading policy follows York’s recommendations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Letter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90–100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>80–89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>75–79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70–74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>65–69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60–64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>55–59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50–54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>40–49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0–39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Prerequisites and Drop Deadline

All 4000-level psychology courses require the successful completion of the following prerequisites in order to enroll:

- Honours standing
- 84 completed credits
- PSYC 1010 6.0 with minimum grade of C
- PSYC 2020 3.0 or 2021 3.0
- PSYC 2030 3.0

Please note that you should drop from this course yourself if you do not meet these prerequisites to avoid losing fees and being de-enrolled later in the semester.

The last date to drop this course without receiving a grade is February 6, 2015.

Assignment Descriptions

Each assignment in this class is in place for a specific purpose, because it is important for students to gain concrete knowledge and skills for future schooling or a career. I hope to make these goals explicit by explaining them at the end of each assignment description below.

Reaction papers. To help you prepare for class, a reaction paper will be due the evening before each class (i.e., by Tuesdays at 5pm). Each paper should be 1–1.5 pages double-spaced and uploaded to the course Moodle website by the deadline. The goal for these papers is to demonstrate that you did the readings while, most importantly, showing that you are thinking critically about the bigger ideas in the articles, the way the research was conducted, and the appropriate inferences to draw from the results. In your paper, please discuss at least two of the articles by spending a few sentences (around 2–3) per article summarizing the main points. The bulk of the paper should be a careful reflection that achieves any of the following:

- Analyzes overarching issues or themes across multiple readings.
- Connects the readings to other areas of research in psychology.
- Discusses questions you had about the readings.
- Offers critiques of the research, including weaknesses in the study design or interpretation of results. Remember that criticisms should be constructive.
- Suggests ideas for future research based on the readings.
- Highlights points in the readings that you found particularly important or interesting and then expanding on why you thought they were interesting/important.

Each paper will be graded based on whether it shows that you made a serious effort to read and carefully think about the articles (Pass: 100%) or not (Fail: 0%). In addition, each passing paper will be evaluated for your personal benefit (i.e., not factored into your grade) as Weak, Acceptable, Strong, or Very strong. Late papers will not receive credit, although at your request I can still provide an evaluation. At the end of the course, your two lowest reaction paper grades will be dropped, so you essentially have two “free passes” to use if you are sick or are otherwise unable to write one. You are not required to submit a reaction paper for the week that you are one of the discussion leaders, and there a few weeks when a different assignment is required instead of the usual reaction paper, so please read the schedule for each week carefully.
**What is the purpose of reaction papers?** Strong writing skills are one of the most important concrete skills for students to gain from an undergraduate degree, and one of the best ways to master this skill is to write frequently and to challenge yourself to improve your writing over time. Reaction paper assignments are also designed to help you improve critical thinking skills as you read empirical journal articles and to help you prepare for class discussions.

**Class participation.** Everyone in the class will be expected to have done all the readings and participate in weekly discussions. Attendance will be taken in each class meeting because you cannot earn participation marks without attending class, and you will be graded based on the quality of your contributions. Good contributions are those that:

- Show you have carefully considered the important issues in the readings and previous discussions in class.
- Provide new insights that are also relevant to the topic at hand (note that long, off-track comments are not always the most constructive).
- Build on contributions from others in the class in order to move the discussion forward.
- Offer honest but respectful questions and criticisms of the readings.

**What is the purpose of class participation?** Class discussions make up the core of this course, and discussions work best when everyone participates. The discussions are meant to help students learn to share their thoughts clearly, and to provide a space where students feel comfortable responding to each other’s ideas. Productive discussions will ideally help everyone gain a stronger understanding of the material and also improve critical thinking. Although students may still learn from simply listening to discussions, the ideal is for everyone to try their best to contribute what they can in order to strengthen communication skills.

*Note: I understand that some students may find it more difficult to participate in class for different reasons. If you find that it is difficult for you, I encourage you to let me know so that I can provide some suggestions for ways to help you participate more comfortably.*

**Leading discussions.** For each class meeting, two students will be assigned to be discussion leaders. Discussion leaders should be prepared to first help the class briefly summarize the main points in the articles, especially the key findings or results, as well as any methodological points necessary in order to understand the results. Discussion leaders should try not to read summaries of the articles themselves; instead, they should try to ask questions to the class to first allow others to provide the main points from the articles. After summarizing the main points so that everyone is on the same page, the leaders should raise important questions or topics to facilitate discussion about the readings. The main goal for discussion leaders is to help the class think about the articles critically and gain a deeper understanding of the findings and implications of the research for social psychological theory and the real world. It can also be helpful for the class to have an activity to introduce the general topic or to learn more about a specific part of the readings, so I encourage discussion leaders to think of their own activities they might like to do. I sometimes have activities to potentially add on for certain topics. Discussion leaders do not need to discuss their plans with me beforehand, but they must discuss their plans for class together so they are prepared to help facilitate discussions as a team. Powerpoint is generally not permitted for discussions, although in special cases students can use it for visual aides (e.g., short video clips) as long as they check with me beforehand. Discussion leaders will receive a grade from 0–10 points after their assigned class
date, and they will receive a grade as a team. Remember that discussion leaders are not required to submit a reaction paper on the week they are scheduled to lead discussion, although I am happy to provide an evaluation (not factored into your grade) for those who choose to submit one.

**What is the purpose of leading discussion?** Sharing your ideas and facilitating an open and engaging discussion with other people is an important skill for many careers. Also, the best way to understand the material deeply yourself is to be prepared to help others understand it.

**Pop quizzes.** There will be 2–3 pop (i.e., surprise or non-scheduled) quizzes per semester based on readings assigned that week. The format will be multiple-choice and should take no more than 5–10 minutes. Quizzes will be administered, unscheduled, at the beginning of class. Any quizzes missed for regular absences cannot be given again. There are no other forms of examination in this course, so pop quizzes (worth 5% of your total grade) are the only real “tests” required.

**What is the purpose of pop quizzes?** Tests can motivate students to keep up with the readings and also remember the material. The benefits of testing for learning and retaining information are well established in education and psychology research (e.g., Abbott, 1909; Allen, Mahler, & Estes, 1969; Lachman & Laughery, 1968; McDaniel & Fisher, 1991; see Roediger & Karpick, 2006 for review). For example, see this recent New York Times article on “How Tests Make Us Smarter” by Dr. Henry Roediger.

**Research proposal.** The research proposal is meant to help you integrate what you’re learning in the class with your own interests by ultimately proposing an idea for a new study based on past research relevant to this course. The research proposal has five components that will be due at different points throughout the academic year: (1) topic proposal, (2) literature review, (3) methods and analysis worksheet, (4) oral presentation, and (5) full written proposal. Each component, except for the oral presentation, must be submitted electronically through Moodle.

1. **Topic proposal.** The topic proposal is a 2-page paper explaining what you would like to do for your research proposal, including a potential research question and summary of the relevant background literature that includes a minimum of 4 peer-reviewed academic journal articles. Please also include a reference section in APA style at the end of your paper. The purpose of the topic proposal is for you to have a chance to check your topic with me before moving on with the full proposal. Before deciding on a topic, you should do a thorough literature search on several potential topics in PsycINFO to first explore the available background research. Sometimes students decide to change their topic after they actually conduct a literature search, so be sure to give yourself enough time to think about your topic and do some research well before this assignment is due. You should choose a topic that has not been done before, but at the same time, there should be enough relevant background literature to support the idea you would (hypothetically) like to test. You are welcome to use the course syllabus as a starting place for ideas, or you can draw on a topic you enjoyed from another class and see if you can integrate it with topics in cultural psychology.

2. **Literature review.** The literature review is a 5-page paper clearly summarizing relevant background research while formalizing an argument for your full written proposal. You should reference a minimum of 10 peer-reviewed academic journal
articles in your literature review. The goal of this assignment is to become more familiar with articles relevant to your topic while further developing your research proposal idea, and you can also think of it as a draft of your introduction section for the full written proposal.

3. **Methods and analysis worksheet.** The methods and analysis worksheet will ask for information about your study methods (including participants, design, materials or measures, procedure) and data analysis plan. The purpose of the worksheet is to help you think about the details of how you would conduct your study and analyze the data, which will then help you prepare for your full written proposal. Because you will not actually collect or analyze data for this study, you will simply report your plans if you were to do so.

4. **Oral presentation.** Each student will present his or her research proposal to the class in a 15-min. powerpoint presentation. You should also be prepared to answer questions from the class and the instructor about your proposal. The goal of the oral presentation is to build formal presentation skills while giving you the opportunity to get feedback from the class before the full written proposal is due. Note that you are responsible for bringing your presentation on a USB drive on the day you are signed up to present.

5. **Full written proposal.** The full written proposal should be like a psychology journal article, except that it will have a data analysis plan and anticipated implications and limitations instead of Results and Discussion sections since you will not actually collect data. The paper should include a title page, abstract, introduction, method, data analysis plan, discussion, and references, all in APA style. It should be about 10 pages double-spaced, not including the title page, abstract, and reference section.

**What is the purpose of the research proposal?** The research proposal provides an opportunity for improving formal writing skills and critical thinking in research. It helps students exercise creativity by designing their own study, while also thinking carefully about scientific rigor in the research planning process.

**Academic Honesty and Other Important University Policies**

Academic honesty is important because the integrity of every student’s degree and knowledge from his or her education depends on an honest reflection of one’s own achievements (see [http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.htm)). Cases of suspected breach of academic honesty—including but not limited to cheating on quizzes, plagiarizing others’ work, or submitting work for one class to a second class—will be taken very seriously and handled according to the York University Senate Policy on Academic Honesty: [http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69).

In addition to the Academic Honesty Policy, all students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information ([http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/ascp/index-ascp.html](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/ascp/index-ascp.html)) available on the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy webpage under Reports, Initiatives, and Documents:

- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
• Student Conduct Standards
• Religious Observance Accommodation

Emailing Etiquette
When writing emails to professors and others within an academic setting, please remember that there are general norms for how to write them appropriately. Your email correspondence can leave a lasting impression at times, so it is important to keep in mind these tips for emailing etiquette:

• Check course materials, including the syllabus, to see if the information you need is there.
• Try to avoid overly informal language.
• Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
• Think carefully about your question first, and then explain it clearly and succinctly.
• Do your best to email well ahead of when you need an answer.

Good example:
Hello Dr. Sasaki,

I hope all is well and that you are enjoying your weekend. I have been looking over my past assignments, and I was wondering if I could make an appointment to see you during office hours to discuss how I can improve for my presentation and final paper. Tuesdays and Wednesdays would be the best days for me. Looking forward to hearing from you.

- [Student’s name]

Bad example:
hey prof, i was wondering if i could come and see you tmrw? i just started working on my presentation and ran into some problems and im kind of confused as to what i should do in regards to my topic.thx

Frequently Asked Questions:

• What should I do if I am sick or have an emergency? If you cannot make it to class due to illness or emergency, you should email me as soon as you are safely able to do so. Please provide me with a doctor’s note or other official documentation to excuse your absence. If you missed a pop quiz due to an excused absence, it is your responsibility to ask me about rescheduling a short-answer written version of the quiz as soon as possible. If you were unable to write a reaction paper on time due to illness, it is your responsibility to contact me about the possibility of an extension. You can find the university’s official form for your doctor to complete here: http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/exams/deferred/.

• What if I turn in an assignment late? Because it is very important to turn in your assignments on time, you should plan to submit your assignments with enough time before a given deadline to account for possible technical difficulties, travel plans, etc. Remember that you can always submit assignments early. Late submissions for reaction papers will not receive credit, but I will still provide feedback at your request. For research proposal assignments, there will be a 10% deduction from your grade per 24 hours or portion thereof past the deadline. Examples: 5 minutes late = 10% deduction; 18 hours late = 10% deduction; 25 hours late = 20% deduction, etc.)
Schedule of Topics
*Note: You should be able to download all assigned readings through York’s library system using the PsycINFO database or Google Scholar, except for the Shweder chapter and De Waal book excerpts in the first week, which I will upload on the course Moodle website. If you are uncertain about how to access PsycINFO, please be sure to ask one of the York librarians for assistance.

Fall Week 1, September 10 – Class overview

Fall Week 2, September 17 – What is culture, and why study it?

Fall Week 3, September 24 – Cultural dimensions

Optional readings:

Fall Week 4, October 1 – The self

Optional readings:

**Fall Week 5, October 8 – Cognition I: Systems of thought**

Optional readings:

**Fall Week 6, October 15 – Cognition II: Perspective taking, time, and space**

Optional readings:

**Fall Week 7, October 22 – Motivation**
Do assigned reading below, and note that the reaction paper is slightly different than usual.
In class we will discuss the articles and then watch a video. Instead of the usual reaction paper, your assignment is to write a 1–1.5-page paper integrating your reactions to the video with this week’s readings. Your paper should briefly summarize the readings and main points from the
video and also provide a reflection of how parts of the video relate to the readings. This paper will be due Saturday, October 25 at 5pm.


**Fall Week 8, October 29 – No class or assignments scheduled (Co-curricular day)**

**Fall Week 9, November 5 – Choice**


**Optional readings:**


**Fall Week 10, November 12 – No class scheduled (Individual meetings)**

No readings assigned for this week, and no reaction paper.

Instead of class, you will have an individually scheduled meeting with me on either Monday or Tuesday of that week to discuss your topic proposal. Since you will need to submit your topic proposal by Saturday, November 8 at 5pm, I can give you feedback during the meeting. You will need to be prepared to discuss your proposal at our meeting, and you will be able to clarify any questions you have about your topic.

**Fall Week 11, November 19 – Emotion**


**Optional readings:**

**Fall Week 12, November 26 – Current research and graduate school in cultural psychology (Guest lecturers: Maya Yampolsky and Rui Zhang)**

*No assigned readings for this week, and note that the reaction paper is different than usual.*

In class there will be two research presentations by York University researchers in cultural psychology. Instead of the usual reaction paper, your assignment this week is to write a 1–1.5 page paper in response to these presentations. You should take the opportunity in class to ask the researchers questions about their research to learn more about their work and also to help you with your paper. Your paper should briefly summarize the research presentations and provide a reflection of the talks. Your paper will be due *Saturday, November 29 at 5pm*. After the presentations, there will be an informal Q&A session about graduate school in psychology.

**Fall Week 13, December 3 – Coping and social support**


**Optional readings:**
**Winter Week 1, January 7 – Relationships**


**Optional reading:**


**Winter Week 2, January 14 – Morality**


**Optional readings:**


**Winter Week 3, January 21 – Religion as culture**

*Bring your literature review and completed draft of worksheet to class.*

In class we will discuss the assigned readings, and then you will go over your literature review and draft of your worksheet in pairs or groups. You will also have the opportunity to ask me any questions you have about your planned methods and analyses for your research proposal.


**Optional readings:**


**Winter Week 4, January 28 – Region as culture**


Optional reading:


**Winter Week 5, February 4 – Social class as culture**


Optional readings:


**Winter Week 6, February 11 – Multiculturalism and acculturation**


Optional readings:


**Winter Week 7, February 18 – No class or assignments scheduled (Reading week)**

**Winter Week 8, February 25 – Origins of cultures**


**Optional reading:**


**Winter Week 9, March 4 – Cultural neuroscience and genetics**


**Optional readings:**


Winter Week 10, March 11 – Student oral presentations

Winter Week 11, March 18 – Student oral presentations

Winter Week 12, March 25 – Student oral presentations

Winter Week 13, April 1 – Student oral presentations