

PSY 344. Psychology and Culture

SDSU – Spring 2025 – Schedule # 3242

Class Meetings

Class Day and Time: Tuesday 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Class Location: Student Services West (SSW) 1500

Mode: Hybrid

Platform: Canvas

Instructor: Dr. Thierry Devos

Preferred pronouns: he/him

Phone: (619) 594-6911

Email: tdevos@sdsu.edu (best way to reach me)

Office Hours: Thursday 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM or by appointment

Office Hours Location: Life Sciences South (LSS) 273 or Zoom Link

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Maria Arantes

Email: marantes4065@sdsu.edu

Office Hours: TBD

Office Hours Location: TBD

Course Content and Purpose

The goal of the course is to **introduce you to the field of cultural psychology**. This course will explore how culture influences human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The relations between culture and psychology are both complex and profound. In contrast to the view that psychological processes are essentially the same everywhere, cultural psychologists examine how psychological processes are inextricably linked to specific social, cultural, and historical contexts.

This course provides an overview of theory and research on psychology and culture. We will be considering a number of complex questions including: What are key dimensions along which cultures vary? How do cultures change or persist over time? What methodologies can we use to study culture in psychology? How do “universal” laws in psychology vary by situation and culture? How do culture and self make each other up? How do various ways of thinking differ across cultures? Does the definition of what is moral or fair vary across cultures? What happens when people move to another culture? The course will be taught from a research perspective. We will identify answers to these questions that are currently being proposed by the research community.

Student Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Use concepts, principles, theories, and research findings to describe and analyze how cultural contexts influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviors;
- Analyze differences and similarities in psychological dynamics across cultural contexts;
- Analyze the dynamics coming into play during intercultural contact and identify biased vs. sensitive ways to interact with people of diverse cultural backgrounds;

- Consider various perspectives or levels of analysis in your thinking about diversity and multiculturalism.

More broadly, the following student learning outcomes for the Psychology Liberal Arts Major are relevant to this course:

- SLO 1.1 Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology
- SLO 2.2 Evaluate knowledge claims
- SLO 3.1 How does psychology inform our understanding of culture and diversity
- SLO 3.2 How do psychological findings differ across cultures
- SLO 3.3 Describe ethical considerations as they apply to culture and diversity
- SLO 4.2 Demonstrate effective (general/non-APA-style) writing
- SLO 5.1 Describe how psychology information and skill sets can be applied to law, business, health care, education, and other career opportunities
- SLO 5.3 Develop general skills that can be used in a range of workplace environments (e.g., excel, word, stats skills, writing skills, communication)

Diversity and Inclusion

As an instructor, my goal is that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives benefit from and feel included in this course. I view the diversity of experiences and perspectives that students bring to this class as a resource and a strength we can all learn from. It is my intention to present course material that is respectful of diversity based on gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, national origin, religion, political orientation, and other background characteristics. Your suggestions on how to improve the value of diversity and inclusion in this course are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students.

Classroom Atmosphere

We should work together to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. I strongly encourage active participation in the classroom; you should feel comfortable asking questions and contributing to class discussions. Throughout this course, we will be discussing a variety of sensitive and controversial issues. Thus, it will be extremely important to keep an open mind, to listen to others' viewpoints, and to tolerate a different opinion than your own. I expect everyone to show respect for each other and to refrain from actions that might reduce the quality of students' learning experiences.

Prerequisite

Before taking this course, you must have already completed PSY101 (Introductory Psychology) or an equivalent Introductory Psychology course from another school. This pre-requisite is designed to ensure that students have the adequate skills and experience to do well in the class and to avoid being at a disadvantage in the course relative to those who have taken Introductory Psychology.

Course Structure and Conduct

The course includes a series of **six modules**. Each module is devoted to a different topic (see *Schedule of Topics, Activities, and Examinations*). We will learn about these topics in several ways including interactive presentations, demonstrations, exercises, discussions, readings, videos, and assignments. Through a mix of instructional methods, students will assimilate and integrate new ideas and develop problem-solving skills.

Typically, each module will include the following:

- **Learning Objectives:** A description of the specific learning objectives;
- **Face-To-Face Class Meetings (on Tuesdays):** Two class meetings during which we will cover a significant amount of material in an interactive format lectures (attendance is expected and strongly recommended);
- **Activities:** Four activities (e.g., exercise, short essay, demonstration, discussion board, quiz, etc.) completed online;
- **Readings:** Two assigned readings;
- **Dig Deeper:** Additional (optional) resources relevant to the module;
- **Review Sheet:** A review sheet listing key constructs you need to master.

This course is a **blended course**. This means that we will conduct instructional activities both in class and online. This course offers some flexibility in the sense that online activities will be completed at a time convenient to you. Even more important, the online activities will require that you **play a very active role in the learning process**. In this course, online instruction does not mean passively listening to recorded lectures.

Online activities will be completed on Canvas and are designed to help you assimilate and master course material. New course materials will be released on Mondays each week and all activities for the week must be **completed by Friday (11:59 PM Pacific Time)**. To stay on track, log in on Canvas several times each week and work on portions of the course material (e.g., complete an activity or do the readings). An estimate of the amount of time necessary to complete each online task will be provided on Canvas. Keep in mind that there are individual differences among students/learners (it may take some of you more or less time to complete some of these tasks).

Course Materials

This course will use the **Canvas** learning management system. To access the site for this course, sign in at canvas.sdsu.edu using your SDSUId. Please make sure you adjust your notification settings in such a way that you receive ALL announcements regarding this class. All Canvas email notifications will be delivered to your SDSU email address. You can add additional email addresses and sign up for text/mobile app notifications via the settings in your Canvas Profile, and then adjust your notifications in the Notifications Tab. Canvas notifications are system wide and cannot be adjusted by course. If you have technical issues with Canvas, please contact the SDSU Canvas 24/7 support line at (619) 483-0632.

Slides used as a support for class meetings will be available on line before class meetings.

For each module, **required readings** will be made available (at no cost) on Canvas. There is no textbook assigned for this course.

Specific additional resources (articles, videos, websites, blogs, etc.) for each module will be provided under **"Dig Deeper"** menus.

IMPORTANT: Material posted on Canvas (slides, videos, activities, readings, etc.) is only for students enrolled in a section of PSY 344 - Psychology and Culture taught by Dr. Thierry Devos at SDSU. By accessing or downloading these documents, you agree (1) not to share them with anyone and (2) not to post them on the Internet.

Course Assessment and Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

Tests and Final Exam (60% = 3 x 100 pts)

Three tests and a final exam will be taken online (see *Schedule of Topics, Instructional Activities and Examinations*). Each test covers two modules, is worth 100 pts, and will consist of 50 multiple choice questions (1 correct answer = 2 pts). For these tests, you need to know material covered in lectures, activities, and assigned readings. The format of the final exam is similar to that of the tests (50 multiple choice questions), but the final exam covers all six modules (comprehensive exam). Only the three best scores (3 tests or 2 tests + final exam) will be taken into account for the final grade. If you miss a test, your grade will be based on the two remaining tests and the final exam. If you took the three tests, the final exam is optional.

Activities (40% = 200 pts)

You will be asked to complete activities (**exercises, short essays, demonstrations, discussion boards**, etc.). Each activity is worth between 5 and 10 pts depending on the amount of work it requires. Specific instructions for each activity will be provided on Canvas. You can also earn activity points for completing a short quiz prior to each test (3 x 5 pts), for creating a student profile (5 pts), and for completing a mid-semester teaching evaluation (5 pts). Please make sure you **follow carefully instructions** and pay attention to **deadlines** to complete these activities (see *Schedule of Topics, Instructional Activities, and Examinations*).

Deadlines and Late Submissions

All deadlines are provided on the syllabus (pdf version) and you are given plenty of time/flexibility to complete coursework. If you miss a deadline, you can submit work late for **partial credit** (50% of the maximum total of points) up to one week after the deadline (i.e., following Friday by 11:59 pm). This applies to all graded activities except the tests and final exam. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work was submitted successfully on Canvas. Penalties for late submissions will not be waived based on screenshots of computer files (or similar documents).

Grading Scale

In line with University Policies, grades are defined as follows: A (outstanding achievement; available for the highest accomplishment); B (praiseworthy performance; definitely above average); C (average; awarded for satisfactory performance; the most common undergraduate grade); D (minimally passing; less than the typical undergraduate achievement); F (failing). Plus/minus grading is utilized at the discretion of the instructor. Final grades will be based on an absolute scale (not a curve). Thus, your grade will not be affected by how well (or how poorly) other students perform in the course.

Percentage	Grade
93-100	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
77-79.99	C+
73-76.99	C
70-72.99	C-
67-69.99	D+
63-66.99	D
60-62.99	D-
< 60	F

Student Academic Success

For essential information about student academic success, please see the [SDSU Student Academic Success Handbook](#). This document includes important information and resources about campus deadlines, advising, tutoring, well-being, as well as rights and responsibilities.

Communication

The best way to reach me is via email (tdevos@sdsu.edu). I will try to respond within 24-48 hours to emails. For quick questions, the turnaround time may be much shorter. Of course, you are welcome to talk to me after class, during office hours, or to schedule a meeting at a time convenient for both us. My preferred gender pronouns are he/him. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. Please let me know early in the semester if you would prefer an alternate name and/or gender pronoun.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Honesty: Academic integrity is one of the fundamental principles of a university community. San Diego State University expects the highest standards of academic honesty from all students. Cheating and plagiarism represent violations of academic integrity and will not be tolerated in this class. San Diego State University defines cheating and plagiarism to include: (1) unauthorized assistance on an examination, (2) falsification or invention of data, (3) unauthorized collaboration on an academic exercise, (4) submitting work, either in part or in whole, completed by another as one's own, (5) misappropriation of research materials, (6) unauthorized access of an instructor's files or computer account, and (7) any other serious violation of academic integrity as established by the instructor. Please click [here](#) to read the University policy.

Students agree that by taking this class they will uphold the principles of academic integrity. If your academic integrity is not maintained in this class, you will be reported to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities and to the Chair of the Department of Psychology. Furthermore, you will receive a zero on the exam or quiz in question, in accordance with the SDSU academic integrity policy. A second instance of academic dishonesty will result in failure of the course.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Many tools that rely on generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to produce content (text, images, videos, etc.) are now available (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Meta AI, Claude, etc.). Below is my position regarding the use of these tools in the context of this course.

For weekly activities: These activities are designed to help you assimilate the material. The process of completing the activity is one of the ways in which you will understand and master the material. With that in mind, if the AI tools expand your knowledge, skills, and perspectives, using them is probably appropriate. However, if these tools provide “shortcuts” in the sense that they make you think less, they do the work for you, using them is not appropriate. In other words, if the tools help you clarify a point, improve your writing, consider alternative perspectives, understand the limitations of some ideas, etc., that is consistent with the goal of this course. Anytime you feel like using the tools conflicts with the learning goals, take it as a clue that you are fooling yourself.

A major limitation of most of these tools is that they do not provide the specific sources used to generate the content. In addition, depending on how you frame the question/prompt, the tools will produce very different outputs. Thus, always critically assess the outputs and do not take them as scientific evidence.

Often the activities will ask you to reflect on personal experiences. AI tools do not have access to these experiences. You have this rich cultural knowledge and expertise. Rely on it rather than let a machine dictate or shape your thinking.

For some activities, you will explicitly be asked to use an AI chatbot such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Meta AI, or Claude. Depending on the chatbot you want to use, you may be asked to create an account or to log in using your email address. The FREE version of these tools will always be good enough in the context of this course. In other words, my recommendation is: DO NOT purchase a subscription for a more advanced version of these tools.

For assigned readings: You are welcome to use a tool such as [ChatPDF](#) to help (e.g., extract main ideas, ask questions or clarifications, etc.). This might be particularly useful if, for some reason, you find the readings challenging.

For the three tests and the final exam: Using AI tools is **not allowed** as it would be considered “unauthorized assistance on an examination.”

Please understand that what is stated here only applies to this course and that I may change my position over the course of the semester if I realize that it interferes with the learning goals.

Student Concerns, Problems, and Complaints

If at any time there are issues with the conduct of this course, including lectures, exams, and quizzes, please see me immediately. We will work together to address your concerns. If this does not satisfy your concerns, you must follow the appropriate [procedures for registering a complaint](#). Speak first to me. If you are still not satisfied, contact the Psychology Department Chair, Dr. Paul Gilbert (pgilbert@sdsu.edu). If you are still not satisfied, contact the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in the College of Sciences, Dr. Estralita Martin (esmartin@mail.sdsu.edu). If your concerns remain unresolved, you may contact the University Ombudsman. Students must exhaust informal levels of redress before filing a formal grievance with the [Student Grievance Committee](#).

Land Acknowledgement

For millennia, the Kumeyaay people have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony. As members of the San Diego State University community, we acknowledge this legacy. We promote this balance and harmony. We find inspiration from this land, the land of the Kumeyaay.

Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Examinations

<i>In-Class</i>	<i>Instructional Activity</i>	<i>Due Date*</i>
Module 1. Mapping and Understanding Cultural Diversity		
Tuesday 1/21	Setting the Stage: What Is this Course About?	
	Activity - Introduce Yourself - Create Student Profile	Friday 1/24
	Activity - Personal Growth and Career Readiness (Part 1)	Friday 1/24
Tuesday 1/28	Cultural and Psychological Variations	
	Activity - Do We Have Our Own Culture?	Friday 1/31
	Activity - Is It Universal or Cultural?	Friday 1/31
Tuesday 2/4	Psychological Universals and Dimensions of Culture	
	Activity - Babies: Differences and Similarities	Friday 2/7
	Activity - Dimensions of Culture	Friday 2/7
Module 2. Cultural Perspectives on the Self		
Tuesday 2/11	Self-Definitions	
	Activity - Independent vs. Interdependent Self	Friday 2/14
	Activity - The Art of Choosing - Dr. Sheena Iyengar	Friday 2/14
Tuesday 2/18	Acculturation and Multicultural Identities	
	Quiz - Preparation for Test 1	Friday 2/21
	TEST 1 – Modules 1 & 2 – Online	Friday 2/21
	[75 min max – Window to complete: Wed 2/19 – Fri 2/21]	
Module 3. Cultural Evolution		
Tuesday 2/25	Culture and Human Nature	
	Activity - So Human, So Chimp	Friday 2/28
	Activity - Functions of Culture	Friday 2/28
Tuesday 3/4	Cultural Dynamics	
	Activity - Re-Production of Culture	Friday 3/7
	Activity - Global Increases in Individualism	Friday 3/7
	Mid-Semester Teaching Evaluation	Tuesday 3/11

Module 4. Social Norms and Behaviors

Tuesday 3/11	Morality and Ethics	
	Activity - Cultural Relativism vs. Ethnocentrism	Friday 3/14
	Activity - Moral Foundations and Political Identity	Friday 3/14
Tuesday 3/18	Interpersonal Relations	
	Quiz - Preparation for Test 2	Friday 3/21
	TEST 2 - Modules 3 & 4 – Online	Friday 3/21
	[75 min max - Window to complete: Wed 3/19 – Fri 3/21]	

Module 5. Culture and Cognition

Tuesday 3/25	Culture and Cognitive Processes	
	Activity - Analytic vs. Holistic Thinking Styles	Friday 3/28
	Activity - Linguistic Relativism	Friday 3/28
	SPRING BREAK	
Tuesday 4/8	Multicultural Minds	
	Activity - Cultural Being	Friday 4/11
	Activity - Cultural Perspective on COVID-19	Friday 4/11
Tuesday 4/15	Global Perspectives Symposium	
	Activity - International Student	Friday 4/18
	Activity - Multicultural Experiences and Prosocial Behaviors	Friday 4/18

Module 6. Diverse Societies

Tuesday 4/22	Contrasting Perspectives on Diversity	
	Activity - Conceptions of National Identity	Friday 4/25
	Activity - Personal Growth and Career Readiness (Part 2)	Friday 4/25
Tuesday 4/29	Intercultural Contact	
	Quiz - Preparation for Test 3	Friday 5/2
	TEST 3 - Modules 5 & 6 – Online	Friday 5/2
	[75 min max - Window to complete: Wed 4/30 – Fri 5/2]	
Tuesday 5/6	Review Session	
	FINAL EXAM - Online	Tuesday 5/13
	[75 min max - Window to complete: Mon 5/12 – Tue 5/13]	

* Unless specified otherwise, the deadline to submit coursework is 11:59 PM on the due date.