Cross-Cultural Psychology in Spanish Context
PSYC-3060 (3 credits)

Spain: Choose Your Track—Climate, Psychology, Economics OR Cinema

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course provides essential knowledge of cross-cultural psychology principles necessary for meaningful engagement with Spanish society and personal cultural adaptation. The course examines the complex relationship between culture and psychological processes through five interconnected modules that integrate theoretical frameworks from cross-cultural psychology with experiential learning in Seville. Through lectures, discussions, field visits, and cultural immersion activities, students will analyze how cultural factors influence human behavior, development, and mental health, with particular attention to Spanish and Andalusian contexts. The course explores how cultural backgrounds shape psychological phenomena, including identity formation, family dynamics, acculturation processes, and approaches to mental health in a multicultural society. Students will ethically engage directly with Spanish communities, local psychologists, and cultural organizations to develop analytical tools for understanding how culture, psychology, and personal experience intersect in contemporary Spain.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- **Apply** major theoretical frameworks from cross-cultural psychology to analyze cultural influences on behavior and development in Spanish contexts
- **Critically** analyze Spain's multicultural society and evaluate approaches to cultural diversity, immigration, and regional identity within European and global contexts
- **Assess** how cultural factors influence psychological processes, mental health practices, and therapeutic relationships in Spanish healthcare systems
- **Evaluate** the complex relationship between individual identity, cultural adaptation, and psychological well-being using comparative cultural perspectives
- **Demonstrate** skills in cross-cultural communication and cultural competence through engagement with diverse Spanish communities and perspectives

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

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Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualization*, and *active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Texts

See the course schedule for a full list of reading assignments.

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence -- such as illness -- must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

- **In-Class Participation and Field Engagement (10%)**
Active participation in class discussions, field activities, interactions with Spanish communities, and engagement with guest speakers. Evaluation based on quality of contributions, critical thinking skills, respectful cultural engagement, and ability to connect field experiences to theoretical concepts.

- **Cross-Cultural Adaptation Reflection Portfolio (30%)**
Students create a portfolio documenting their personal cross-cultural adaptation process throughout the semester. This portfolio serves as both academic exercise and personal growth documentation, integrating weekly reflection journals that apply course theories to their own cultural adaptation experiences in Seville. Students analyze their personal reactions to cultural differences, changes in their assumptions and worldview, and application of acculturation theories to their own journey. The portfolio includes a photo-documentation component featuring 8-10 photographs of their personal cultural experiences in Seville (places visited, cultural events attended, daily life moments), each accompanied by 200-word reflective captions connecting their experiences to course theoretical frameworks. The portfolio culminates in a 1,500-word synthesis essay analyzing their personal transformation through the lens of cross-cultural psychology theories covered in the course.

- **Comparative Cultural Analysis Project (30%)**
Students conduct a mini comparative analysis examining a specific psychological phenomenon (such as family relationships, communication styles, concepts of mental health, or educational approaches) between Spanish culture and their home culture. This project relies on existing research, media analysis, and students' own cultural backgrounds rather than new data collection. The project concludes with a ~1500-word analytical paper that applies cross-cultural psychology theories to understand cultural variations and includes practical implications for cross-cultural interactions.

- **Cultural Competence Case Study Analysis (20%)**
Students analyze real-world scenarios involving cross-cultural psychological challenges in Spanish contexts to develop practical skills. Students select from provided case studies covering hypothetical but realistic situations such as therapeutic relationships across cultures, educational challenges for immigrant children, or workplace cultural conflicts. The assignment requires theoretical application using multiple course frameworks to analyze the cultural dynamics at play, followed by solution development proposing culturally competent interventions that demonstrate understanding of Spanish cultural contexts. Students engage in peer consultation through structured case discussion sessions before completing a written analysis (1,200 words) that demonstrates mastery of cultural competence principles and their practical application in Spanish multicultural settings.

Grading Scale

94-100% A 90-93% A- 87-89% B+ 84-86% B 80-83% B- 77-79% C+ 74-76% C 70-73% C- 67-69% D+ 64-66% D below 64 F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. For an interactive course to succeed, you must be present, on time, and have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone. Moreover, the content of this course is learned collaboratively, meaning that when a student isn't here, they take away from everyone's opportunity to learn. The only way to maximize our collective learning potential is if we are all here contributing. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program

- Submit assignments on time: SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field- based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

- Bring your curiosity: Ask questions in class. Engage the guest lecturers, as these are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak. Remember, there are no foolish questions, and your inquiries might help others in class who have similar ideas/thoughts. By actively participating and showing curiosity, you demonstrate respect for our guests and contribute to creating a dynamic learning environment for everyone.

- Maintain academic Integrity: As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:

   - Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
   - Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?
   - Did you answer "yes" to any of the above questions? If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment

- Principled Disagreement: Learning often involves discomfort. Some discomfort can facilitate personal and collective growth. You, your peers, guest lecturers, instructors, and local constituents, have diverse experiences, values, beliefs, affiliations, and identities. Reflecting on these differences can be emotionally challenging, even when it deepens self-awareness and mutual understanding. In this course, we aim to encourage brave spaces were principled disagreement is encouraged rather than avoiding difficult conversations. *This is challenging work, and we will inevitably make mistakes.* Our goal is to thoughtfully critique ideas rather than attacking individuals. We aim to embrace productive discomfort and minimize unproductive discomfort, striving for principled disagreement.

- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a brave space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.

- Our social identities – Our social identities - race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, mental and physical ability, size, national origin, citizenship status, and more – shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated. They also influence what knowledge and learning is deemed

valuable and legitimate. To challenge hegemonic paradigms and perspectives, this course intentionally includes readings, topics, videos, and assignments from authors and perspectives of diverse backgrounds. However, there may be gaps we have overlooked. Your constructive feedback is always welcome on how to make this course more inclusive and transformative.

- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services,](#) [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Theoretical Foundations - Understanding Culture and Psychology

This module establishes theoretical foundations for understanding how culture influences psychological processes. Students explore definitions of culture, race, and ethnicity while examining different approaches to cross-cultural research. Class sessions may include visits to cultural institutions that

demonstrate Spanish cultural values, exploration of sites representing Andalusian regional identity, and meetings with local psychologists and cultural organizations involved in cross-cultural practice.

Readings:

- Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Breugelmans, S. M., Chasiotis, A., & Sam, D. L. (2011). *Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* (Chapters 1-3)
- Bohannan, L. (1966). "Shakespeare in the Bush." *Natural History*
- Betancourt, H., & López, S. R. (1993). "The Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race in American Psychology." *American Psychologist*, 48(6), 629-637

Module 2: Development, Identity, and Socialization Across Cultures

This module examines how cultural factors influence human development, identity formation, and socialization processes, with focus on Spanish and Andalusian contexts. Students analyze child-rearing practices, family dynamics, cultural identity development, and how language shapes psychological processes within Spain's multicultural landscape. Class sessions may include visits to Spanish family centers, educational institutions, cultural centers preserving regional traditions, and workshops on analyzing cultural influences on development and identity.

Readings:

- Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Breugelmans, S. M., Chasiotis, A., & Sam, D. L. (2011). *Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* (Chapters 4-7)
- Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). "A Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity."*Journal of College Student Development*, 41(4), 405-414
- Rogoff, B. (2003). "Orienting concepts and ways of understanding the cultural nature of human development." In *The Cultural Nature of Human Development* (pp. 3-36)
- Sussman, N. M. (2002). Sojourners to another country: The psychological rollercoaster of cultural transitions. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1067

Module 3: Migration, Acculturation, and Mental Health

This module analyzes acculturation processes, migration experiences, and cultural approaches to mental health within Spanish contexts. Students examine how cultural factors influence psychological well-being, therapeutic relationships, and help-seeking behaviors. Class sessions may include visits to community wellness centers, immigrant integration services, intercultural mediation centers, and meetings with Spanish mental health professionals working in multicultural contexts.

Readings:

- Berry, J. W. (2005). "Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 697-712
- Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Breugelmans, S. M., Chasiotis, A., & Sam, D. L. (2011). *Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* (Chapters 8-9)
- Fagundo-Rivera, J., García-Lozano, M. S., Portero-Prados, F. J., Romero-Castillo, R., Badillo-Sánchez, N., & Fernández-León, P. (2025). Barriers to healthcare access for irregular

immigrants after their arrival in Spain: A systematic review. *European Journal of Public Health*, *ckaf042*. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaf042
- Pérez-Urdiales, I., Goicolea, I., San Sebastián, M., Irazusta, A., & Linander, I. (2019). Sub-Saharan African immigrant women's experiences of (lack of) access to appropriate healthcare in the public health system in the Basque Country, Spain. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, *18*(1), 59. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-0958-6

Module 4: Cultural Competence and Contemporary Applications

This final module examines cultural competence in professional psychology practice, intercultural communication, and contemporary challenges in multicultural Spain. Students analyze how globalization, European integration, and social change affect cultural identity and psychological practice while developing practical skills for cross-cultural work. Class sessions may include visits to professional psychology practices, international organizations, cultural competence training centers, and meetings with practitioners working in multicultural contexts.

Readings:

- Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Breugelmans, S. M., Chasiotis, A., & Sam, D. L. (2011). *Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* (Chapters 10-11)
- Liu, S., & Gallois, C. (2014). Integrating intercultural communication and cross-cultural psychology: Theoretical and pedagogical implications. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1129