Outline and Objectives

What is time? What is the nature of the self? How does language reflect perceived reality? These and other questions have been addressed by Western philosophers for centuries, and more recently by psychologists and linguists. However, because the conclusions of many academic approaches are culture-bound, they cannot be shown to be true for all places and times. Cognitive anthropology is the comparative study of how humans form concepts and classify the world around them. This course begins from the central premise that the comparative study of concepts is fundamental to understanding the human mind and its interaction with language and the material world. We will examine the ways in which cognition is similar and different cross-culturally, without assuming ahead of time the degree to which it is similar or different.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:
- Identify and employ key theoretical approaches in the comparative cross-cultural analysis of concepts.
- Analyze and evaluate peer-reviewed research articles in cognitive anthropology and linguistics.
- Collect data using cognitive-anthropological methodologies to evaluate concepts in a comparative framework.
- Demonstrate interdisciplinary analytical writing skills across the nexus of linguistics, psychology, and anthropology.

Why We are Here

We are here to ask some interesting questions about the intersection of language, mind, and culture, and to develop our critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. The most important thing you need to be successful in this class is intellectual curiosity. Find questions that interest you, and find ways to answer them, and everything else will fall into place. Attendance and doing the readings are not enough to be successful. My goal is to find out what interests you and then to help you do the best you possibly can to learn about it.

For this class to work, we all (instructor and students) have expectations and responsibilities. I expect you to do all the readings before attending class, to bring readings with you to class, to attend and participate in discussions, to submit work in a timely fashion, to seek to acquire both
skills and knowledge, to ask for my assistance when needed, and to be courteous to peers and to me.

In return, I have the responsibility to treat you fairly, to be available for assistance and advice in office hours or by appointment, to take your interests and objectives into account, to return evaluated work speedily with helpful comments, and to be courteous when interacting with you and your classmates.

Please turn off phones and refrain from using social media during class. It's fine if you want to use a laptop in class to take notes or consult articles, but while in class, you need to devote your attention to the course material and avoid distractions.

**Prerequisites**

Undergraduate: ANT/LIN 3310 (Language and Culture) or PSY/LIN 3080 or ANT/LIN 5320. For undergraduates, an introductory course is essential to get you to the point where you are able to participate meaningfully in an advanced course like this one.

Graduate: None. Graduate students in anthropology, linguistics, psychology or other related fields are welcome to participate regardless of whether they have taken any specific course.

**Course Structure**

This class is two hours and forty-five minutes in length, broken down roughly as follows each week (allowing for some flexibility):

a) Lecture / Introduction by Dr. Chrisomalis (15 mins.)
b) Class discussion of two articles (60 mins.)
c) Break (15 mins.)
d) Class discussion of two articles (60 mins.)
e) Summary (10 mins.)
f) Introduction to next week (5 mins.)

**Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and cheating are serious forms of academic dishonesty that will not be tolerated under any circumstances. If you use ideas or phrases from sources such as books, articles, websites, etc.) without giving credit to the author(s), this is plagiarism. Any written work submitted for this course may not have been previously or simultaneously submitted for another course. University policy strictly prohibits plagiarism and cheating and you can be subject to disciplinary action for it. If you need help clarifying what you need to cite, and where, please see me for help.

Please note that you are free to record my lectures for your own use, but you are not permitted to redistribute them electronically. You do not need to cite or credit my lectures when preparing written material.
Disabilities

If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TTY: telecommunication device for the deaf; phone for hearing impaired students only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

Grading

Deadlines are firm and no extensions will be given without a medical note. Grading is not on a curve, but I reserve the right to increase (but not decrease) all student grades equally, if necessary. A penalty of 10% of the assignment's value per day, including weekends, applies for late material. No work will be accepted after the other students' papers have been returned. You may submit material by email by the due date to avoid late penalties, but you must provide a hard copy, identical to the original, in order to have your work graded.


Graduate: A: 93-100%; A-: 90-92%; B+: 87-89%; B: 83-86%; B-: 80-82%; C+: 77-79%; C: 73-76%; C-: 70-72%; F: 0-69%

Withdrawal

It is your obligation to be aware of the university’s deadlines for withdrawing from classes. Normally you cannot get reimbursements of tuition after the drop/add period. If you petition to withdraw officially after the first month of classes, you must also contact me to request permission. I am then asked by the university to assign you a grade: WP (Withdrawal-Passing), WN (Withdrawal-No Work), WF (Withdrawal-Failing), or to deny the request. If you do not contact me to request permission, I will deny your request.

Readings

Big textbooks are overpriced and rarely of any value to you after you finish this course. There are no texts to buy for this course! Instead, we will use a selection of articles from major journals, which will be available for download on the course Blackboard site. We will be doing approximately 50-75 pages per week of reading, usually four articles. Another advantage of using electronic articles is that we can add, remove, or change readings without costing you time and money. The readings provide information not covered in class, and so it is essential that you read them before class. You should print them or have them available on a laptop or tablet during class.
**Evaluation**

Undergraduates in the course will be evaluated based on ten reading responses, a data collection assignment, and a take-home examination, as well as on your participation in discussions. Graduate students, as well as students taking the course for honors or AGRADE credit, have an additional research design project. Deadlines are firm and normally no extensions will be given without a medical note.

As this class has both undergraduate and graduate students, the expectation is that graduate students will produce work that is of greater analytical substance than undergraduates. However, all students are held to a very high level of expectation in general.

**Reading Responses (10 x 30 = 300 points):** For any ten weeks (starting with Week 2), write and submit a short (maximum 2 double-spaced pages) response to the week’s readings. The response is due at the beginning of the relevant class. You can choose which ten (of the 13 available weeks) you want to respond to. Your response could be a detailed look at one of the four articles, a comparison/contrast of two articles, or a general question or issue that arises across the readings. I am looking for a thoughtful, analytical response: you need to show me not only that you understand the article(s) but that you are thinking critically about the week’s subject.

**Data Collection Assignment (100 points):** This is a brief (maximum 5 double-spaced pages) assignment in which you use a method commonly used by cognitive anthropologists (e.g., free lists, pile sorts, triad tests) to evaluate some aspect of a cultural domain across at least ten respondents, and write up your data and results. It will be handed out on January 30 and you will have two weeks to complete it, so it is due on **February 13**.

**Take-Home Examination (400 points):** This is a substantive essay-based take-home examination. There will be five essay questions, of which you will choose four. Each question should be answered in a maximum of five double-spaced pages (maximum 20 double-spaced pages total). Cooperation and collaboration on this learning exercise is permitted and encouraged as long as you do not directly copy answers from, or write answers for, another student. It will be handed out on March 27 and you will have three weeks to complete it, so it is due on **April 17**.

**Participation (200 points):** You are expected to have done the readings and to come ready to ask pertinent questions and contribute actively in every class. If you have an introverted temperament or require additional time to formulate your contribution, you should talk to me – we can develop strategies for you to participate more actively. Attendance alone is necessary but not sufficient to constitute participation. Coming to meet with me in office hours, and emailing me about the course content, definitely do count towards your participation grade.

**Research Design (Honors / MA / PhD students only: 250 points):** You will design a research project using the concepts, theories, and methods outlined in the course. Your research design should include a clear research question, a background / framework, a clearly-explained methodology (including tasks / interview instrument / other research tools) and a bibliography. The project should be at least 10 pages double-spaced in length, and is due on **April 22**.
Part I: How We Think

Week 1 (Jan. 9)
Cognition and Culture


Week 2 (Jan. 16)
Cognitive and Linguistic Universals


Week 3 (Jan. 23)
Categorization


Week 4 (Jan. 30)
Cultural Models I: Knowledge Systems


Week 5 (Feb. 6)
Cultural Models II: Social Organization


Week 6 (Feb. 13)
Conceptual Metaphor


Data Collection assignment due
Week 7 (Feb. 20)
Socialization and Transmission


Week 8 (Feb. 27)
External Representations


Part II: What We Think

Week 9 (Mar. 6)
Number


March 13: No class, Spring Break
**Week 10 (Mar. 20)**

**Causality**


*Note: No regular class meeting this week – we will conduct our discussion online on Blackboard*

**Week 11 (Mar. 27)**

**Space**


**Week 12 (Apr. 3)**

**Time**


Week 13 (Apr. 10)

Ethnicity


Week 14 (Apr. 17)

Emotion


