

UNDERGRADUATE COURSE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION¹

This course gives students the opportunity to step into the Cultural Cognition Project, a collaborative venture led by faculty at Yale University, George Washington University, and the University of Washington. The Project explores the ways in which cultural values shape our attitudes on public policy questions. "Cultural cognition" refers to the tendency of individuals to use their cultural identities shape their beliefs about disputed matters of fact (e.g., whether global warming is a serious threat; whether the death penalty deters murder; whether gun control makes society more safe or less).

This quarter's Intercultural Communication course advances the Cultural Cognition Project by examining the contours of the different cultural orientations and how those worldviews shape the way we express ourselves and communicate with one another—from interpersonal conversation to public discussions to competing media campaigns. An even more specific aim is to explore the ways in which different communication practices, strategies, and structures could increase the potential for meaningful cross-cultural communication and deliberation. To examine these subjects, students will read a variety of scholarly work from communication, social psychology, anthropology, environmental science, public affairs, and political science, and students will also immerse themselves in the different expressive worlds of these distinct cultural orientations. Final student presentations will share students' principal insights and ideas.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the quarter, students will be able to:

- engage in an informed discussion about different cultural orientations and cross-cultural communication, specifically in relation to conceptions derived from Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky's grid/group theory,
- identify the theoretical and practical implications of cultural theory for cross-cultural communication,
- understand the variety of research approaches one can use to study cultural worldviews and communication generally, and
- gain a better understanding of the complexities, challenges, and rewards of a large-scale scholarly program of social scientific research.

Assignments and Grading

- Two exams will include short answer and short essay questions that test your ability to understand key cultural concepts and theories and apply that knowledge. The first exam is worth 20% of your grade, and the second is worth 30%.
- Two group projects will require you to (1) make a presentation on a particular kind of cultural orientation and (2) explore the challenges of cross-cultural communication. You and your fellow group members will be graded based on the quality of the in-class presentation and the group materials you produce. The first project is worth 15% of your grade, and the second is worth 30%.
- I will also take overall class participation into consideration when setting final grades. You should attend every one of the scheduled classes unless an emergency (or illness, see below) prevents you from doing so. Participation is worth 5% of your grade.

¹ Adapted from Autumn 2009 syllabus prepared by John Gastil.

Course Schedule
(see specific Reading Packet readings below)

Week/Day	Topic/Task in class	Readings Due
Weeks 1-2: Introduction to Cultural Theory		
Oct 1	Goals for the quarter Overview of Cultural Cognition Project	
Oct 6	Discuss Mary Douglas' theory Discuss Oct 8 assignment	Gross & Rayner, "Measuring culture" Coyle, "The theory that would be king" Wildavsky, <i>The rise of radical egalitarianism</i>
Oct 8	Compare cultural artifacts brought to class Discuss first group project	Douglas, <i>Risk and blame</i>
Weeks 3-5: How Culture Shapes Attitudes, Thinking, and Judgment		
Oct 13	Shaping public attitudes	Wildavsky, "Choosing preferences..." Gastil et al., "The Wildavsky heuristic..." Kahan et al., "Culture and identity-protective..."
Oct 15	Cultural judgment	Kahan and Braman, "More statistics..." Kahan et al., "Who fears the HPV vaccine?" Kahan et al., "Whose eyes...?"
Oct 20	Project group meetings (held at location of students' choice)	
Oct 22	Project presentations 1	
Oct 27	Exam 1 Discuss second group project	
Week 5-9: Politics, Conflict, and Deliberation		
Oct 29	Project group meetings (held at location of students' choice)	Thompson et al, <i>Cultural theory</i>
Nov 3	Deliberation and culture (cont.)	Karmasin, "Towards a meta ethics..." Stenvoll, "Norwegian politics of abortion..."
Nov 5	Political-cultural divides	Fiorina et al., <i>Culture war?</i> Bishop, <i>The Big Sort</i>
Nov 10	Bridging the divides	Gastil et al., "Ending polarization" Gastil et al., "Deliberation across the cultural..." Kahan et al., "...risks and benefits of nanotech"
Nov 12	Project group meetings (held at location of students' choice)	
Nov 17	Trust and cross-cultural deliberation	Festenstein, "Negotiating diversity"
Nov 19	Culture diversity and political theory (In-class project meeting time)	Deveaux, "A deliberative approach"
Nov 24	An Australian perspective	Dryzek and Niemeyer, "Reconciling pluralism..." Dodds & Ankeny, "Regulation of hESC research..."
Week 10: Project Presentations and Conclusion		
Dec 1	Project presentations 2A	
Dec 3	Project presentations 2B	
Dec 8	In-class exam review session	
Dec 10	Exam 2	

Packet Reading List in Order (by Date)

Oct 6

- Gross, J. L., & Rayner, S. (1985). *Measuring culture: A paradigm for the analysis of social organization*. New York: Columbia University Press. (chap 1)
- Coyle, D. J. (1994). The theory that would be king. In D. J. Coyle & R. J. Ellis (Eds.), *Politics, policy, and culture* (pp. 219-239). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Wildavsky, A. (1991). *The rise of radical egalitarianism*. Washington, DC: American University Press. (chapter 1)

Oct 8

- Douglas, M. (1994). *Risk and blame: Essays in cultural theory*. New York: Routledge. (chaps 2 and 7)

Oct 13

- Wildavsky, A. (1987). Choosing preferences by constructing institutions: A cultural theory of preference formation. *American Political Science Review*, 81, 3-21.
- Gastil, J., Braman, D., Kahan, D., & Slovic, P. (2006). *The "Wildavsky Heuristic" and the cultural orientation of mass political opinion*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia, PA.
- Kahan, D., Braman, D., Gastil, J., & Slovic, P. (2007). Culture and identity-protective cognition: Explaining the white-male effect in risk perception. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 4, 465-505.

Oct 15

- Kahan, D., & Braman, D. (2003). More statistics, less persuasion: A cultural theory of gun-risk perceptions. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 151, 1291-1327.
- Kahan, D. M., Braman, D., Cohen, G. L., Gastil, J., & Slovic, P. Who fears the HPV vaccine, who doesn't, and why? An experimental study of the mechanisms of cultural cognition. Submitted to *Law & Human Behavior*.
- Kahan, D. M., Hoffman, D. A., & Braman, D. (2009). Whose eyes are you going to believe? *Harvard Law Review*, 122.

Oct 29

- Thompson, M., Ellis, R., & Wildavsky, A. (1990). *Cultural theory*. Boulder: Westview Press. (chapter 15)

Nov 3

- Karmasin, M. (2002). Towards a meta ethics of culture - Halfway to a theory of metanorms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 39, 337-346.
- Stenvoll, D. (2002). Norwegian politics of abortion: Perspectives, arguments, and values. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 4, 287-304.

Gastil, J., Reedy, J., Braman, D., & Kahan, D. M. (2008). Deliberation across the cultural divide: Assessing the potential for reconciling conflicting cultural orientations to reproductive technology. *George Washington Law Review*, 76, 1772-1797.

Thompson, M., Ellis, R., & Wildavsky, A. (1990). *Cultural theory*. Boulder: Westview Press. (chapter 15)

Nov 5

Bishop, B. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin. (chapters 1, 6, 10)

Fiorina, M. P. (2006). *Culture war? The myth of a polarized America*, 2nd ed. New York: Pearson. (chapters 1-2)

Nov 10

Gastil, J., Kahan, D., & Braman, D. (2006, March/April). Ending polarization: The good news about the culture wars. *Boston Review*. Available at <http://bostonreview.net/BR31.2/gastilkahanbraman.html>.

Gastil, J., Reedy, J., Braman, D., & Kahan, D. M. (2008). Deliberation across the cultural divide: Assessing the potential for reconciling conflicting cultural orientations to reproductive technology. *George Washington Law Review*, 76, 1772-1797.

Kahan, D. M., Braman, D., Slovic, P., Gastil, J., & Cohen, G. (2008). Cultural cognition of nanotechnology risk-benefit perceptions. *Nature Nanotechnology*, 3. Available at <http://www.nature.com/nnano/journal/vaop/ncurrent/pdf/nnano.2008.341.pdf>.

Nov 17

Festenstein, M. (2005). *Negotiating diversity*. Cambridge: Polity. (chapters 5-6)

Nov 19

Deveaux, M. (2003). A deliberative approach to conflicts of culture. *Political Theory*, 31, 780-807.

Nov 24

Dryzek, J. S., & Niemeyer, S. (2006). Reconciling pluralism and consensus as political ideals. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 634-649.

Dodds, S., & Ankeny, R. A. (2006). Regulation of hESC research in Australia: Promises and pitfalls for deliberative democratic approaches. *Bioethical Inquiry*, 3, 95-107.

Reading/Study Questions for Exam 1

Gross, J. L., & Rayner, S. (1985). *Measuring culture: A paradigm for the analysis of social organization*. New York: Columbia University Press. (chap 1)

1. What is the meaning of "grid" and "group"? What are the four "prototype" combinations thereof?
2. Do people "need" a grid/group orientation? What purpose does it serve them?

Coyle, D. J. (1994). The theory that would be king. In D. J. Coyle & R. J. Ellis (Eds.), *Politics, policy, and culture* (pp. 219-239). Boulder: Westview Press.

1. What are "hermits"? Do you think they exist?
2. Is there variation *within* the four cultural quadrants?
3. When assessing risks and making policy choices, do we take anything into account besides our cultural orientation?

Wildavsky, A. (1991). *The rise of radical egalitarianism*. Washington, DC: American University Press. (chapter 1)

(and from Oct 13) Wildavsky, A. (1987). Choosing preferences by constructing institutions: A cultural theory of preference formation. *American Political Science Review*, 81, 3-21.

1. Which of the four cultural quadrants does Wildavsky choose to ignore? Why?
2. What purposes do our cultural orientations serve? What are the drawbacks, if any, of relying on them to make judgments and form preferences?
3. What are the "heuristics" Wildavsky speaks of, and how do they relate to culture?

Douglas, M. (1994). *Risk and blame: Essays in cultural theory*. New York: Routledge. (chaps 2 and 7)

1. Why do people with different cultural orientations emphasize different risks and dangers?
2. What impact does cultural orientation have on "rational" behavior in "markets"?
3. Given what Douglas says about culture, do you think we should be cultural relativists or moral absolutists? What are the pros and cons of each position/

Gastil, J., Braman, D., Kahan, D., & Slovic, P. (2006). *The "Wildavsky Heuristic" and the cultural orientation of mass political opinion*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia, PA.

1. Describe the two-dimensional culture typology used in this article. How do the authors *measure* people's cultural orientations?
2. How do these authors hypothesize that cultural orientations shape attitudes? Are they right?
3. Does a person need high levels of political knowledge to use their cultural orientations to guide them on policy questions? Why, or why not?

Kahan, D., Braman, D., Gastil, J., & Slovic, P. (2007). Culture and identity-protective cognition: Explaining the white-male effect in risk perception. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 4, 465-505.

1. What is the "White male effect"? Does cultural theory fully explain this effect?
2. What is the interplay of race, sex, and culture on perceived abortion risks and gun risks.

Kahan, D., & Braman, D. (2003). More statistics, less persuasion: A cultural theory of gun-risk perceptions. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 151, 1291-1327.

1. If there were a new, powerful study on gun violence, would it be likely to change many people's minds about gun rights/gun control? Why, or why not?
2. What is a "rational weigher," and who—if anybody—acts like one?
3. Why would people use an issue to "express" their cultural orientation? What is an "expressive debate"?

Kahan, D. M., Braman, D., Cohen, G. L., Gastil, J., & Slovic, P. Who fears the HPV vaccine, who doesn't, and why? An experimental study of the mechanisms of cultural cognition. *Law & Human Behavior*.

1. Describe the different experimental conditions and their effects on HPV risk-benefit perceptions (see Figure 4)? Are the authors' hypotheses about communication and cross-cultural communication supported?
2. What are the practical implications of this study?

Kahan, D. M., Hoffman, D. A., & Braman, D. (2009). Whose eyes are you going to believe? *Harvard Law Review*, 122.

1. How do people of different cultural orientations view the *Scott v. Harris* video differently?
2. What is the *legal* significance of the authors' study of the *Scott v. Harris* video?

Quick Culture Quiz for Day 1 of class

Answer on scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Hierarchy-Egalitarianism

- A. Discrimination against minorities is still a very serious problem in our society.
- E. Our society would be better off if the distribution of wealth was more equal.
- K. We live in a sexist society that is fundamentally set up to discriminate against women.
- D. It seems like the criminals and welfare cheats get all the breaks, while the average citizen picks up the tab.
- F. We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country.
- J. Nowadays it seems like there is just as much discrimination against whites as there is against blacks.

Individualism-Solidarism

- B. People who are successful in business have a right to enjoy their wealth as they see fit.
- C. Government regulations are almost always a waste of everyone's time and money.
- H. Too many people today expect society to do things for them that they should be doing for themselves.
- G. Sometimes government needs to make laws that keep people from hurting themselves.
- I. It's society's responsibility to make sure everyone's basic needs are met.
- L. The government should do more to advance society's goals, even if that means limiting the freedom and choices of individuals.

Each student calculates his/her scores:

Dimension 1 (hierarchy): Add D, F, and J together; then subtract A, E, and K.

Dimension 2 (solidarist): Add G, I, and L together; then subtract B, C, and H.

Then plot the students in the class on a cultural grid.

Group Project #1 - Presentation describing a cultural orientation

Prepare an in-class presentation that clearly illustrates one of the four cultural orientations discussed in class. The ten-minute presentation should:

- draw on research on cultural theory, such as the readings in the reading packet but also including others beyond that limited number. Provide an annotated bibliography with your presentation that includes at least four scholarly sources.
- illustrate the views and communication practices common to this cultural orientation using cultural artifacts, such as movies, music, fiction, nonfiction, famous people, etc.
- encourage the audience to come to understand the virtues—and the pitfalls—of adopting that particular cultural orientation

Group Project #2 - Understanding and meeting the challenge of inter-cultural communication

For this second project, each group will develop an in-class presentation that does one (or more) of the following: (a) describes or dramatizes the challenges of intercultural communication, (b) proposes a way to improve intercultural communication, and/or (c) actively seeks to stimulate effective cross-cultural communication *during* the presentation period.

Each group will have thirty minutes maximum for their presentation, which should not go fewer than twenty minutes. In preparing this presentation, your group will:

- draw on research on cultural theory, such as the readings in the reading packet but also including others beyond that limited number. Your group will provide an annotated bibliography with your presentation that includes at least twenty sources, including ten scholarly sources. No more than five of your twenty sources may be from the reading packet.
- provide a set of slides or a summary outline of the presentation, which should draw on the research you conducted (though “draws on” simply means *influenced by*; you don’t necessarily have to have slides that list names and dates of researchers, though that can be fine, too).
- Make the in-class presentation interactive, such that in some way or another actively involves the class, even if only briefly.