Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Beijing
Course Code / Title: (BJ/COMM 320) Chinese and Western Cross-Cultural Concepts
Total Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Communications / East Asian Studies, History, Cross-Cultural Studies, Sociology
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites/Requirements: None

Description
As political, economic and social integration of China and Western cultures increases in the 21st century, it is increasingly vital that we attempt to attain a greater mutual understanding between East and West. One path to this goal is to make a comparative study of Chinese and Western core concepts, taking advantage of the growing body of ethnological, sociological and psychological evidence for cultural differences. Just as “Western culture” is not a monolithic category, so what it means to be “Chinese” is embedded in a larger, Eastern context. This course attempts to present a contrastive analysis of the defining concepts of Chinese and Western culture through the lens of different academic disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, language, semiotics, cognitive science, and cross-cultural psychology. The approach is interdisciplinary and comparative, leading students to explore central concepts in Chinese and Western philosophy, values, interpersonal relationships, communication patterns, thinking and behavioral norms. Emphasis will be on specific examples of various cultural phenomena, and will draw on both scientific research and illustrative informal data in order to generate classroom discussion and open analysis.

Objectives
By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Identify key cultural concepts in Chinese and Western cultures, and explain how these concepts manifest themselves in the two cultures
- Become familiar with various sociological and anthropological frameworks for analyzing China-Western cultural differences
- Tease out the different influences of human cognition, language and culture when analyzing cross-cultural phenomena

Course Requirements
Students are expected to attend each class and field-based course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Active participation is essential. Students are to read all assigned materials before each class session and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions. Reading assignments average about 50 pages per class.
Graded assignments include:
- One midterm test; the test will focus on the key concepts and terms of the first half of the semester.
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- A short in-class presentation on an independent field study, survey, or interviews, to be determined in consultation with the professor.
- A final essay (1,250 words/5 pages) on a topic related to the independent field study, the topic to be decided on in consultation with the professor.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

- Class discussion: 20%
- Midterm test: 20%
- Independent study presentation: 30%
- Final examination: 30%

Readings

Culture background


Zimmerling, Ruth. "Guilt Cultures’ vs ‘Shame Cultures’: Political Implications?" Paper given at the International Conference on Reassessing Democracy: New Approaches to Governance, Citizenship and Multiple Identities in Comparative Research *AK Interkultureller Demokratievergleich*

Language differences: the relationship of language and thought


Social and business interaction


**Cultural concepts and the human body**


**East-West differences in thinking and cognition**


(Chinese Translation of Nisbett book)


**Outline of Course Content**

**Part 1. Cultural concepts and cultural/philosophical background**

- Topic 1: Culturally-specific concepts and related terms; Traditional Chinese philosophy vs. Greek philosophy
- Topic 2: Holism vs. reductionism; “guilt culture” vs. “shame culture”; individuals vs. collectives

**Part 2. East-West differences in thinking and cognition**

- Topic 3: Cross-cultural semiotics; Cognitive differences, east and west
- Topic 4: Processing of time and space in China and the West

**Part 3. Language differences: The relationship of language and thought**

- Topic 5: “Metaphor systems” in Chinese and English
- Topic 6: Sexism and gender defaults in English and Chinese

**Part 4. Social psychology and culture**

- Topic 7: Culture differences in family, relations, hierarchy, class
- Topic 8: Business and culture

**Part 5. Cultural concepts and the human body**

- Topic 9: Concepts of medicine, the human body, health; TCM and Western biomedicine.
- Topic 10: Non-verbal communication; Proxemics (cultural use of space)