

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.

Syllabus of Record

- 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

De Mente, Boye Lafayette. *The Chinese Mind: Understanding Traditional Chinese Beliefs and their Influence on Contemporary Culture*. Tokyo: Tuttle Publishers, 2009.

Hook, Brian (general editor). *Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Lin Yutang. *My country and my people*. New York: John Day, 1935.

McCormack, Jerusha & John G. Blair. *Thinking Through China*. London: Rowen & Littlefield, 2016.

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

King, Brian. *The conceptual structure of emotional experience in Chinese*. Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, Dissertation Abstracts International, no. DA-9011203, 1989.

Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Liu, Dilin. *Metaphor, Culture and Worldview: The Case of American English and the Chinese Language*. New York: University Press of America, 2002.

Social and business interaction

Chu, Ben. *Chinese Whispers: Why Everything You've Heard about China is Wrong*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013.

Syllabus of Record

Feldman, Steven P. *Trouble in the Middle: American-Chinese Business Relations, Culture, Conflict, and Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Cultural concepts and the human body

Kaptchuk, Ted. *The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*. New York: McGraw Hill
2nd edition, 2000.

East-West differences in thinking and cognition

Bond, Michael Harris. *The Psychology of the Chinese People*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986.

_____. *Beyond the Chinese Face: Insights from Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Nisbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why*.
New York: Free Press, 2003.

(Chinese Translation of Nisbett book)

[美] 理查德·尼斯贝特, (2007) 《思维版图》. 北京: 中信出版集团

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)