The Philosophy and Psychology of Encultured Minds

COURSE NUMBER, Sec. XX, Spring 2020

**Location:**

**Days/Time:**

**Instructors**: Charles Lassiter & Vinai Norasakkunkit

**Offices:** Campion 205 (Lassiter), College Hall 303 (Norasakkunkit)

**Office hours:** TBD,and by appt

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**Course Description:** This course will expose students to findings and ideas discussing how culture and the human mind are intimately bound together and offer philosophical resources for thinking about the implications. For example, when explaining behavior, when people grow up in a western cultural context, then tend to learn to take for granted the importance of self-esteem and organize their mental operations around protecting and enhancing their self-esteem. In contrast, people who grow up in an East Asian context tend to learn to take for granted the importance of saving face and organize their mental operations around preventing loss of face.

We will address the fourth yearly theme and question (“Imagining the possible: What is our role in the world?”). Whatever your future role, it will involve interacting and thinking about people in their own cultural context. This class is aimed at understanding the nature of mind and culture to better understand why we are the way we are, so that you may attempt to better understand and sympathize with all people.

**Learning Outcomes**

There are three learning outcomes:

1. integrate the principles of a Jesuit education, prior components of the Core, and their disciplinary expertise (knowledge).
2. clearly and persuasively communicate with an audience of diverse educational backgrounds, personal experiences, and value commitments using ideas and arguments based on evidence, logic, and critical thinking (skill).
3. assess the ways in which the Core has transformed the commitments and perspectives that will inform their future endeavors (attitude).

**Required Texts**: Readings will be made available on Blackboard

**Assignments**:

1. “Understanding the Other” paper and presentation: Students will write a 10-12 page paper describing the beliefs and history of a group to which the student *does not* belong. This group might espouse beliefs the student will find offensive, or it might be a group with a very different belief system. Students will research the beliefs espoused by the group as well as the wider cultural context in which the group has emerged. Students will reflect on whether the beliefs and the psychology of the target group are reasonable to hold (even if the student disagrees with them) by reflecting on (1) empirical and metaphysical relationships between mind and culture and (2) the relativity (or not) of rationality. Finally students will reflect on how their understanding of culturally shaped minds inform their future reactions to people from very different cultural contexts who hold very different belief systems and norms.

*Discussion:* In this paper, students are to analyze some group with which he or she does not identify. This group could be an opposing political party (e.g. if you are a liberal you might learn about Tea Party Republicans) or a hate group (e.g. the Proud Boys) or a racially-affiliated group (e.g. the Black Panthers). The aim of the project is to contextualize your findings about the group in the wider science of cultural psychology and then to our philosophical tools to reflect on the nature of mind and culture as well as your own reactions to the group and its members. This assignment is worth **40%** of the final grade. *Satisfies learning outcomes 1, 2, & 3*

1. Journal assignments: Students will complete four 2-3 page journal entries about course readings. In each entry, students will:
   1. Describe findings from the readings.
   2. Reflect on why they believe that particular finding to be interesting.
   3. Reflect on how the finding shapes their own understanding of mind and culture as well as their relationship
   4. Reflect on how the material ties into their own majors. This latter component may take many forms, e.g. connecting disciplinary knowledge with the content of the course, or using the content of the course to better understand how to communicate with others.

*Discussion*: The goal of the readings is for students to process material from the readings and offer opportunities on how it relates to their interests and understanding of the encultured mind. This assignment is worth **40%** of the final grade. Satisfies *learning outcomes 1, 2, & 3*.

1. Discussion leaders: Student groups will lead class discussion at least once per semester (the exact number will depend on student enrollment). This will involve following the Jesuit pedagogical cycle of: context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. Students will confer with the faculty to ensure a quality class session.

*Discussion:* This course is a seminar, which means that students lead the course as much as the faculty. Nonetheless, guidance from the faculty is offered to ensure that students learn as much from being discussion guides as participants. This assignment is worth **20%** of the final grade. *Satisfies learning outcomes 1 & 2*

**Grading Scale**

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| Numerical Value | Letter/GPA point value | Rough idea of what the grade means |
| 94-100 | A/4.0 | **Outstanding**. Student goes above and beyond what is required. Offers an insightful synthesis or analysis. |
| 90-93 | A-/3.7 |  |
| 86-89 | B+/3.3 | **Very good**. Student does more high-quality research than is required for the assignment. |
| 82-85 | B/3.0 |  |
| 78-81 | B-/2.7 | **Average**. Doing what is assigned |
| 74-77 | C+/2.3 |  |
| 70-73 | C/2.0 | **Below averag**e. Doing less that what is assigned. |
| 65-69 | C-/1.7 |  |
| 60-64 | D/1.0 |  |
| <60 | F/0.0 | **Failure** to show anything learned. |

Take note: successfully completing the assignments will get you an 80 (typically). That means you do what is asked of you satisfactorily. Going above that means putting in substantially more effort. But also know that more effort is not a guarantee of a higher grade.

**Late Work**

Papers are penalized by one letter grade for each class it is late. If students know ahead of time that they will have some difficulty meeting a deadline, please contact me. I'll be more than happy to take other commitments you might have into consideration when assigning due dates.

**Technology in Class**

After many failed attempts to moderate technology use in class, I’m issuing a ban: please do not use laptops, tablets, or phones in class. The one exception to this is when we’re completing course evaluations, but I’ll give you a heads up for that.

**Plagiarism and Cheating**

Plagiarism, or taking someone else’s work without giving credit to the original author, can and must be avoided at all costs. It violates the integrity of scholarship and academic honesty. It is certainly fine to build on or explain the work of others, and in fact, such communal work is necessary to expand our knowledge. But, to claim the other’s work as your own is dishonest, and honesty is essential to the life of a student.

Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and theft. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, which may include, but is not limited to, (1) a failing grade for the test or assignment in question, (2) a failing grade for the course, or (3) a recommendation for dismissal from the University.  If you have any questions about what does or does not count as plagiarism or cheating, please feel free to ask me. (See also “[Academic Integrity](https://www.gonzaga.edu/academics/academic-calendar-resources/center-for-student-academic-success/academic-integrity)” in the University’s online student handbook.)

**Statement Concerning Sexual Misconduct**

Gonzaga University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people.  Sexual misconduct is not tolerated at Gonzaga. This includes unwanted physical/sexual contact, sexual assault, and unwanted and harassing sexual comments. (Clearly, this list isn’t exhaustive.) If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, I want you to know that I am a first point of contact for getting you in touch with mental health services, campus police, and (if you should choose to pursue legal action) city police. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and healthy environment. But you should also know that if you tell me anything that incriminates a student, I am legally bound to report that information. The technical terminology here is that I (and all other faculty and administrators) am a *mandatory reporter*. This rule might seem a little draconian, but it prevents faculty and administrators from being passive bystanders: if you tell me something, I’m breaking the law if I don’t tell the relevant people, e.g. Gonzaga University’s title IX coordinator. But I understand that you might not want to begin going down the road of an investigation. Perhaps you just want to talk with someone about what happened. That’s ok. If you would feel more comfortable talking with someone other than me or any other mandatory reporter, here are some phone numbers that will connect you with people to whom you can talk.

* **Gonzaga Health Center** | 509.313.4052 | 704 E Sharp Avenue
* **Gonzaga Counseling Center** | 509.313.4054 | 324 E Sharp Avenue
* **Any priest serving as a sacramental confessor or any ordained religious leader serving in the sacred confidence role**. |509.313.4242
* **Lutheran Community Services and SAFeT** | 509.624.7273

The people you would talk to at these numbers are either (1) bound to keep the information to themselves (e.g. a priest serving in the role of confessor) or (2) are not affiliated with the university in a such capacity that makes them mandatory reporters (e.g. Lutheran Community Services). But no matter whether you talk to me, another faculty member/administrator, or someone at one of the above numbers, there are lots of people in the Gonzaga community who want — and are able — to help.

If you have questions or concerns or need to file a report, please contact:

Stephanie N. Whaley  
Title IX Director  
509-313-6910  
whaleys@gonzaga.edu  
Business Services Building 018

Or by filling out [an online form](http://www.gonzaga.edu/sexualmisconduct).

**Notice to Students with Disabilities or Medical Conditions:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability/medical condition requiring an accommodation, please call or visit the Disability Access office (room 209 Foley Library, 509-313-4134).

**Course Evaluation:**

At Gonzaga, we take teaching seriously, and we ask our students to evaluate their courses and instructors so that we can provide the best possible learning experience. In that spirit, we ask students to give us feedback on their classroom experience near the end of the semester. I will ask you to take a few minutes then to carry out course/instructor evaluation online. Please know that I appreciate your participation in this process. This is a vital part of our efforts at Gonzaga to improve continually our teaching, our academic programs, and our entire educational effort.

**Tentative Calander**

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| **Week** | **Reading** | **Topic** | **Assignments** |
| **1: Phil & psych** | Shweder, R. A. (1991). “Cultural Psychology: What is it?” In Schweder (Book), **pp.73-110**.  “Hylomorphism” from Jaworski, *Philosophy of Mind* | Introduction to cultural psychology and philosophy of mind |  |
| **2: Phil** | Kuhn, from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* | Normal science |  |
| **3: Phil** | Kuhn, from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* | Paradigm shifts and revolutions in science | Journal #1 |
| **4: Psych** | Cole, from *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline* | History of understanding cultural differences in human psychology |  |
| **5: Psych** | Heine, chapter 2 from *Cultural Psychology*, 2nd ed. | Human nature and culture | Check-in for final paper |
| **6: Phil** | Vukov & Lassiter, “How to Power Encultured Minds” and “Fear and Anger in Lineages” | Mental powers | Journal #2 |
| **7: Phil** | Quine, from *Ontological Relativity* | Relativism in ontology, web of belief |  |
| **8: Psych** | Heine, chapter 3 from *Cultural Psychology*, 2nd ed. | Spreading, sharing, and evolving of cultural information |  |
| **9: Psych** | Shweder, & Bourne, “Does the concept of the person vary cross-culturally?”  Shweder & Miller, “The social construction of the person: How is it possible?” | Culture and the concept of the person | Journal #3 |
| **10: Phil** | Rorty, from *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* | Relativism in knowledge | Check in for final paper |
| **11: Phil** | Boghossian, from *Fear of Knowledge* | Objectivism in knowledge |  |
| **12: Psych** | Fincher, et al, “Pathogen prevalence predicts human cross-cultural variability in individualism/collectivism”  Oishi,S., et al “Residential mobility increases motivation to expand social network: But why?” | Origins of cultural differences in human psychology | Journal #4 |
| **13: Psych** | Gelfand, from *Rule Makers, Rule Breakers* | Loose and tight cultures |  |
| **14: Phil & Psych** | Presentations |  | **Final papers** |