

112-1 GEC 140202
Social and Cultural Analysis: Cross-Cultural Comparison

社會文化分析：跨文化比較 (M789;教 114)

Instructor: Professor Francisca Lai laiyk@mx.nthu.edu.tw

Office: Room 211A, Education Building (教育館)

Teaching assistant: Resdres Saliljan 潘鈺軒 (Institute of Anthropology)

Email: pop0121106@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Adopting a cultural relativist perspective, this course examines diverse cultural phenomena of both pre-industrial and contemporary societies. The course will cover a wide range of topics, including substance strategies, economic systems, gender, family, and migration. Students are guided to understand the processes of cultural construction and the underlying power relationships between people who are of different class, age, and gender. Introducing the basics of anthropological and sociological concepts, the course will lead students to examine the relationship between individual and society, and whether individuals conform to the society or are able to make changes. By comparing and analyzing diverse social situations and cultural phenomena, students will learn to reflect on their experiences and critically examine their values.

Upon finishing the course, students will be able to:

1. understand the construction of cultural phenomena from a socio-cultural perspective;
2. re-think the place of the individual within structures of power and domination; and
3. examine their own values and understand others whose values may be very different from their own.

READINGS

- Reading materials are available on eLearn: <https://elearn.nthu.edu.tw>

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

- Lectures and PPT slides will be in English.
- Please use English during class discussion and group presentation.
- Individual written works can be written in either Chinese or English.

COURSEWORK REGULATIONS

1. Written reports must include **both in-text citations** (文中引用) **and a bibliography** (參考書目) whenever you have borrowed ideas from any website, book, or newspaper. Written works without proper referencing will be considered plagiarized and will receive a failing grade. Please consult the professor if you have questions about referencing.
2. Wikipedia/ Baidu/ kknnews are not reliable sources. Do not cite them.
3. Late submission of work will result in a deduction of grades. You will be responsible for any late submission and should notify the professor beforehand.
4. Upload your written reports to Turnitin (文章剽竊檢測工具). No email submission!
5. You need a school email to register a Turnitin account.
<https://learning.site.nthu.edu.tw/p/412-1319-6168.php?Lang=zh-tw>
6. Turnitin will show a similarity rate after submission. Please check the similarity rate, which should be below 10%. The only way to lower the similarity rate is to use your own words in your writing.
7. Generative AI is prohibited from being used in any course assignment.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Class participation (5%)

Apart from attendance, students are expected to participate in class discussion. Both attitudes and quality of content will be evaluated. If you are unable to attend the class, you need to notify the professor and provide reasons by email beforehand.

Public lecture report/ Social activism report/ Documentary film report (5%)

In week 9 (Thursday, Nov 9), Center for General Education will host a public lecture (網路獵巫行動下的群眾心理與被霸凌者的創傷與療癒). You can opt to participate in one of the following social activism:

- Taiwan LGBT+ Pride, October 28 (Sat), Taipei
- Migrant Workers Rally, December 10 (Sun), Taipei

Or, you can opt to write a report on a documentary film. Documentary film refers to non-fictional motion picture (紀錄片). Select a documentary film and watch it on your own.

At the beginning of the report, state clearly which activity you selected to work on (public lecture, social activism, or watching a documentary). Then provide the details of the activity, including a summary of the public lecture, your observations at the rally, or the plots of the documentary (also provide a link to the webpage of the film so that I can learn more of the film). In the main body of the report, discuss what you have learned from the activity and relate your discussion with the course materials, concepts and theories.

- Length: no less than 500 words in English, or no less than 900 words in Chinese. Please provide a word count at the end of your paper.
- Submit the report to Turnitin, before Dec 31 (Sunday), 23:59.

Reading notes (@30% x2 = 60%)

There are two parts (PART A and PART B) in the weekly schedule. Select one piece of reading from PART A and another piece from PART B, then provide two reading notes before the due dates listed below. In each reading note, you need to provide a summary and your comments on the reading. **The summary should include the main arguments of the author and should be around one-third of your reading note. Your comments should build upon a cultural relativist perspective and should be related to the key points you mentioned in the summary.**

- Length: 1,000 – 2,000 words in English/ 1,800 – 4,000 words in Chinese.
- Submit the reading notes to **Turnitin**.
- Due dates:
 - 1st reading note: before November 5 (Sunday) 23:59
 - 2nd reading note: before December 24 (Sunday) 23:59

Group project (30%)

Students in a group will be responsible for a project. Your group needs to analyze a cultural phenomenon in or outside Taiwan.

The project requires your group to collect information about your selected cultural phenomenon. The information can be second-hand data, such as facts and data from reports or newspaper, etc. You can also include first-hand data by conducting interviews. Please consult the professor about the interview questions beforehand. (Note: survey is not preferred). In the analysis part, you are required to apply at least 2 concepts that you have learned in class to analyze the information you collected.

Due dates:

1. Week 8: present your topic with PPT in class (~10 minutes/group):
 - (1) A short description of the cultural phenomenon, and which 2 concepts you are going to apply; (2) methods of data collection (*avoid using questionnaires); and (3) timeline. Each group member must show up.
2. Week 13 - 15: Deliver a presentation in 30 minutes, plus 15 minutes for Q&A. Upload your set of ppt slides to eLearn a day (24 hours) before your presentation. Each group member should take part in the oral presentation.
3. Within a week after your presentation: submit a written report of your group project (no less than 3,000 words) to Turnitin. Make sure you take my comments in your group report and include in-text citations and a bibliography. Therefore, be prepared to work with your groupmates on the written report after the presentation.

Suggestions:

1. **Originality:** try to think innovatively about the topic and the ways to collect data.

Simply drawing materials from Wikipedia will not bring you a good grade.

2. **Diligence:** The phenomenon should be supported with facts and data. Try to collect data from different reliable sources, which will give you different perspectives to think through the phenomenon.
3. **Make good use of PPT:** Please put key points with brief explanations in the PPT. It will help the audience to follow.
4. **Teamwork spirit:** Help each other out in the Q/A session.

Reminders:

1. Points will be heavily deducted if the written report is not properly referenced. The facts and data of the phenomenon should be supported by external references. Therefore, please make sure the written report includes both in-text citations and a bibliography.
2. Check the similarity rate (under 10%) after uploading it to Turnitin.

Assessment breakdown: Group presentation **20%** + Group report **10%** (total 30%).

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction: course requirements

PART A

Week 2: Subsistence and Culture

By reviewing different subsistence strategies, such as hunting and gathering, horticultural, pastoral, and agricultural societies, the class will critically examine the relationship between affluence, human relationships, and economic development.

Key concepts: subsistence strategies

Read: Lee, the Hunters

Week 3: Gender

Are there only two genders? How do nature and culture work together in gender construction?

***Writing and project guidelines**

Key concepts: femininity and masculinity; gender and work; body politics; transgender

Read:

- Reddy and Nanda, Hijras: an "alternative" sex/gender in India
- Pascoe, Compulsive Heterosexuality

Week 4: Sexuality (*Must come to class. Going to form groups for group project.)

How does a society come to use sexuality to define people? The class will examine the meanings of sexuality in different societies.

***Turnitin registration**

Key concepts: construction of sexuality; sexual meanings

Read: Rubin, Thinking Sex (*this piece is a challenging one but very interesting! Don't miss it)

Week 5: NO CLASS (public holiday)

Week 6: Family and Marriage

The class will deconstruct the relationship between romantic love and marriage by reviewing the marriage systems and family forms of different societies.

Key concepts: kinship; inheritance; monogamy and polygamy

Read: Goldstein, Polyandry: When Brothers Take a Wife

Week 7: Parenthood

Is parent's love an instinct? Are women necessarily better care-givers than men? The class will examine the parenting practices of different societies.

Key concepts: fatherhood; motherhood; adoption; surrogacy

Read: Scheper-Hughes, Mother's Love

Week 8: Presentation of your group project topic

PART B

Week 9: Regular class is replaced by the public lecture (Nov 9, 19:00-21:00, at 旺宏館)

Week 10: Political systems

Are there any free gifts? The class will examine how leaders establish their power by giving out big gifts in pre-industrial societies. This may help understand the current international relations.

Key concepts: reciprocity and power; leadership; international relations

Read: Harris, Life without Chiefs

Week 11: Religion and Cultural Rights

Some traditions are considered as violating human rights. How can we uphold the values of human rights without giving up our traditions?

Key concepts: traditions; universal values; state interests

Read: Gruenbaum, Female Genital Cutting

Week 12: Labor migration and Sexuality

How do gender and racial stereotypes work in the international division of labor? How does sexuality affect the decision of migration? How does migration journeys shape migrants' sexuality?

Key concepts: international division of labor; stereotypes; transnational sexuality; intersectionality

Read:

- Ehrenreich and Hochschild, Global Women
- Lai, Maid to Queer Introduction & Ch. 2

Week 13-15: Group presentations

Week 16: NO CLASS

--Enjoy the semester--