

**PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**in partnership with the Gap Year Association (GYA)**

**PSY 204: Psychology as Social Science**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**CREDITS: 4 quarter-credits – Continuous Enrollment Course**

Students who plan to use this course to fulfill specific requirements should discuss transfer options and obtain written approval from a counselor or study abroad advisor at their own college/university PRIOR to enrolling in this course.

**PREREQUISITES:**

There are NO prerequisites for this course.

**METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:**

This course is a field-based self-study. The course instructor will correspond with the student and provide written feedback on course assignments via email and other remote communication.

**INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD:**

PSU has approved the following Instructors of Record, one of whom will be assigned to you (typically two+ weeks prior to the beginning of your program):

- Britt Basel, MS - [brittbasel@ecothropic.com](mailto:brittbasel@ecothropic.com)
- Dianna Hahn, MA - [dianna@gapyearassociation.org](mailto:dianna@gapyearassociation.org)
- Alexander Papouchis, MS - [alexpapouchis@gmail.com](mailto:alexpapouchis@gmail.com)
- Cam Sylvester, MA – [ccamsylvester@gmail.com](mailto:ccamsylvester@gmail.com)

Office: 503-206-7336  
[www.gapyearassociation.org](http://www.gapyearassociation.org)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to provide hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students who undertake study-away opportunities. Students will explore the ways in which human individuality is defined by social contexts, leveraging topics such as identity, intelligence, motivation, coping skills, psychological disorders, and cultural context. By examining their own experiences, students will learn about the theories, methodologies, and research that help to frame how humans interact with one another. In doing so, they will learn to better contextualize their own cultural norms and biases.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

- **Environment of Respect:** Disagreement and diversity of opinions are encouraged. You will be challenged to think critically about the impact of cultural differences, which may emerge in concepts of gender, race, the roles environment has in business and market development, socioeconomic status, physical and cognitive ability, sexuality, and other forms of diversity. You are encouraged to ask difficult questions and engage in discussion and critical reflection. Please be respectful of others, listen, and try to understand differences.
- **Experiential Learning:** In this course, learning is an experiential process in which you will have the opportunity to reflect on your experiences throughout the term. The richness of the course will depend on the questions, insights, and active participation that you bring.
- **Personal Responsibility:** You are expected to engage fully in the coursework and take action if you need help. Please communicate any concerns about assignments, deadlines, or course activities to your Instructor of Record.
- **Academic Integrity:** Please adhere to university policies. Take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. Each student is expected to prepare their own assignments, and any assignments submitted should be the sole work of the student. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information, will not be tolerated. PSU's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/psu-code-student-conduct-and-responsibility>

## STUDENT OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Examine how individuality is formed within social contexts.
- Understand behaviors and some of the ways in which society influences them.
- Examine tools for psychological measurement and some of their limitations.
- Understand some of the ways in which psychological processes are shaped by experiences.
- Examine differences and similarities between cultural norms and their influences on behavior.
- Summarize and analyze insights gained from engaging in varied local cultural experiences.
- Improve cross-cultural and critical thinking about interpersonal interactions.

## CONTACT HOURS, EXCURSIONS, AND METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

A total of 40 contact hours will be facilitated. These hours will come in the forms of:

- Homestays
- Introduction to relevant cultural norms
- Language learning and its role in shaping worldview
- Excursions to markets and culturally significant sites
- Interviews/lectures with/by local contacts
- Projects focusing on social service
- Cohort meetings and facilitated group dynamics

## ASSIGNMENTS

**REQUIRED HOURS:** You must complete 40 contact hours as described above. The Gap Year Association will provide verification of hours.

**DAILY JOURNAL:** The journal requirement is an important component of your grade for this course. It will count for 30% of your final grade. Elements that make a strong journal include self-reflection and evidence of critical thinking.

*\*If you are enrolled in multiple courses, you are only required to **maintain one journal** for all courses\**

Journals should be **handwritten and legible**, as handwritten reflections tend to be deeper and more insightful than those maintained digitally. Additionally, many programs have limitations to device usage in different locations; as such, a typed version may not be an option.

Journals will be graded as follows:

- **Self-reflection (20%):** Ask yourself critical questions about the experience you are having. How is this different from what you expected? What personal challenges are you experiencing? How are you learning and growing from this experience?
- **Reflection about your location and host culture (20%):** What is similar to and/or different from your home culture/environment? What is unique about this place/location? How is your day-to-day experience and learning in the host culture challenging or validating your worldviews?
- **Sharing reflections on group dynamics (20%):** What lessons can you take away from the experience you are having with your cohort? How are you developing or changing within the group?
- **Reflection on specific course themes (20%):** Review the student outcomes from the courses you are registered for. In your journal entries, speak directly about your inquiry and learning related to those course themes.
- **Quality & Consistency (20%):** Journaling every day or every few days with focus on the above elements will lead to higher quality journals and a better overall journal grade.

**REQUIRED READING:** You must read at least **ONE** book from the Recommended Reading list and demonstrate knowledge learned and/or perspectives expressed (**with MLA or APA citations**) in your FINAL REPORT.

A **FINAL REPORT** of insights gained from your study-away experience is required in order to complete the course. **Our expectation is that the paper you submit will reflect college-level writing.** Your report should be 8-10 pages in length. Reports must be typed (double spaced) with a cover page that includes your name, the academic quarter (e.g. fall 2021), the name of the program you attended, and the course number.

**Submit a comprehensive analytical paper comparing how individuality and identity are expressed between your host community and your home. Explain how specific social contexts such as motivation, stress, intelligence, social psychology, and psychological disorders are viewed in your host community versus home. Highlighting academic research and psychological measurements, outline how your own upbringing might frame these social contexts in contemporary terms.**

**Final Report will be graded as follows:**

- Description host-community view on identity & individuality, citing specific social contexts - 20%
- Description of home view on identity and individuality - 10%
- Inclusion and understanding of psychological research and measurement - 20%
- Reflection on how common biases from your home are framed by social contexts – 20%
- Clarity and organization of ideas - 10%
- Grammar and punctuation - 10%
- Ability to demonstrate knowledge from the required readings - 10%

**DEADLINES & SUBMISSIONS:**

All course requirements must be submitted by:

- Fall Semester: January 20th
- Spring Semester: June 20th

**SUBMITTING JOURNALS & FINAL REPORTS:**

- **Journals:** Once complete, please capture legible images/scans of your handwritten journal and submit as **ONE COMPLETE** document via email/shared drive to your instructor. Instructors reserve the right to refuse your journal submission if it is not legible. Some tips for quality submission when photographing or scanning your journal:
  - Ensure adequate light
  - Use equal camera height/distance if taking photos of journal
  - Turn OFF the flash
  - Pay attention to shadows and reflections
  - Ensure the entire page is captured and sections are not cut off (even margins)!
- **Final report:** Please email or share your final report with your Instructor of Record

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

- **Daily Journal** (30% of total course grade): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, clearly presented ideas and observations, creative thought, and relevant concepts.
- **Final Paper** (70% of total course grade): Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to, appropriate grammar and verb use, format, content relevance, organization, analysis, originality, and summarization skills.
- **Required Readings:** This is a requirement for successful completion of this class and 10% of your paper grade depends on your referencing examples and lessons learned. Citations are required.
- **Required Hours:** The Gap Year Association will provide verification of these hours.
- **Grading:** This course is graded with letter grades A - F. See more details about PSU's grading system [here](#).

**READING LIST**

**Students must read and cite at least ONE book in the final assignment. The following books have**

**been approved for this course. Any other books not on this list must first be approved by your Instructor of Record.**

#### **ALL REGIONS:**

*Man's Search for Meaning*, by Victor Frankl

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival to discover what individuals find meaningful.

*Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*, by Thich Nhat Hanh

World-renowned Zen master, spiritual leader, and author Thich Nhat Hanh shows us how to make positive use of the very situations that usually pressure and antagonize us.

*The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu

In April 2015, Archbishop Tutu traveled to the Dalai Lama's home in Dharamsala, India, to celebrate His Holiness's eightieth birthday and to create what they hoped would be a gift for others. They looked back on their long lives to answer a single burning question: How do we find joy in the face of life's inevitable suffering?

*Animism: Respecting the Living World*, by Graham Harvey

In this study, Graham Harvey explores current and past animistic beliefs and practices of Native Americans, Maori, Aboriginal Australians, and eco-pagans.

*The Tibetan Book of Living & Dying*, by Sogyal Rinpoche

This book is an introduction to Tibetan Buddhist wisdom. An enlightening, inspiring, and comforting manual for life and death.

*Engaging Cultural Differences: The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies*, by Richard Shweder, Martha Minow & Hasel Markus

Liberal democracies are based on principles of inclusion and tolerance. But how does the principle of tolerance work in practice in countries such as Germany, France, India, South Africa, and the United States, where an increasingly wide range of cultural groups holds often contradictory beliefs about appropriate social and family life practices?

*Worldviews: Cross Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, by Ninian Smart

This book offers a balanced, wide-ranging, and realistic approach to the full range of worldviews, showing how, whether religious or secular, they define the human values that drive the engines of both continuity and change worldwide.

*Nobody Home: Writing, Buddhism and Living in Places*, by Gary Snyder

A book of conversations about how to live presently in the moment. Snyder describes the practice of Buddhism as way to articulate a direct experience rather than as a kind of abstract philosophy.

*The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, by Chogyam Trungpa

There is a basic human wisdom that can help solve the world's problems. It doesn't belong to any one culture or region or religious tradition—Chögyam Trungpa calls this the sacred path of the warrior.