



Self and Culture Seminar

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In Spring 2019, the Self and Culture Seminar will welcome up to 10 third year students interested in and committed to conducting research in social psychology. A small number of fourth year students may join, but under very limited conditions. The seminar meets for 2 periods (4 credits) on two separate days of the week.

Goals of this seminar

[1] Discover how your socio-cultural context influences your thoughts and behaviors

We will read and discuss seminal theories and current research in social and cultural psychology. Our focus is to challenge stereotypical views associated with interdependence and independence, subsequently gaining a deeper understanding of the goals pursued for the self in both East Asian and North American cultures.

[2] Get a deeper understanding of yourself

We will co-create a class in which you will learn about the self by reading and discussing current research, while exploring how the self works in our own life. Specifically, we will learn how to recognize the costs and benefits of ego mechanisms, how to identify ego threats, how to respond constructively to ego threats, and how to shift from reacting to creating.

[3] Gain research skills

You will develop research skills in social psychology by empirically examining your own research question related to the self and culture. Identifying important problems, proposing solutions, and checking the validity of your conclusions are crucial skills that should serve you well in your future career. You will also gain useful skills in statistics.

What we do in this seminar

- ✦ **During the spring term**, you will read and discuss empirical and theoretical articles on social and cultural psychology. Everyone is expected to read 2-3 research articles a week and provide questions/comments to the discussion leader. You will also design and conduct an experiment in small groups to hone your research skills.
- ✦ **During the fall term**, you will develop your own empirical research relating to the self and culture. This consists of finding a research question, formulating hypotheses, conducting a literature review, designing an experiment, and preparing materials for that proposed experiment. Fourth year students will write up their senior thesis based on the data they collected in the spring.

Examples of research topics students have pursued in the past

- Does self-compassion increase compassion toward others?
- What kind of feedback motivates people to overcome challenges?
- Do mastery goals increase learning from failure more than performance goals?
- Does self-enhancement increase well-being among the Japanese too?
- What kind of self-disclosure promotes interpersonal relationships?
- Is there a gender difference in how acceptable amae is?
- Does holding a hot pack influence one's evaluation of a person as warm and kind?
- The influence of thank you messages and thank you gifts on prosocial behavior
- Does relatedness increase happiness more so than competence in Japan?
- Is time an individual property? Concept of zero-sum time perspective and its relation with self-image goals

Selection Criteria

- ✦ Knowledge in psychology: Priority will be given to those who have successfully completed Social Psychology I and II (preferably both) and Social Research Methods¹.
- ✦ Basic knowledge and skills in statistics
- ✦ Enthusiasm and determination: You are expected to do a lot of work outside of class time and commit to this seminar until the end of your 4th year².
- ✦ Ability to work as a team, responsiveness, and punctuality

Interested in joining this seminar?

- ✦ There will be no seminar try-out this year. If you are interested in speaking to the current seminar students but do not know who to ask, send me an e-mail (). I will be happy to answer any questions.
- ✦ If you know you want to join this seminar, explain in the application essay (1) why you are interested in joining, (2) what you want to achieve in the seminar, and (3) how you meet the above criteria. (Submission: Oct 19- Nov 5, 17:00).
- ✦ Interview will be held over Skype in November. You will receive all the necessary information for the interview over e-mail on or after Nov 8.

Students often ask these questions when choosing a seminar:

Is this seminar interesting? Is it worthwhile? Will it suit me? Will I like it?

My answer is simple: It's up to you. Remember self-fulfilling prophecy?
(and rest assured there is always some post-choice cognitive dissonance at play!)

¹ An exception applies to those who have studied (or are currently studying) abroad.

² Again, an exception applies if you are planning to go abroad in your 3rd or 4th year. Let me know in your application essay if you have such a plan.