

Culture, Morality, and Society

University of Notre Dame · Instructor: Omar Lizardo

Discussion

Description

Course info, except for syllabus, is visible to the public.

Calendar

People

Library

Syllabus

Settings

This course is an interdisciplinary romp through the best that classical and contemporary social science (which includes sociology, anthropology, psychology, and more recently the cognitive neurosciences) have to offer to explain the fact of moral diversity. The first premise is that moral diversity (the existence of multiple moralities across historical periods, different societies, and across different cultures) cannot only be accounted for, but is to be expected. The second, premise is that persons engage the moral world primarily in an intuitive (not rule based way) and that culture affects morality by tuning our moral intuitions. The basic goal is that by enhancing our understanding of the sources and consequences of moral diversity our capacity to engage in (rational) dialogue across distinct moral cultures can be enhanced.

Instructors



Omar Lizardo

Details

University of Notre Dame
Spring 2014

Syllabus

Syllabus is not visible to the public.

Class Meetings

Most weeks will be divided into two types of meetings. "Lecture" days will be dedicated to the introduction of a new (and sometimes not so new) set of theories or concepts. "Seminar" days will be dedicated to seeing those theories or concepts applied to some set of specific cases, issues or examples. Seminar days will also be dedicated to student presentations on the readings due for that day. That means that while I will be doing most of the talking during lecture days you will be doing most of the talking during seminar days. Of course, student participation (questions, clarifications and opinions) are expected (and welcome) both on Lecture and Seminar days.

Assignments

There will be seven major ways of evaluating your learning performance in this course:

1) Daily reading summaries (15%): These are short (no more than 500 words) summaries on the readings due for that day. They are due every class meeting before 12p. These are not meant to provide any high-level analysis of the readings, but simply a "brain dump" that allows me to check (a) whether you did the reading, and (b) whether you actually got the gist of the readings. If none apply, I will mark you with a zero; if only (a) but not (b) applies, then you will get a score of one; if both (a) and (b) apply you will get a two. These may seem like a pain in the butt at first, but most people end up being appreciative of this assignment when all is said and done.

2) Short papers (30%): These are relatively short (no more than 2000 words) papers that will be (usually but not invariably) assigned on "seminar" days. They are meant for you to (after being familiar with a theory or set of concepts) to *apply* these concepts for explaining or shedding light on some issue. Check the course calendar for the dates and times at which these papers are due. You are required to do a total of five short papers throughout the semester. These will be graded from 0 to 10. You can get extra-credit by doing more than the required five.

ADDENDUM: Essays topics are divided into three groups corresponding to each of the classical theorists we will be dealing with this semester. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLETE AT LEAST ONE ESSAY FROM EACH GROUP (the list can be found at: <http://goo.gl/g3W9cA>). If you don't this counts as a "minus one" (meaning that you will have to do seven total from the other two groups to receive full credit). You are always welcome to submit more than six, and I'll count that as extra-credit.

3) Student presentations (10%): These will be short (10 - 15 minutes) presentations on *one* of the readings assigned at a given class meeting. These will be usually (but not always) happen on "Seminar" days. In this presentation, you will be responsible for (a) outlining the key argument in the reading in a way that your classmates can clearly follow, (b) provide a summary of the main conclusions of the reading, (c) outline what you see as the main strengths and the main weaknesses of the argument, (d) provide the class with a set of (2 - 5) questions that emerged from your reading and that can be the basis of further discussion. These will be graded from 0 to 4, depending on how many of the (a) through (d) requirements I deem that you have accomplished. You are required to do two (2) in-class presentations this semester.

4) Presentation of final project (5%): These will be short (10 minutes) presentations of your final paper, and they will take place during our last two class meetings (Mon. 4/29 and Wed. 5/1). These presentations should follow a "formal" (social science) presentation format: you begin by stating the main theses of your paper, you follow with a brief review of the literature, and then you present your

main conclusions. These will be graded on a scale from 0 to 3.

5) Miscellaneous assignments (10%): Occasionally, I will ask you to engage in an informal assignment (such as an in-class writing prompt, or taking a quiz online). These assignments are designed to give you a more "hands on" understanding of some of the theories (especially those based on psychological measurement) that we will be discussing throughout the semester. This will not be graded, but simply marked as either completed or not completed.

6) In-class participation (5%): In class participation, is expected and required. In class participation can take the form of asking clarification during lectures, or offering your own take or opinions during seminars. If you take a vow of silence throughout the semester, then you will not get credit for participation.

7) Final paper (25%): This will be a standard (5000 - 7500 words) research paper. You will write the paper "in stages":

- (a) First you will turn in a short one-paragraph proposal for a paper idea.
- (b) Then you will turn in a short introduction to the paper and a draft bibliography for the subject that you will be writing about.
- (c) Then, you will turn in a 5-7 page preliminary draft of your paper, which will serve as the main foundation for your 10 minute in-class presentation on the last week of the semester.
- (d) Finally, you will turn in a complete 8-12 page final draft on the day of the final.

You will only receive a grade (from 0 to a 100) on the final draft of the research paper. All the preliminary drafts will receive only comments and suggestions for improvement.

Notes on Assignments ▲

1) If students know that they will have to miss a paper deadline (e.g. due to involvement in a college sporting event or performance, or certain religious holidays not acknowledged by the university), they must inform me before-hand.

2) All written assignments (short papers and final paper drafts) will be due on the course website. Submission via email or under my door or as a hard copy in class does not constitute a formal submission unless you clear it with me first.

3) There is no formal "extra" credit, but doing more than the five required short papers is a way to get it.

Grading Scheme ▲

A : > 95%
 A- : 90-94%
 B+ : 87-89%
 B : 83-86%
 B- : 80-82%
 C+ : 77-79%
 C : 73-76%
 C- : 70-72%
 D : 60-69%
 F : < 60%

Attendance Policy ▲

I will take attendance each day. All absences must be cleared with me first. Furthermore, attendance rates, as an objective measure of student participation, will be used as a deciding factor in the determination of final grades, should a student's point total place her/him "on the line" between letter grades. Students will be allowed to make up work missed due to absences ONLY if they are EXCUSABLE, such as debilitating or highly contagious personal illness, illness of dependents, death in the immediate family, or legal obligations. To be excused for an absence the student must either notify me in advance of the class and receive my approval, OR document the absence in writing (by a doctor's note, letter from the Dean's office, etc.) on the first day the student returns to class. Evidence for excused absences will NOT be accepted at any later date. You only get three (3) excused absences for the semester, after that each additional absence will result in a penalty of half a letter grade on whatever your final grade is.

Reading Material ▲

All of the assigned readings will be available in this website (in the "Library" section) in pdf format.

Academic Code of Conduct ▲

In-Class Conduct ▲

Because of the subject matter, we are bound to cover topics that people might look at from different points of view. Discussion is an important aspect of this course. Let people have their say. You will have yours. Please respect the views, experiences, and opinions of others. Treat others as you

would like to be treated; trying to avoid destructive criticism and offering constructive criticism instead. Following these guidelines will make this more enjoyable to everyone.

Also, as a sign of respect to your fellow classmates, please avoid walking in late or leaving early. Please turn off cell phones and pagers before class. Please don't read the paper, talk to your friends, or pass notes during class. Not only are those things disrespectful and disruptive to your classmates and to me, but they also limit your ability to participate in class discussions and understand the material. Tardiness is disruptive. It is not professional, nor will it be appreciated. If you are more than 15 minutes late, that will count as an absence.

Office Hours

My office hours are TR from 12-1p. If these hours do not work for you, you can always send me an email and we can set up a time to meet.

Class Info

Culture Morality and Society (SOC 43197)

Place: Flanner Hall 625

Time: MW 9:30p-10:45p

Instructor: Omar Lizardo

Office: 735 Flanner

Phone: 631-1855

E-mail: olizardo@nd.edu or omarlizardo@gmail.com

url: <http://www.nd.edu/olizardo>

Thematic Organization

Thematically, the course is organized into four parts. We begin with the classical (Durkheim and Weber) sociological statements on the sources and consequences of moral diversity in historical societies. From Durkheim we revisit the distinction between morality in its mechanical and organic solidarity modes, and from Weber we revisit the argument for the religious and ideational bases of morality. We follow with the modern "anthropological take" on the issue of moral diversity which takes off from a development of the basic ideas of Weber on the importance of cultural worldviews as explanation for the existence of suffering and misfortune in the world (Shweder). We then switch gears to a case study of sociological explanations for the existence of diverse moral cultures in the contemporary United States (Bellah et al). We examine the applicability of these theories for explaining the so-called "cultural wars" in the contemporary United States. This concludes the first (sociological and anthropological) part of the course.

We then switch gears towards the "cultural psychology" of the self. Here, we become acquainted with contemporary thinking on the relation between culture, the self and social relations (Markus and Kitayama). We find that cultural psychologists have discovered something that Durkheim already knew: there are essentially two ways to relate to the world (and others): independent and relational. We examine the applicability of this theory of culture and the self to various cultural and moral divides in the contemporary world, in particular those premised on Class, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Region.

The third part of the course is dedicated to a broad review of the "embodied" and "emotive" sources of morality in modern psychology and linguistics. We begin with a review of modern research in "Moral Psychology" which is the branch of psychology in charge of the study of morality. We review the most influential contemporary paradigm in the field: "Moral Foundations Theory" (Haidt and collaborators) which is the most successful attempt in contemporary moral psychology to explain the existence of moral diversity in human societies. We will see that this approach is eminently compatible with the classical sociological tradition, in particular the work of Durkheim. We then dedicate a couple of weeks to the work of Rozin, who has done more than any other scholar in the study of morality today to ground moral reasoning on the body (e.g. disgust and food). We follow with a study of "moralization" which is the process through which previous morally neutral behaviors, attitudes and practices come to acquire a moral cast. We close with a review of the "metaphorical" bases of morality in discourse, and make connections with some initial themes in the anthropological study of moral diversity.

Topics

Culture, Morality, Cognition