



KIIS Austria Program, Summer 2025

PSY 355 Cross-Cultural Psychology

Professor: Dr. Alison Heck

Email: hecka@berea.edu

Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

Course Description

Examines the impact of culture on major principles, theories, and applications of psychology, including social behavior, gender, communication, development and abnormal psychology. Involves interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through this process and through hands-on experiences during the study abroad program, students will gain a better understanding and appreciation of psychological universals (phenomena common to people of many cultures), as well as the breadth and depth of diversity in human thought and behavior across the world.

Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes

Students will...

1. Discuss how culture relates to psychological processes, including one's behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and mental health and apply those ideas to their own lives and experiences during their time abroad.
2. Apply cultural psychology to their understanding of real-life cultural conflicts and tensions.
3. Describe the pros and cons of different approaches to navigating diversity in communities.
4. Apply the acculturation process to their own experiences abroad (e.g., culture shock).

Major Topics Covered in the Course

Research methods in cross-cultural psychology, race, ethnicity, and nationality, class/socioeconomic status, religion, mental health, intergroup conflict, identity and acculturation, multiculturalism vs. colorblindness.

Required Readings and Materials

There is no textbook for the course – relevant readings will be provided to students using a shared Dropbox prior to the beginning of the course. Students will need to have the readings available (either as hard copies or digital copies on a laptop or tablet) when we cover them during the program.

Attendance

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

Graded Assignments

The course will involve the following solo activities (i.e., work on outside of "class"):

- Daily journal entries
- Interview a local
- Acculturation check-ins
- Readings

The course will also involve the following "in-class" activities (i.e., work during "class"):

- Field excursions and their corresponding observation assignments
- Reflection and discussion of readings and experiences
- Final mini-presentation on specific population in region

More information will be provided in class on the various assignments – the section below is a brief summary of each assignment type.

Daily Journal Entries

You will need to keep a daily journal that allows you to track the cultural differences and similarities you have observed during your time abroad. For example, you could draw on your experiences with your host families and how those interactions and your expectations differ from those with your own families. While these entries do not need to be lengthy, you should not just be providing a "report" of your observations – it should include a reflection on what differences (or similarities) were observed in various behaviors, a discussion on how something you experienced challenged your preconceptions, and/or a discussion of how your observation relates back to class readings/discussions, perhaps. Note: I would recommend using photo documentation as well – this will help with your final project!

Interview a Local

You will be provided with a handout that provides a series of prompts for you to get to know someone from a different cultural background from yourself – in this case, you need to interview someone outside of our group who is local to Bregenz or that you meet during your travels.

Acculturation Check-ins

You will submit three “check-ins” that relate back to the acculturation process (including the culture shock phenomenon). Traveling abroad, especially if you have not done it before, is full of ups and downs in terms of how we are feeling about ourselves and our host country. At different points during the program (beginning, middle, end), you will reflect on how you are doing (excited? homesick? nervous?) and how that all fits in with the acculturation process.

Field Excursions/Travel Day Assignments

When we take a travel day, you will be exploring culture-related topics in the context of Bregenz and surrounding areas inside and outside of Austria. To help structure this learning, bring a camera (phone is fine) and be ready to take photos as directed for your field excursion assignments. You will also need to take notes and/or complete a handout, so bring something to write with and on.

Readings and Class Reflections

During the program, you will be assigned required readings that relate back to the topics we will be discussing during our time in Bregenz and surrounding areas. All readings will be provided before our journey so that they can be downloaded ahead of time. Reflections/discussions will occur in class.

Final Project/Presentation

The purpose of the final project is for you to become an “expert” on a particular community in the region. You will research that target population across these domains: 1) racial/ethnic/national background of members of the community, 2) class/socioeconomic status, 3) religion, 4) region, 5) intergroup conflicts and approaches to diversity. For example, you could choose to focus on the Jewish communities in European countries both in the past (i.e., WWII-era) and today. You could then compare what they have learned about your chosen target population and your own cultural background. Your “research” could be done online and/or through the direct experiences (e.g., museums and other cultural excursions, direct observations of behaviors noted in your daily journals). For the final presentation, you will create a digital product (e.g., a photo or video journal, a slideshow, digital scrapbook, etc.) covering what you learned about your chosen community.

AI Statement:

Specific assignments in this class could permit or even encourage the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools, such as ChatGPT. The default is that such use is disallowed unless otherwise stated. Any such use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited. It is each student’s responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any GAI output that is submitted: you bear the final responsibility. Violations of this policy will be considered academic dishonesty. Different KIIS classes could implement different AI policies, and it is student responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

Grading

Course grades will be based on the total number of points earned on each of the following activities:

Source of points (100 points)
Daily journal entries (25%)
Interview (5%)
Acculturation check-ins (15%)
Excursions and observation assignments (25%)
Readings and class discussion (10%)
Final project/presentation (20%)

Letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

90-100% of the total points available = A

80-89% of the total points available = B

70-79% of the total points available = C

60-69% of the total points available = D

0-59% of the total points available = F

Late Work/Make-up Work

Late work or make up work will be given at the discretion of the instructor. The validity of an excuse given as a reason for missing an exam or assignment will be determined by the instructor with consultation from the program director if needed. The instructor reserves the right to not allow late work or make-up work, or to give late or make-up work which is more difficult, less convenient, or in a different form than the original.

What to bring to class

1. The reading for the day (can be electronic version or paper).
2. Laptop, tablet, phone, or any device that can access the web.
3. Something that can take pictures (phone, camera).
4. Something to write with and on.

Disability Accommodation

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.

Planned course topics and associated excursions by week (specific schedule TBD):

Week 1: Introduction to cross-cultural psychology (what is it, how is it done); acculturation process; intergroup conflict (stereotypes, bias, discrimination)

- *Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site (Munich, Germany)*

Week 2: Cross-cultural comparisons in behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and mental health based on race, ethnicity, and nationality and religion

- *Vorarlberg Museum (Bregenz) and/or Kunsthaus Zürich (Zürich, Switzerland)*
- *Brewery and/or Beer Hall Visit (Bregenz and/or Munich, Germany)*
- *Schwarz-Weiß Bregenz Football Match (Bregenz)*
- *Jewish Museum Hohenems (Hohenems, Austria)*

Week 3: Cross-cultural comparisons based on class/socioeconomic status and region

- *Neuschwanstein Castle (Schwangau, Germany)*
- *Pfänder (Bregenz)*
- *Mindfulness, Resilience, & Happiness or Forest Bathing Programs (The Bregenzerwald)*

Week 4: Approaches to navigating diversity: multiculturalism vs. colorblindness.

****Excursions are subject to change based on program director's discretion, availability, weather, etc.**