



KIIS Argentina Program, Summer 2026

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

This course introduces students to the study of human thought, emotion, and behavior in cultural context. We will examine how cultural values, traditions, and social structures shape individual development, social interaction, and psychological well-being. Topics include cultural influences on identity, communication, and mental health, with a particular focus on Latin American cultural perspectives. Students will engage in discussions, research, and local observations to explore how psychology varies across societies and what remains universal. While studying in Buenos Aires, students will connect theory to lived experiences, deepening their understanding of psychology in a global and culturally diverse 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 or 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 Google Drive 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 (see schedule)

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

- Pre-/post-quiz on cross-cultural psychology concepts
- Final mini-presentation on specific population in region

More information will be provided in class and in the class Google Drive folder for the various assignments – the section below is a brief summary of each assignment type. **All assignments need to be uploaded to your individual folder in our shared Google Drive unless otherwise specified.**

Pre- and Post-Quiz

This is an assessment that will be given during our first and last class days – you will be asked questions about cross-cultural psychology that will be relevant to the material we will be covering during the course of the program. This will allow me to assess whether the key learning outcomes have been achieved by the end of the program.

Daily Photo Journal Entries

You will keep a daily journal that allows you to track the cultural differences and similarities you have

observed during your time abroad, which will tie in any excursions that happen that day. For example, you can draw on your experiences interacting dining out in Buenos Aires vs. back home – how do interactions with staff differ? Is dining leisurely vs. rushed? 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. You will take pictures that represent key aspects of your experience (be creative here!).

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 Argentina 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.

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 Argentina. All readings will be provided before our journey so that they can be downloaded ahead of time. Reflections/discussions will occur during class sessions.

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 at least three 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 Gaucho culture in Argentina or focus on other unique cultures within Latin America. 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 (Student Use)

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.

Statement on Faculty Use of Generative AI in Course Materials

Portions of the materials developed for this course, including assignment prompts, excursion guides, and activity outlines, may be created or refined with the assistance of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT by OpenAI). These tools will be used under the direction of the instructor to support clarity, structure, and alignment with learning objectives. All content will be reviewed and adapted to meet the specific needs of the course and student learning outcomes.

Grading

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

Source of points	Percentage of Total Grade
Daily journal entries + excursion reflections	30%
Interview	10%
Acculturation check-ins	15%
Readings and class discussions	15%
Final project/presentation	20%
Pre-/Post-Quiz	10%

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, camera, or any device that can access the web and take pictures.
3. 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/eo/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.

Tentative Topic Schedule – Will Change As Itinerary Finalized

Week 1: Introduction to Cross-Cultural Psychology

Theme: Defining cross-cultural psychology; WEIRD problem; research challenges; culture shock.

Reading: Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, "The Weirdest People in the World?"; Culture shock; Cross-cultural methods.

Local Connection: Walking orientation of San Telmo or Palermo, noting cultural markers (greetings, café culture, public space use).

Activity: "First Impressions" reflection + begin *Inside/Outside Journal* (personal adjustment + observed behaviors).

Week 2: Culture, Identity, and Mental Health

Theme: Cultural identities (race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, region); culture's impact on mental health, emotions, and behavior.

Reading: Readings on identity across various domains; article on Argentine identity and mental health.

Local Connection: Visit MALBA (Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires) to analyze identity and expression in art; observe leisure in fútbol, tango, or café culture.

Activity: Identity Map exercise (compare self and Argentine markers) + *Inside/Outside Journal* entry on leisure/identity.

Week 3: Navigating Diversity

Theme: Color-blindness vs. multiculturalism; intergroup and intragroup conflict; acculturation processes.

Reading: Readings on acculturation. Argentina-specific readings about immigrant influences.

Local Connection: Neighborhood visit to explore immigrant influences on architecture, food, and daily life; Plaza de Mayo for politics and collective identity.

Activity: Mini-ethnography in small groups (document diversity with photos/sketches/notes) + *Inside/Outside Journal* entry on diversity.

Week 4: Integration & Reflection

Theme: Universals vs. cultural specifics; revisiting culture shock and adaptation; integrating theory with lived experience.

Reading: Reviewing culture shock phenomenon readings; human universals reading (e.g., on grief)

Local Connection: Final class in Jardín Japonés or Parque Tres de Febrero for reflective discussion.

Activity: Creative synthesis presentations (poster, podcast, zine, video, or gallery walk) + submission of *Inside/Outside Journal Portfolio*.