WST 3106 -- Syllabus
“Introduction to Global Diversity”

FIU Women’s Studies Center
March 2013

Course Description

This course is designed to enhance the understanding of diversity by exploring the complexity of difference within our contemporary global framework. We will evaluate diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, sexuality, ability, social and economic status as well as age, to assess how these constructs manifest systems of inequality and privilege.

Throughout the course we will examine a series of global case studies to approach the question whether members of one culture can justifiably criticize the values of another: Given the power dynamics between majority and minority cultures, where social, economic, and political power disproportionately remains with members of the dominant culture, we will assess in what ways the existence of diversity may lead to greater tolerance of the standards and norms of other cultures.

Against this background, we will look at possible trajectories to leverage diversity to achieve equality, engaging students to evaluate how diversity can be framed as an asset, rather than a problem. At the end of this course, students will be challenged to take action for affirming diversity and ending oppressive behavior to formulate policies of social justice.

Course Objectives

- To develop a framework for better understanding and respecting cultural difference.
- To increase awareness and understanding of diversity within as well as between groups.
- To develop awareness, sensitivity, and understanding of various racial, religious, sexual orientation, cultural, and ethnic groups by identifying and deconstructing stereotypes.
- To examine the effects of prejudice and discrimination with regard to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability status within a domestic and global context.
- To recognize the ways in which the construction of dominant, hegemonic identities manifest dynamics of privilege and inequality in societies across the globe.
- To instill factual knowledge (terminology, trends, and concepts) of demographic diversity on a local and global level.
- To demonstrate competency in researching cultures and societies different from our own.
- To identify and understand implications of diversity for study and research across all academic and professional disciplines.
Global Learning Course Outcomes

- Global Awareness: Students will be able to demonstrate awareness of interrelated socio-cultural, historical, political and economic forces that shape the construction of difference in local and global cultures, and examine how cultural values shape and impact decisions and actions across the globe.

- Global Perspective: Students will be able to analyze how a form of privilege/inequality (e.g. ableism, racism, sexism, classism) prevails globally, internationally, or interculturally, and manifests in diverse locales including institutions, organizations, and policies across the world.

- Global Engagement: Students will be able to demonstrate acceptance of shared responsibility for respecting cultural difference, as well as engaging in solving local, global and intercultural experiences of inequalities whether in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability status.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course students will

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures and worldviews;
- Examine the impact of globalizing processes in shaping contemporary diversity with regard to heterogeneity in terms of culture, identity, and nation;
- Assess how the construction of hegemonic identities reinforce persistent power imbalances against the background of local and global processes;
- Identify social, economic, political, and religious interrelationships between cultures and worldviews;
- Understand how cultural values shape people’s perceptions and impact global decisions and actions;
- Identify theoretical frameworks and approaches for interpreting, defining, analyzing, and evaluating the diversity of human experiences on a local and global level;
- Use multiple lenses including race, ethnicity, gender, social class, culture and relation to assess intercultural challenges and how these might be transformed into assets;
- Develop sustained critical thinking skills as well as literacy skills to evaluate global issues from multiple perspectives.

Required Texts


Please see Course Schedule for all additional readings.
Co-Curricular Activities

As co-curricular activities, this course will offer Case Studies with a global dimension to deepen the understanding and evaluation of the way in which diversity can be leveraged as an asset. In the course of the semester, students will complete 5 Group Applications that require analysis of a given topic to gain a realistic viewpoint on global issues versus students’ individual location. This will enable students to determine the different perspectives and overcome their own bias to respect and leverage diversity.

In addition, Guest Speakers will be invited from different departments at FIU, local community organizations as well as professionals who deal with the key concepts taught in this course. Topics depend on availability of speakers and lectures may include:

**TOPIC I: Cultural Diversity – Brazil (cultural diversity)**
Possible Speaker: Centro Cultural Brasil USA, Miami, FL

**TOPIC II: Ethnic & Religious Diversity – Africa**
Possible Speaker: Nigerian Association of South Florida, Miami, FL
Kenyan Writer, Coral Springs, FL

**TOPIC III: Diversity in the Workplace (ableism; racism; hetero/sexism)**
Possible Speaker: FIU Labor Studies Department;
FIU Center for Diversity in Engineering & Computing

**TOPIC IV: Diversity in Education (ableism; racism; hetero/sexism)**
Possible Speaker: Miami-Dade Office of Diversity Compliance

**EXTRA CREDIT/TOPIC MISCELLANEOUS:**
Students will have the opportunity to gain extra credit points by attending a local, cultural event and presenting their experience in a reflection paper. Events can include Film Festivals, Cultural Festivals, Author Readings, etc.

Evaluation and Grading

All assignments listed below ask students to critically engage with the course material, apply it and extend it as necessary. Exclusive of in-class exams, all assignments contribute to classroom discussion and debate.

1) **Attendance & Participation (10%)**

**Discussion Leader Assignment:**
Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class, and be prepared for class discussion. Students will be in charge of leading discussion of the course material for at least two class sessions during the semester, assigned by the instructor. Students will briefly introduce the thesis of the assigned article before starting a sustained class discussion by raising specific questions for open debate.

Unexcused absences and lack of participation will count against your final grade. Students who miss more than 4 classes unexcused will have their course grade automatically reduced one level, e.g. from A- to B+. Students who fail to attend at least 60% of class sessions will automatically receive an F grade.
2) **Critical Response Papers (20%)**

Students have to choose four course sections (Parts I, II, IV, V) to reflect on the forms of privilege and inequality discussed. While reflecting on one of the class readings/movie analysis/guest lecture, students examine the impact of diversity in local and global terms.

3) **Midterm Exam (10%) & Final Exam (10%)**

Students will be given Short Answer Questions to demonstrate their ability to comprehend and apply knowledge gained through the textbook readings as well as media analyses. In addition, students will have to write one Essay to show that they can apply the theoretical understanding to a global context.

4) **Active Learning Component, Final Class Paper (50%)**

**Group Work (50 points)**

Students will form study groups (4-5 participants) to examine one form of privilege (e.g., Ableism) in a chosen societal structure (e.g., health, work, politics) and conduct research within a local context (store/organization/factory etc).

a) Study groups will compile a *RESEARCH REPORT* (form is variable: blog entry; video; document) on their topic with the following focus:

- The social construction of privilege/inequality within the study context;
- Factual data gained in observation/interviews/research;
- Conclusion: obstacles to equality, and suggestions how to gain equality while leveraging diversity.

b) *ORAL PRESENTATION*: Student groups will present research results, evaluate possible solutions, and lead class discussion on the individual topic

**Individual Class Paper (50 points):**

Students will conduct individual research within a global context that directly relates to the topic of their Group Work:

- Study the chosen form of privilege within a global context (in a country of student’s choice);
- Explore in what ways the issues are overcome; under/represented; or ignored;
- Evaluate the impact on society, public or private lives;
- Assess the lessons learned comparing the student’s local framework (group work) with the global perspective (individual research).
Course Schedule

PART I
In Part I we will analyze how other cultures' values, perspectives, and realities are similar and different than our own. We will acquire an understanding of our own cultural identity as a basis for developing global consciousness and increasing cross-cultural competency: We will analyze how social identities are learned and reinforced through social practice. Against this background, we will examine how the manifestation of hegemonic identities (i.e. masculinity; ability; whiteness; heterosexuality, etc) mediates institutionalized oppression by reinforcing forms of inequality and privilege in societies across the globe. Students will critically engage with ingrained stereotypes and ethnocentrism while taking a self-assessment test on Global Diversity. Discussion Leader assignments as well as a Group Application and a Critical Response Paper will enable students to challenge personal and societal bias and apply critical thinking skills, within a local as well as global context.

WEEK 1
Introduction
Introducing key terminology: Cultural Identity, Difference, Diversity, and Globalization. We will explore the basic framework: What is Diversity? Why do we have diversity? What is Globalization? And what is the interconnection between globalizing processes and formations of identity and difference?

ASSESSMENT: Global Diversity Awareness Test
Thomas Sowell “Cultural Diversity: A World View”
Anthony Appiah, “Race, Culture, Identity” in Amy Gutmann (ed.) Color Conscious

WEEK 2
Theoretical Framework: Identities and Social Locations

GROUP APPLICATION: “News” (Students analyze the same topic in 3 journalistic publications from different global regions and will evaluate the different perspectives)
Textbook Section 1 ‘Conceptual Frameworks’
Edward T. Hall “Culture as an Irrational Force”

WEEK 3
Stereotypes & Ethnocentrism

MOVIE ANALYSIS: “Ouch! That stereotype hurts” (2007)
CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPER#1 due

PART II
We will look at the definition and social practice of oppressive systems including racism, classism and religious intolerance, assessing the way in which these constitute social problems rather than historical legacy. Students will demonstrate analytic skills in evaluating how these systems of oppression intersect and reinforce each other by means of a Critical Response Paper as well as Discussion Leader assignments.

WEEK 4
Racism

GROUP APPLICATION
Textbook Section 2 ‘Racism’
John Tehranian “Performing Whiteness: The Construction of Racial Identity in America”

**WEEK 5**

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- Textbook Section 3 ‘Classism’

**WEEK 6**

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- GROUP APPLICATION: “Literature” (Students will analyze the short story “Dead Man’s Path” by Chinua Achebe and assess the inherent issues of religious diversity in Nigeria)
- Textbook Section 4 ‘Religious Oppression’
- Desmond Tutu, “God is Clearly Not a Christian: Pleas for Interfaith Tolerance”
- CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPER #2 due

**PART III**

Students will examine the effects of prejudice and discrimination with regard to either race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability status within a domestic and global context through an Active Learning component, which includes Group Work as well as the compilation of an Individual Research Paper: Based on a local study of a chosen form of inequality/privilege, students will be able to set their findings into a global context, and assess how intercultural challenges might be leveraged and transformed into assets. In the midterm exam students will be able to demonstrate their theoretical knowledge acquired as well as apply their understanding to contemporary social issues.

**WEEK 7**

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- Student Off-campus Research Project

*** **Midterm Exam*** ***

**WEEK 8**

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- Student Off-campus Research Project

**PART IV**

We will look at the definition and social practice of oppressive systems including hetero/sexism and forms of oppression for gendered minorities, applying the theoretical understanding of these social issues within a global context. Students will critically analyze how systems of oppression intersect and reinforce each other by means of a Critical Response Paper as well as Discussion Leader assignments.

**WEEK 9**

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- GROUP APPLICATION: Analysis Social Media
- Textbook Section 5 ‘Sexism’
- Susan Moller Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”

**WEEK 10**

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- Textbook Section 6 ‘Heterosexism’
WEEK 11 | Transgender Oppression

- Textbook Section 7 ‘Transgender Oppression’

CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPER#3 due

PART V

We will look at the definition and social practice of oppressive systems including ableism and ageism, applying the theoretical understanding of these social issues within a global context. Students will demonstrate analytic skills in evaluating how these systems of oppression intersect and reinforce each other by means of a Critical Response Paper as well as Discussion Leader assignments. In the fourth Response Paper assignment, students will be able assess in what ways diversity can be leveraged as an asset, as a means to ending oppressive behavior and achieving equality. Their Final Class Papers, based on the Active Learning Component, will allow students to formulate policies of social justice in a global comparison.

WEEK 12 | Ableism

- GROUP APPLICATION: Movie Analysis (“Working out: people with disabilities in the workplace”)
- Textbook Section 8 ‘Ableism’

WEEK 13 | Ageism & Adultism

- Textbook Section 9 ‘Ageism and Adultism’
- MOVIE ANALYSIS: ‘Age Issues: From Young to Old’ (2008)

WEEK 14 | Working for Social Justice

- Textbook Section 10 ‘Visions and Strategies for Change’
- Pollis “Human Rights a Western Construct”

CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPER#4 due

WEEK 15 | Final Class Paper & Presentation

- Students will present their Active Learning Project in class;
- Submit Papers on their Research Project and Practical Findings.

WEEK 16 | Conclusion

- Assessment: Global Diversity Awareness Test

***FINAL EXAM***