

Cognition and Culture - Anthropology 3383 - Pascal BOYER Tu-Th 8:30-10am

This course examines the influence of evolved cognitive dispositions (the way natural selection engineered the human mind) on the transmission of cultural knowledge. Dispositions present from early childhood make certain kinds of cultural knowledge particularly easy to acquire, and therefore, culturally stable. We also consider the evidence for differences in cognitive processes triggered by different social environments. Emphasis is on empirical studies and experimental methods in the study of cultural similarity and differences.

Evaluation.

[a] in-class discussion of the readings (10%)

[b] oral presentation of primary sources (20%)

[c] five in-class quizzes (45%)

[d] term paper (25%)

Letter grades: "A+"=96+, "A"=92+, "A-"=88+, "B+"=84+, "B-">80+ and so on.

Readings and discussion. All the relevant texts are on Blackboard, in the "Cog&Culture Texts" folder. Always prepare a list of main points of the readings and questions, as you may be asked to lead the discussion.

Presentation. This should be a 15 to 20 min presentation (you can use Powerpoint or equivalent, or write on the blackboard, or use handouts – your choice). This is graded for accuracy and clarity. Avoid simply summarizing the text, or going through the different sections ("they say this... then they say that..."). Please provide a clear summary of [1] what the general question is, [2] what the state of the art is before the study, [3] what the authors want to add to that, [4] whether the results justify the conclusion and support the hypotheses.

Paper. This will be about 1500 words long, on one of the topics posted early in the course. The ideal is to use a few new sources, and describe different positions or arguments on the issue at hand. Avoid expressing mere personal opinions – all statements should be based on citation, argument and evidence. The final version of the paper is due on Dec 3 **but** you can submit a draft version before that – as long as I receive it before Nov 20, so I can send comments and suggestions to make it (even) better.

Contact. Email pboyer@wustl.edu Office hours T-Th 2-3pm or make an appointment. Office: 453a, Psychology Building.

Dates		Theme	Readings	Presentations
25-Aug-15	1	Intro to culture, cognition		
27-Aug-15	2	Logic and Culture	NisbettCh6	
1-Sep-15	3	Background: Concepts and categories, syntax	Smith.Medin.1983.ch1.2	
3-Sep-15	4	Color categories	Kay Color TiCS	MandarinEnglishConceptTime
8-Sep-15	5	Review and Quiz		
10-Sep-15	6	Orality and memory	Lord Oral Poetry	Rubin Oral Tradition Memory Exrpt
15-Sep-15	7	http://www.ancientscripts.com/ws.html	Link: Writing Systems	
17-Sep-15	8	Effects of literacy	Goody&WattLiteracy.pdf	LuriaCh4
22-Sep-15	9	Numerical cognition and number systems	DeCruz 2006 Evol Number Systems	Gordon 2004 Piraha Number.pdf
24-Sep-15	10	Review and Quiz		
29-Sep-15	11	Background: Folk-biology	Inagaki naive biology, Gelman child essentialism	Greif Questions DomSpec
1-Oct-15	12	Social categories 1 - Essentialised categories	GilWhiteEthnicSpecies.pdf	Faulkner 2004 Cont Xenophobia.pdf
6-Oct-15	13	Social categories 2 - Racism in different cultures	Payne 06 Weapon Bias	
8-Oct-15	14	Review and Quiz		
13-Oct-15	15	Background: Theory of mind	Malle Folk_Theory_of_Mind_03	Astuti 2001 Natural Dualism
15-Oct-15	16	Spirits, souls and dead people	Bering 2006 Folk Psych of Souls	Astuti 2002 What-happens after death
20-Oct-15	17	Tribal Religion	BoyerTics	Kelemen Intuitive Theism
22-Oct-15	18	Axial age religions	Baumard Boyer 2013 Moral Religions	BarrettPrayer.pdf
27-Oct-15	19	Ritualized behavior	2006LienardBoyerRitualsAmAnth.pdf	Barrett & Lawson 2001
29-Oct-15	20	Magic	Nemeroff Similarity and Contagion Heuristics	Tambiah Power of Words

3-Nov-15	21	Review and Quiz		
5-Nov-15	22	Story telling	Sugiyama-2001-food-foragers-and-folklore	BartlettPages.pdf
10-Nov-15	23	Aesthetics	McManus 2005 Symmetry	MorinPortraits-2013.pdf
12-Nov-15	24	Musical cognition	Peretz 2006 Biology Music	Fritz 2009 Universal Music Emotion
17-Nov-15	25	Review and Quiz		
19-Nov-15	26	Strange beliefs	http://www.michaelshermer.com/weird-things/excerpt/	Heath 01 Emot Selection Urb Legends
24-Nov-15	27	Cultural epidemics	Sperber1985Anthropology&Psychology	
1-Dec-15	28	Domain-specificity in culture	SperberHirschfeldCultureModularity.pdf	
3-Dec-15	29	Evolution and culture	TBA	