

## COU 655 Social and Cultural Context and Systems

### Three Credit Hours

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**Required Text:** Susan T. Fiske, Social Beings. Third Edition, Wiley, 2013. ISBN: 1118552547.  
Note: Older editions are acceptable.

**Reference:** Howard Rosenthal, Encyclopedia of Counseling. Third Edition, Routledge, 2008. Chapter 4, "Social and Cultural Foundations." Note: This will be available for use in the classroom as a reference.

**Course Description:** Counseling 655 is a three-hour graduate level course intended for career professionals in the mental health field. The course is an examination of the effect of social influence on the development of human behavior. Attitude formation, group behavior, cultural subgroups, and general systems theory are examined. Additional topics include aggression, role patterning, leadership, and the influence of social systems context on patterns of relationship development. Special attention is given to the manner in which social roles and system expectations are relevant to counseling practice. The course focuses on studies that provide an understanding of the social and cultural context of relationships and systems, issues, and trends in a multicultural and/or diverse society.

The course examines the effects of social influence on the development of human behavior. Attitude formation, group behavior, cultural subgroups, and general systems theory are addressed. Additional topics include studies in the relationships between individual and social spheres with attention to such issues as conformity, role patterning, leadership, persuasion, self-justification, aggression, prejudice, intimacy and attraction, and the influence of social and cultural systems and context on patterns of relationship development. Course study concerns social interaction in situations of (1) social influences on individuals, (2) dyads or face-to-face groups, and (3) larger social systems. Special attention is given to the manner in which social roles and system expectations are relevant to counseling practice. Concepts, theories, data, research methods, and applications of varied substantive topics are examined. Critical thinking, writing, and the sharing of experiential knowledge by students are stressed. This course draws from theoretical perspectives of social psychology, applying relevant concepts and theories to graduate counseling majors. We are particularly interested in understanding and explaining how the "thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others" (Allport, 1985: 3), and in what context and systems behavior occurs.

This course is a refreshingly different approach to the traditional study of human behavior. The goal is for the course to be a highly engaging experience connecting course material to students' everyday lives and to their future practice of counseling. The course integrates material showing its relevance to human problems and incorporates motivation, social evolution, and culture, not as after-thoughts, but as intrinsic features of the human condition. The course focuses on five core social motives: Belonging, Understanding, Controlling, Enhancing Self, and Trusting. We look at the concept of adaptation from a social and cultural context approach that is progressive, responsible, and complete. Within this framework, we integrate culture throughout, providing a realistic sense of how human persons operate in an increasingly multi-cultural world, weaving issues of gender, socioeconomics, and ethnicity into the understanding of human behavior in most contexts and systems.

Requirements for course participants include maintaining reflective journals and doing oral presentations. Students will maintain a course journal in which they will enter insights and reflections about readings from the text, video cases studies, presentations by other students, and class discussions. The journal should be organized by text chapter and be integrative in that reflections (insights and observations) are tied together and viewed from a counseling perspective. For each Fiske chapter, discuss the chapter's main points and/or important concepts; presenting definitions of these points or concepts in your own words; generating brief questions or comments (pointing out insights and observations); highlighting what's interesting, relevant to counseling, and/or unconvincing, confusing, or pointless; and what makes sense, and briefly explain why. For video case studies, class discussion, and presentations you are to summarize what was presented in a few sentences and tie this narrative back to the relevant text chapter and provide the same analysis as for information and material in the text chapters. The student will demonstrate achieving Course Learning Objectives in the journal.

Regarding presentations, students will make presentations on assigned reading selections of enduring intellectual value--classic articles, book excerpts, and research studies--that have shaped the study of social behavior and our contemporary understanding of it. These selections, written by some of the greatest thinkers in social behavior, are organized topically around major areas of behavioral study: social cognitive processes; attitudes; social interaction and relationships; social influence and group processes; helping and aggression; and applications of other areas of social behavior. Students will critique the presentations and note these reflections in their course journal. All of the class assignments and activities (readings from the text, video cases studies, student presentations and class discussions) are to promote an understanding of social behavior and help the class think about how context (social and cultural) and systems may affect human behavior, especially related to understanding antecedent variables or underlying factors of behavior in a person's life.

**Course Goals.** This course is designed to be a challenging academic experience. The goal is for the course participant to grow as a result of this scholarly pursuit by gaining a better understanding of “self” and the others in one’s life and/or their future counseling practice. In this regard, the course can help the participant obtain an understanding of concepts of social behavior and be able to relate this understanding to real life situations, social interactions, and counseling practice. Also important is for participants to become more proficient communicators, both in verbal and written communicative skills, and to gain confidence as a counselor working in a multifaceted, diverse group environment.

**Course Integrated into the Program Requirements**

Mental Health Focus	Addictions Focus	School Focus
Required	Required	Required

**Course as Relates to External Requirements**

CACREP Requirements (2009)	Nebraska Licensure Addictions	NDEA Rule 20
Social and cultural diversity studies.	Social and cultural diversity studies.	Social and cultural diversity studies.

**Course Learning Objectives:** Upon completing the course, students will be able to demonstrate through classroom participation, written work, and class room presentations the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills involving the following:

1. becoming aware of the importance of antecedent variables or underlying factors in and/or affecting a client's life circumstances and world view, including the processes of socialization and development of "self" and its various attributes;
2. understanding the importance of social and cultural influences and context of a client's life and the systems in which the client exists;
3. understanding multicultural and pluralistic trends, including characteristics and concerns within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally;
4. understanding the effects of crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events on persons of all ages;
5. becoming aware of attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and understandings, and acculturative experiences, including specific experiential learning activities designed to foster students' understanding of self and social and/or culturally diverse clients;
6. understanding the counselors' roles in developing cultural self-awareness, promoting cultural social justice, advocacy and conflict resolution, and other culturally supported behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind, or body; and
7. understanding counselors' roles in eliminating biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression, exclusion, and discrimination.

**Evaluation of Learning Outcomes.** Course participants will be evaluated to determine whether or not the learning outcomes are achieved. Grading will encompass class attendance; the oral presentations; participation in class discussion, critiques, and the degree of preparedness for each class session; quality and depth of the course journal in terms of content, concept or theory development, insights and reflections, and the application of concepts and demonstrating a solid understanding learning objectives in the journal. In total, these means of evaluations address all stated course learning objectives. Preparation for each class session is essential if these objectives are to be met. In this regard, staying current in the assigned readings is very important.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluations (Grading):**

1. Attendance and participation in classroom discussions. This includes being prepared to discuss assigned readings, handouts, films and videos, etc. Twenty points toward the final grade will be based on participation and attendance. After reading the syllabus, you can understand that attendance is important to take full advantage of all the learning opportunities of this course. If you know in advance that you must miss a class, speak to me so that I can give you assignments to make-up the absence. One absence can be made-up. Two absences will result in the loss of 10 points, plus will require make-up work. If you anticipate more than two absences, please enroll for the course at a time more convenient to your schedule.
2. **Oral Presentation.** The presentation is worth 10 points.
3. **Journal.** Discussion in the journal should demonstrate that the Course Learning Objectives have been achieved. The journal should be integrative in that insights, observations, and reflections are tied together and relate to the learning objectives. For each Fiske chapter, write about the main points and discuss how they relate to better understanding human behavior and pertain to counseling. The integrative journal should include information and discussion from class discussions, video case studies, and student presentations. For presentations, summarize what was presented in a few sentences and provide the same analysis as for the text chapters. Use your comments, summaries, and thoughts as a basis for your in-class contributions (participation). The journal is worth 70 points and is due one week after the final class session.

**Grading Scale: Possible Points:**

100-97=A+	83-80=B-	Journal	70 points
96-94=A	79-77=C+	Oral Presentation	10 points
93-90=A-	76-74=C	Attendance/	
89-87=B+	73-70=C-	<u>Participation</u>	<u>20 points</u>
86-84=B	60-67=D	Total Possible Points	100

**Feedback:**

Students may request feedback at any time during the course. Formal evaluation and feedback will follow the routine format for the college.

**Methods of Instruction:**

This will be an interactive course that includes completion of reading assignments, student presentations and discussions, lecture and instruction, and participation in cooperative learning opportunities. Course requirements and sessions' activities; class schedule; reading and presentation assignments; student participation; and other issues will be discussed during the first class session.

**Weekly Assignments:**

Students will be responsible for reading the assigned chapters according to the class schedule, demonstrate an ability to discuss course materials and content using critical thinking and professional standards, and demonstrate mastery of the material through written work, discussion in class, and oral presentations. Students will be responsible for researching an assigned topic and presenting it to the class. The requirements for this will be discussed in the first class.

**Schedule:**

The schedule for the course will be discussed during the first class session. There will be work required outside of the classroom. This work will be in the form of research and the development of class presentations, and viewing video case studies. Listed, as follows, is the expected time contribution to the course:

**Required hours for each session of the 9-week course:**

4 hrs. in class.

5 hrs. completing reading assignments and research, and viewing video case studies.

5 hrs. class preparation and reflective journal writing.

Total required weekly hours are 14 hours x 9 wks. = 126 hours.



Critical Thinking. Remember, in seeking the elusive truth and trying to have better human relations through a better understanding of one another, we have two basic questions to ask:

*How do you know?...What does it mean?*

We truly hope that you will enjoy this learning experience.

**Course Outline:**

Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 I Introduction: Adaptive Motives for Social Situations, Via Cultures and Brains  
(Read prior to class) Chapter 2 Scientific Methods for Studying People in Interaction

**Session One.**

1. Introduction and explanation of the course and learning expectations.
2. Discussion of course requirements and assignments.
3. Discuss Journal requirements. (View example journals)(Handout)
4. Introduction of course participants.

LECTURE: Welcome to this introduction of you to your “self” and to others.

Topics Include: Four Central Concerns Involving Human Interaction  
 Five Core Social Motives:  
 Allen Model of Social Development (Handout)  
 Antecedent variables and underlying factors  
 Open the eyes of your heart.

5. VIDEO: "Country Boys" PBS, 2005. Note: Students will continue to view the 5-hour case study at home.
6. Discussion concerning video.
7. Overview of oral presentations.
8. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7.

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Reading Assignment: Chapter 3 Ordinary Personology: Figuring Out Why People Do What They Do  
(Read prior to class) Chapter 4 Social Cognition: Making Sense of Others

**Session Two.**

1. Discuss role theory, reinforcement theory, cognitive theory, and symbolic interaction theory from a critical thinking perspective.
2. LECTURE: Who are you and of what worth?

Topics Include: Socialization      Agents                      Processes                      Outcomes  
 Secondary Socialization  
 Impression Formation  
 Attribution Theory  
 Bias and Error in Attribution  
 What would you do in a given situation – The Power of the Social Situation?  
 Viewing the social world – Social Cognition

4. VIDEO: “The Power of the Situation.” *Discovering Psychology* Series, Annenberg Foundation
5. Discussion of video (Self-image, self-worth, self-concept, reference groups)
6. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

a. Article \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Article \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

7. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1 through 7.

Reading Assignment: Chapter 5 The Self: Social to the Core  
(Read prior to class) Chapter 6 Attitudes and Persuasion: Changing Hearts and Minds

**Session Three.**

1. LECTURE: The Social Self in the Everyday World ~ Understanding Attitude Change.  
Topics Include: Schemas  
Attitude Formation  
Cognitive Dissonance  
Balance Theory  
Emergence and Source of Self  
Self-Schema, Self-Image, Self-Concept, Self-Worth, and Self-Esteem (Handout)  
Attitude Change Through Methods of Persuasion  
Threats and Promises  
Obedience to Authority  
Social Power Compliance Obedience  
Conformity Language and Verbal Communication  
Nonverbal Communication  
Social Structure and Communication  
Self-Presentation  
Impression Management  
Socialization Cultural Message Peer Pressure  
Gender Stereotypes  
Gender-Based Evaluation Bias
  
2. VIDEO: "A Time for Burning." American Lutheran Church, 1966..
3. Discussion of video.
4. Discuss social influence and persuasion.
  - a. Communication-Persuasion Paradigm
  - b. Obedience to authority
5. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
  - a. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - b. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
6. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1to7.



Reading Assignment: Chapter 7. Attraction: Initiating Romance, Friendship, and Other Relationships  
(Read prior to class) Chapter 8. Close Relationships: Passion, Interdependence, Commitment, and Intimacy

**Session Four.**

1. LECTURE: Relax and Meet Shirley Valentine.

Topics Include: Interpersonal Attraction, Love, and Intimacy  
Physical Attraction  
Matching Hypotheses  
Homogeneity of Norms  
Proximity  
Same Sex Attraction  
Components of the Life Course  
Influences on Life Progression  
Stages in the Life Course: Age and Sex Roles  
“The Natural Order”  
Historical Variations  
Socialization Cultural Message Peer Pressure  
Gender Stereotypes  
Gender-Based Evaluation Bias

2. Discuss symbolic communication and language.

3. VIDEO: "Shirley Valentine."

4. Discuss video.

5. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

a. Article \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Article \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

6. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1 to 3 and 5 to 7.



Reading Assignment: Chapter 9. Helping: Prosocial Behavior  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Five.**

1. LECTURE: Going my way?  
Topics Include: Motivation to Help Others  
Other Factors in Helping Others  
Status Attainment Individual Values Alienation Role Theory  
Social Influences on Health Symbolic Interaction Theory  
Alienation
2. VIDEO: "Gospel for Teens." ABC, 2011.  
"Bridget Kelly's Story of Survival." ABC News, 2004; 2007.
3. Discussion of video (e.g., impression management, interpersonal attraction and relationships, attitudes [prejudice], self-esteem, and social perception and attribution, etc.).
4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
  - a. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18.

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Reading Assignment: Chapter 10. Aggression: Antisocial Behavior  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Six.**

1. LECTURE: Having a hard time getting along.  
Topics Include: Aggression and the Motivation to Harm  
Other Aspects of Aggression  
Status Attainment Individual Values Alienation Role Theory  
Alienation
2. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
  - a. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
3. VIDEO: "Ground Truth." IMDb, 2006.
4. Discussion of the video ~ aggression.
5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1 - 7.



Reading Assignment: Chapter 11. Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination: Social Biases  
(Read prior to class) Chapter 12. Small Groups: Ongoing Interactions

**Session Seven.**

1. LECTURE: Applying Social Psychological Concepts to the Real World.  
Topics Include: Development of Intergroup Conflict  
Persistence – Effects -- Resolution  
Group Cohesion            Group Goals            Group Norms  
Minority/Majority Influence  
Role Differentiation in Newly Formed Groups  
Status Characteristics and Social Interaction  
Equity and Reward Distribution  
Stability and Change in Authority  
Group Performance            Group Tasks            Leadership            Groupthink
2. Discussion relative to lecture and contemporary events.
3. VIDEO: "American Hollow." HBO, 2001
4. Discussion --- Achieving course learning objectives.
5. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
  - a. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
6. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1 - 7.

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Reading Assignment: Chapter 13. Conformity and Obedience: Doing What Others Do and Say  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Eight.**

1. LECTURE: Follow me...  
Topics Include: Obedience to Authority  
Social Power    Compliance    Obedience  
Conformity Language and Verbal Communication  
Nonverbal Communication  
Social Structure and Communication  
Self-Presentation  
Impression Management
2. VIDEO: "Restrepo." National Geographic, 2010.
3. Discussion about video.
4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
  - a. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1 - 7.

Reading Assignment: Chapter 14. Conclusion: Social Beings  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Nine.**

1. LECTURE: Bringing It All Together.  
Topics Include: Norms Violations Reactions to Norms Violations Formal Social Controls  
Labeling and Secondary Deviance Crowds Collective Behavior Underlying Causes  
Precipitating Events to Collective Behavior Social Movement Development  
Social Movement Organizations The Consequences of Social Movements
  
2. VIDEO: "Stranger with a Camera." Appalshop, 2002.
  
3. Discussion on the application of course learning objectivess and concepts to real situations, as reflected in the video. Does this knowledge help us to better understand and explain human behavior in everyday life? How can this be beneficial to you and to society in general, and what are some ethical considerations?
  
4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:
  - a. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - b. Article \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Questions....answers?
  
6. Course evaluations.
  
7. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1 through 7.

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The course journal is due one week after the final class session.

