



PSYC 300 Experiencing Multicultural Psychology

Course Syllabus
Fall Semester 2025

Coordinators: Zachary Nowak, PhD & Stefano Console, MA

Credits: 1

Contact Hours: 15

Prerequisites: None

Meeting Days & Time: Aula 2 at 5:45pm (unless otherwise specified—refer to definitive schedule in Moodle)

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Type: Core course of the Multicultural Psychology Program (MPP)

Course Fee: Included in the MPP program fee

Course Description

In this mandatory one-credit course, Multicultural Psychology Program (MPP) students participate in a series of experiential learning activities designed to complement their coursework. These activities and related assignments provide hands-on experiences, allowing students to see ideas put into practice. This semester, we will have five workshops led by researchers who will share their stories and insights.

Combining practical activities and critical reflection on these experiences offers MPP students opportunities to engage in co-curricular activities with the University of Perugia students. These activities connect key topics and concepts to practical, applied situations and include community-based learning and field experiences, such as the MPP Capstone, that link classroom learning to real-world problem-solving. Additionally, you will learn about applying to graduate school and how to put together an impressive application.

Toward the end of the course, students will participate in a transformative Capstone Trip for the Multicultural Psychology Program. This trip provides a hands-on opportunity to explore and engage with multicultural psychological topics in real-world contexts. Through immersive, cultural, and interactive experiences, students will gain a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding cultural diversity and social identity. The capstone trip aims to enhance critical thinking skills, foster cross-cultural competence, and encourage reflective integration of multicultural psychology concepts. The experiential nature of the trip allows students to apply their knowledge in authentic settings, promoting personal growth and a heightened awareness of the psychological nuances inherent in diverse environments.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- *Describe* the main concepts of Psychology, Education, and Business learned in the class's co-curricular activities;
- *Apply* concepts learned in the classroom to experiences in co-curricular activities, as part of discussions, but also brainstorming novel applications of those ideas for the US context;
- *Identify* possible research questions that emerge from co-curricular activities and *determine* which methodological approach would be most appropriate for carrying out research to assess causation;
- *Predict* several tasks that they would need to do in order to put together a strong application for

graduate work (either at the MA or PhD level).

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

I depend on my computer and my telephone for much of what I do. That said: An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result, you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy whenever possible (when we do Google Drive Tickets, for example). I ask you to bring your computers but leave them in your bags and phones in your pockets, and use a regular notebook. There are three exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; and 3) if we have an in-class activity that requires you to use your computer.

Course Materials

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's shared Google Folder is the primary location for all readings.

Assessments

Attendance	50%
Course Journal Entries	50%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional <u>Excellent</u> Superior Satisfactory
A	90% - 92%	
B+	87% - 89%	
B	83% - 86%	
B	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	
C	73% - 76%	

C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal and centesimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (50%)

Attendance is mandatory. We will meet up for five workshops as well as the meetings related to the Capstone. For full credit on attendance, students have to participate in four out of five workshops, the Capstone, and both briefings related to the Capstone trip. Students are expected to come to meetings punctually, and prepared to contribute to these discussions.

Course Journal Entries (50%)

Students will respond to course journal prompts throughout the semester. These open-ended questions will be based on workshops, the Capstone, courses at Umbra, and any other experiences during the semester abroad that can be better explained from a multicultural psychology perspective.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students must email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance & Lateness Policy

Class attendance (in person) is mandatory. All students are allowed 1 unexcused absence for one workshop, an absence which does not need to be justified. The breakdown for Attendance is as follows:

- 25% Workshops (at least 4 of 5)
- 20% Capstone
- 5% Capstone Briefing & Debriefing

Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 3% off the final grade. Excessive absences (3 or more) may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. The student must be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course and ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed must be made up outside class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during the Capstone field trip is especially important. Missing this field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff promptly, will be considered the equivalent of two unexcused absences. As such, absence from the co-curricular field trip will lower students' final grade in that course by 20%.

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled. Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided. Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during an exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for generating content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the Umbra's policy and demonstrate appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set to silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices can only be used during class lectures and discussions for note-taking, if the student has specific academic accommodation.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Welcome Workshop & Aperitivo

Wednesday, September 10 at 5:45pm in Aula 2 & Aperitivo

With Zachary Nowak, PhD & Stefano Console, MA

Kick off the Multicultural Psychology Program with our Welcome Orientation Meeting and Aperitivo! Connect with fellow students and faculty, learn about the semester's exciting activities, and enjoy a relaxed, informal setting. Share ideas, ask questions, and start building your community—all while savoring delicious refreshments in a welcoming atmosphere.

WEEK 2

Workshop: Beyond Comfort Zones: Experiencing Culture Shock through Play

Monday, September 15 at 5:45pm in Aula 2 & Aperitivo

With Marco Bagli, PhD

Kick off the Multicultural Psychology Program with our Welcome Orientation Meeting and Aperitivo! Connect with fellow students and faculty, learn about the semester's exciting activities, and enjoy a relaxed, informal setting. Share ideas, ask questions, and start building your community—all while savoring delicious refreshments in a welcoming atmosphere.

This workshop will delve into what culture shock is, its stages, and its impact on individuals. Through interactive play reading, participants will experience and discuss the emotional and cognitive aspects of culture shock, enhancing their understanding of intercultural communication and empathy for those undergoing such experiences.

WEEK 3

Loneliness in the age of AI

Monday, September 22 at 5:45pm in Aula 2

With Eyal Rosenstreich, PhD

This workshop examines loneliness as a universal human experience shaped by evolution and culture, and asks whether AI companions can truly ease it. We will explore the psychology of loneliness, its cultural expressions, and emerging research on AI companions. We will discuss the risks, ethical dilemmas, and reflect on how technology may reshape human connection and belonging across diverse societies.

Assignments:

Readings:

- Hawkey, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010). Loneliness matters: A theoretical and empirical review of consequences and mechanisms. *Annals of behavioral medicine*, 40(2), 218-227.
- De Freitas, J., Oğuz-Uğuralp, Z., Uğuralp, A. K., & Puntoni, S. (2025). AI companions reduce loneliness. *Journal of Consumer Research*, ucaf040.

WEEK 5

Cultures in Context: From Personal Identity to Multicultural Education

Monday, October 6 at 5:45pm in Aula 2

with Natascia Petringa, PhD

Engage in creative activities, reflect on your cultural identity, and explore key concepts in multicultural education. Share ideas, discuss biases, and practice building inclusive environments.

Assignments:

Readings:

- Nieto, Sonia. “Re-Imagining Multicultural Education: New Visions, New Possibilities.” *Multicultural Education Review* 9, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 1–10.

WEEK 7

Visit to Caritas

Monday, November 3 – Aula 2

Caritas is a Catholic-based philanthropic organization; one of the institution’s primary goals is helping people culturally on the margins—whether because they are immigrants to Italy or because they are from disadvantaged parts of Italian society—integrate into broader Italian society. This integration comes through things like their free shared meals but also through educational programs. Caritas is run like a business, with an eye to maximization of return for money invested in its projects, and an emphasis on grant-writing for its funding. We’ll speak with one of Caritas’s directors and examine the operations with an eye not only to education but also to how the charity is organized.

Assignments:

- Pusceddu, Antonio Maria. “The Moral Economy of Charity: Advice and Redistribution in Italian Caritas Welfare Bureaucracy.” *Ethnos* 87, no. 1 (January 1, 2022): 168–87.

WEEK 8

The Psychology of Food

Monday, November 10, 5:45pm in Aula 2

with Clelia Viecegli, PhD

Is taste simply *sensation* (the word *sentire* in Italian means, among other things, *to hear*, *to smell*, and *to taste*) or is tasting food more an exercise in culturally-mediated perception? To what extent do expectations come into play for our psychological experience of food? Dr. Clelia Viecegli, the chair of Umbra’s program in Food, Sustainability, & Environment (FSE), will lead a workshop to explore this topic.

Assignments:

- Smith, John L. “Non-Biological Perspectives.” In *The Psychology of Food and Eating: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Method*, edited by John L. Smith, 27–47. London: Macmillan Education UK, 2002.

WEEK 9

Pre-departure Briefing

Wednesday, November 12, 5:45pm in Aula 2

We’ll have a brief but important meeting on the upcoming Capstone Trip. Gain insights into the itinerary, and key themes such as multicultural psychology, disability, and community care, and prepare for yet another transformative learning experience abroad.

MPP Capstone Trip to Emilia Romagna

Thursday, November 13-Friday, November 14

Important Note: You will receive the itinerary at the beginning of the week.

The Capstone explores diverse psychological and social interventions within multicultural contexts. Topics include the history of disability associations in Italy, therapeutic benefits of equine-assisted interventions for children with autism, innovative early childhood education approaches like Reggio Emilia, and Italy’s transition to community-based mental health care after the closure of mental hospitals. Through experiential learning and critical analysis, students will deepen their understanding of these transformative models, fostering cross-cultural competence and practical problem-solving skills.

Assignments:**Readings:**

- Barbui, C., Papola, D., Saraceno, B., Forty Years Without Mental Hospitals in Italy, *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 12:43, 2018
- Hewett, M. V., Examining the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 29(2), 2001
- Schianchi, M., Associations of People with Disabilities in Italy: A Short History, *Modern Italy*, 19(2), 2014
- Sissons, J. H., Blakemore, E., Shafi, H., Skotny, N., & Lloyd, D. M. (2022). Calm with horses? A systematic review of animal-assisted interventions for improving social functioning in children with autism. *Autism*, 26(6), 1320–1340.

WEEK 10**Capstone Debriefing**

Monday, November 17, 5:45pm in Aula 2

We'll reflect on the Capstone Trip's key moments and insights, as well as discuss the larger program and your suggestions for improving it.

WEEK 11**Getting into Grad School**

Zachary Nowak, PhD

Monday, November 24, 5:45pm

Workshop: "Getting into Grad School"

This workshop will provide students with valuable insights into the application process, emphasizing the importance of aligning research interests with faculty and the practical strategies for admission. The workshop also highlights the challenges of graduate studies, including financial constraints, and job prospects, encouraging students to evaluate their goals carefully.

Assignments:**Readings:**

- Luppi, A. I., Newton, C. C., Folsom, L., Galliano, E., & Romero-Garcia, R. (2021). Ten simple rules for aspiring graduate students. *PLOS Computational Biology*, 17(8), 1-10.
- Mullen, A. L., Goyette, K. A., & Soares, J. A. (2003). Who goes to graduate school? Social and academic correlates of educational continuation after college. *Sociology of education*, 143-169.
- Bain, S., Fedynich, L., & Knight, M. (2011). The successful graduate student: A review of the factors for success. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics*, 3, 1-9.

WEEK 12**MPP Farewell Aperitivo**

Monday, December 1, 5:45pm

Don't miss this opportunity to reflect on the semester and receive your MPP certificate. This recognition celebrates your achievements and completion of the program, marking an important milestone in your academic journey.