

NC GLOBAL DISTINCTION

Dr. Tim Cannon, Forsyth Technical Community College

Region: Africa, Middle East and Muslim Civilizations

Course information and description: PHI 240 (Introduction to Ethics)

This course introduces theories about the nature and foundations of moral judgments and applications to contemporary moral issues. Emphasis is placed on consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Upon completion, students should be able to apply various ethical theories to individual moral issues such as abortion, capital punishment, poverty, war, terrorism, the treatment of animals, and issues arising from new technologies. *This course has been approved for transfer under the CAA as a general education course in Humanities/Fine Arts.*

Description of module: In this module, students will be critically explore, analyze, and reflect upon enculturation and how it impacts moral judgments in general and one's own personal moral judgments in particular. In accomplishing this task, students will be required to interview someone from a cultural tradition that is significantly different their own and discuss with him/her a specific ethical topic of their choosing from a list that is provided. A cultural tradition that is significantly different than their own can entail yet is not limited to difference in gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, educational background, and/or regional location. With this in mind, students will be encouraged to interview someone from Africa or the Middle East, which are the primary regions upon which this module will focus.

Student Global Learning Outcomes

Students will learn to approach cultural traditions and the various ways in which they assess morality with humility, taking them on their own terms, as free from preconceived notions of rightness or wrongness as possible.

Students will (through a cultural immersion project) compare and contrast the ethical beliefs and behaviors of a person from a cultural tradition other than his/her own and critically analyze and explain his/her own assumptions about the validity of said beliefs and practices.

Student Global Learning Activities

Activity 1

Objective: Students will discuss the significance of culture for shaping one's worldview and analyze how one's worldview influences the ways in which societies in general and individuals in particular think and make decisions about behaviors.

Procedure: Students will read the essay, "Being Aware of Our Culture," by Dr. Nathanael Gough, and watch the video clips, "What is a Worldview" and "What is Enculturation."

Assessment: Students will write a minimum two page essay in which they will answer the following questions in detail offering evidence (by utilizing and applying what they have learned in the essay and the video clips) to support their claims.

- 1) What is a worldview?
- 2) What is *enculturation*?
- 3) Does one's culture influence the way in which one sees and interprets the world? Explain your answer.
- 4) Do culture and worldview influence the ways in which societies in general and individuals in particular think and make decisions about behaviors? Why/why not?
- 5) What are the implications of your discovery for assessing behaviors and moral judgments about them?

Follow-Up: Students will meet in small groups to discuss their responses and will share their take-aways regarding this assignment with the class in a poster session.

Activity 2

Objective: Students will immerse themselves into a particular cultural setting and analyze how their own biases/prejudices influences their assumptions about other cultures and themselves, particularly in regards to specific beliefs and behaviors.

Procedure: Watch the movie adaptation of Shirley Jackson's short story, *The Lottery*.

Assessment: Write a minimum three page paper in which you answer the following questions in detail offering evidence to support your claims. You should refer to the movie when necessary:

- 1) Describe the prevailing culture and primary tradition featured in "The Lottery."
- 2) What are your initial reactions to this culture's tradition?
- 3) Why do you feel this way and are your judgements justified? Explain your answer.
- 4) Which character do you identify with the most and why?
- 5) Which character do you identify with the least and why?
- 6) Is this culture's traditions and values just as valid as your own? Why/why/not?
- 7) Do you believe that you have a moral responsibility to attempt to persuade members of this culture to abandon their beliefs and behaviors and adopt yours? Explain your answer.
- 8) Do you believe that your culture's moral compass is superior to and more accurately calibrated than this culture's moral compass? Explain your answer.
- 9) Has your culture influenced your view of this culture's traditions and values and your responses to the discussion questions? Explain your answer.
- 10) What did you learn from this assignment about enculturation and its impact on your assumptions about moral values. Give at least two examples and explain your answer.

Follow-Up: Students will meet in small groups to discuss their responses and will share their take-aways regarding this assignment with the class in a poster session.

Activity 3

Objective: Students will actively engage with an individual from African or Middle-Eastern culture for the purpose of discussing a specific ethical issue and analyzing the impact that one's culture directly plays in shaping moral discourse and assessment.

Procedure: Students will interview a person from an African or Middle-Eastern cultural tradition and discuss in detail with him/her one of the following ethical topics: Abortion, Homosexuality, Capital Punishment, Suicide, Nationalism, Marriage and Family, Immigration, Gender Roles, Genocide, Pornography, Prostitution, War and Torture.

Assessment: Students will ask specific questions of the interviewee regarding his/her culture and moral convictions regarding the chosen ethical topic and record their responses digitally. The digital files will be submitted to the Instructor for review along with the name and a brief bio of the Interviewee.

Follow-Up: Students will sign a statement acknowledging that they have read the document, "Suggestions for a Good Interview" and received permission to interview their chosen person and record their conversation. Students will also inform the Instructor of any issues regarding securing someone to interview as well as the interview process and the Instructor will offer appropriate suggestions to resolve these issues.

Activity 4

Objective: Students will discuss a specific ethical issue with an individual from African or Middle-Eastern culture for the purpose of comparing and contrasting this person's beliefs and values on the subject matter with one's own and discussing whether they believe that that person's beliefs and values are just as valid as one's own.

Procedure: Students will make a 15-20 minute presentation to the class on their interview with an individual from African or Middle-Eastern culture.

Assessment: Students will present their project by providing the following information:

- Introduction (10%)
 - The name of the Interviewee & his/her cultural background
 - The date, time and location of the interview
 - Why you chose to interview this particular person
 - The topic of discussion
 - Why you choose this particular topic to discuss

- The Interview (40%)
 - State the interviewee's position and why he/she holds that particular position
 - State whether his/her position coincides with that of his/her larger cultural tradition
If it is different, explain why
 - State your own position and why you hold that particular position
 - State whether your position coincides with that of your particular cultural tradition
If it is different, explain why
 - State in what ways this person's convictions on this particular issue compare and contrast with your own and whether you agree/disagree with the Interviewee's particular position on your chosen topic and explain why/why not?

- Reflection (40%)
 - What did you learn about this person's beliefs and values that surprised you?
 - Did you feel that the interviewee's argument for his/her convictions were strong and convincing or did you feel that they were flawed and unpersuasive? Explain your answer.
 - Do you think this person's beliefs and values are just as valid as your own? Why/why not?
 - Do you believe that you have a moral responsibility to judge the actions/values of another person/cultural tradition and that you should attempt to persuade him/her/it to abandon his/her/its beliefs and behaviors and adopt yours? Why/why not?
 - What did you learn from this assignment about cultural influences and how they impact moral judgments in general and your moral judgments in particular?

- Delivery (10%)
 - Your presentation should be between 15 -20 minutes long. You may use the computer, the board, or anything else that will help you present the information effectively. However, if any of your materials might be considered offensive, please clear it with me at least 48 hours before your presentation date.
 - You are expected to present your thoughts in an intelligible and coherent manner and to be completely prepared to present, meaning that there should be a logical progression of ideas and you appear polished and confident.
 - After you have presented, the floor will be opened to the class for questions and discussion if time allows.
 - You may dress however you are most comfortable, but dress casual is preferable.

Follow-Up: After presenting, students will engage in a question and answer time with the class. This will give students an opportunity to explain in greater depth specific details about the interview to the class.

Activity 5

Objective: Students will analyze the class presentations and discuss which cultural traditions were the most interesting and why.

Procedure: Students will review the class presentations and participate in a question and answer time at the conclusion of each one.

Assessment: Students will write a one page peer review of each day of the class presentations (Minimum of five reviews). In doing so, they will answer the following questions:

- 1) Which cultural tradition (other than your own) was the most interesting to you? Why?
- 2) How does this cultural tradition compare and contrast with your own? Give at least three examples each.
- 3) Do you think that this cultural tradition and its values are just as valid as your own? Why/why not?

Follow-Up: Students will meet in small groups to discuss their responses and will share their take-aways regarding this assignment with the class in a poster session.

Resources and References

The essay, "Being Aware of Our Culture," by Dr. Nathanael Gough

Video Clip, "What is a Worldview"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QrX6WJl-LM&feature=youtu.be>

Video Clip, "What is Enculturation"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nwef4i060&feature=youtu.be

Video Clips 1 & 2 of CBS's tv adaptation of Shirley Jackson's, "The Lottery"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIm93Xuij7k&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMhV3fwx5Sg>

The document, "Suggestions for a Good Interview"

Grading Rubric for Interview Presentation

List of Approved Topics for Discussion

Africans – Middle Easterners Bibliography