

**FYS 126-A Clash: Navigating a Polarized World**  
**T/Th: 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm**  
**Location: CUB 260 (Thursdays) and Zoom (Tuesdays)**

**Professor:** Dr. Sahana Mukherjee  
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**Office Hours (Zoom)** T/Th: 2:00 – 3:00 pm or by appointment  
Click [here](#) for Zoom meeting link.

**Course Description**

*Why do you feel angry or upset when your peer is annoying or says something against your ideology? Why do you want to be unique? Why do you not want to be unique? What are automatic thoughts? Why are we motivated to defend and protect our own or our group's views?*

The course provides a socio-cultural analysis of various psychological concepts and explore how who we are (e.g., how I define myself), our feelings and motivations (e.g., why I want to be unique or not), our ideologies (e.g., my belief in God), and our behaviors and choices (e.g., why I want to go 'X' school) are linked to our cultural contexts (e.g., nation, race, gender, income level).

We will consider an intersectional framework to reflect on how our various identities (e.g., religion, political, national) intersect, specifically considering how and when there are conflicts between certain identities and how to reconcile these conflicts. We will also focus on how these identities inform our beliefs (e.g., stereotypes) and emotions. Finally, we will explore how our ideas about morality impact our beliefs about others and impact intergroup relations.

**Topics Covered:** The course primarily draws upon research in the social sciences (psychology, anthropology, sociology, and political science), and some research in humanities (philosophy), and natural sciences (neuroscience).

- 1) **Self-Construct theory:** The first section focuses on variations in how we construct our self (independent self-construct and interdependent self-construct) and how these self-constructs impact basic psychological constructs such as *motivation* (e.g., motivation to self-enhance, to express unique preferences), and *perception & cognition* (e.g., categorization style, holistic vs. analytic thinking style, artwork). This section examines several contexts and identities to illustrate the socio-cultural grounding of psychological experience.
- 2) **Blindspots:** This section focuses on the development of unconscious biases and considers strategies to reduce them. It draws on research to examine how cultural context informs our 'cognitive shortcuts' and results in the formation of unconscious associations that impact our interactions with others.
- 3) **Theory of constructed emotion:** This section broadly focuses on the topic of emotion and considers why we feel the way we do. It draws upon various disciplines to understand how people construct and label emotions and how this plays a role in interpersonal and intergroup relations.
- 4) **Study of morality:** The final section makes connections between emotion and morality to understand why people are divided by ideology lines, and considers strategies to reduce polarization and improve dialogue. This section integrates research from the earlier sections

to consider how our cognitions, emotions, and behaviors are informed by our multiple identities and experiences, and specifically applies this to understand group polarization.

**Course Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Be able to explain the bi-directional relationship between the human mind and the socio-cultural context
2. Be able to critically analyze research to explain how socio-cultural experiences and intersection of varied identities shape yours and others' thinking and behaviors
3. Be able to apply course concepts to everyday life (e.g., how to talk to people who have different perspectives than your own; critically evaluate why you feel the way you do when you hear conflicting opinions)
4. Engage with the Gettysburg community and access the academic and social resources available across campus to help you thrive. Doing so, will also improve your:
  - a. Verbal and written communication skills
  - b. Research literacy skills

**Course Objectives:** To accomplish these learning outcomes, you will:

1. Learn about the major theories and research designs used to study the mind-culture relation (*Implementation of Outcomes 1, 2, 3, & 4*)
2. Apply the principles you have learned in the course to better understand effective ways to increase dialogue and reduce polarization (*Implementation of Goals 1, 2, & 3*)
3. Complete assignments that show how cultural factors influence your personal experience (*Implementation of Goals 1, 2, 3, & 4*)
4. Identify and utilize relevant campus resources (*Implementation of Goal 4*).

**Course Materials:** In addition to shorter scholarly articles and news articles/podcasts on current issues (available via Moodle), you will need to purchase/rent and read the following books:

1. Clash! How to thrive in a multicultural world by Hazel Markus and Alana Conner
2. Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald
3. The Righteous Mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion by Jonathan Haidt

### **Method of Assessment**

How I will evaluate your learning and engagement

- **Weekly Reflections 30% [Total = 75 points]**
  - I will provide weekly prompts for you to respond to. All submissions will be due via Moodle. These weekly prompts will allow you to process and organize your thoughts, reflections, and questions about the course. These reflections will also help you to develop your Autoethnography paper (final paper). These reflections will be due on **Fridays** (see schedule for specific dates) and due by **10:00 am**.
- **Tests 30% [Total = 75 points]**
  - There will be three tests across the semester. Each test will be administered via Moodle. Tests are not cumulative and will assess course information relevant to a specific section/time period. More information on each test will be available on Moodle.

- **Autoethnography final paper 40% [Total = 100 points]**

- At the end of the semester you will need to submit a final (term) paper. An autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. Autoethnographies 'are highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding' (Sparkes, 2000, p.21). An autoethnography 'lets you use yourself to get to culture' (Pelias, 2003, p. 372).

In this paper you will explore what it is like to be you, i.e., what it is like to be 'X'. For example, it will examine what it is like to be an intersection of any two identities (e.g., gender, race, socio-economic status, religion, political orientation, ability, nationality). You will examine how the intersection of these identities impact you (your beliefs and ideologies, for example) and also draw larger conclusions through research about these identities and cultural contexts. Thus, **a major goal is to contextualize your personal experience through scientific lens**. You will also consider how your experience is similar to or varies from other people's understanding of what it is like to be 'X'.

The length of this paper should be 8 pages excluding your references page (double spaced, size 12 font). More instructions, including a rubric, is available on Moodle. This paper is divided into several stages with a deadline for each stage. Some of the stages will involve a peer-review component in which you will be asked to read and review two of your peers' work. Many of the submissions can be revised and resubmitted. If you choose resubmit your work then your final grade on that submission will be an average of the two grades (i.e., initial and revised submission).

- Short description of your topic:** You will need to identify two identities/experiences/attributes that are important to you. These could be social roles, identities, or physical attributes. **Can be revised and resubmitted.**  
(1) *Submission of topic = 5 points*
- What research says about these identities/components:** Draw upon the course readings (and other research literature) and summarize and integrate what you find. For example, if one of your core identities is your socio-economic status (SES), then summarize and integrate research that discusses how levels of SES inform specific (e.g., academic) experiences. You will need to submit a **bibliography of relevant research** along with a paper that summarizes and integrates what you found. You need to identify 4 research papers from peer reviewed journals. There will be a Zoom library session (see schedule) where you will learn how to use online databases to find such articles. **Can be revised and resubmitted.**  
(1) *Submission of bibliography = 10 points*
- Identify core questions:** Write down 5 questions that are most relevant to your selected identities (e.g., how does my middle-income status impact my co-curricular experiences in Gettysburg College)? You will need to then **interview** (in-person interview is not required) a minimum of two people who share each of the selected identities as you (e.g., those with similar income levels if class is your selected

identity). These people do not need to be Gettysburg College students (they can be).  
**Can be revised and resubmitted.**

(1) *Submission of questions and interviews = 5 points*

- iv) **Draft of paper:** The draft integrates your personal experiences with both scientific evidence as well as others' perceptions of these identities/experiences. After you submit your draft, you will need to review two of your peers' draft using the final paper rubric and provide constructive feedback.

(1) *Submission of draft = 5 points*

(2) *Submission of 2 peer reviews = 10 points*

- v) **Final Paper**

(1) *Due by 6:30 pm, Friday December 11.*

(2) *Final paper = 65 points*

### **Course Policies**

What is expected from ALL of us this semester

#### **Respect and Inclusion**

We should strive towards working together to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. While we may sometimes disagree with each other on topics discussed in class, it is important that we remember that appreciating diversity in perspectives is an important part of the learning process. With that said, all opinions are welcome. However, disagreements should be directed at an argument and not the person. It is expected that everyone will be treated with respect. **If you ever feel that you are not being treated with respect at any point in the semester, please let me know.** Please allow everyone's voices to be heard. Sometimes even if you have a lot to say, please pause and evaluate if everyone has had a chance to be heard. Thus, while I welcome your voice, I welcome everyone's voice so please be mindful and do not dominate class discussions.

Please arrive to class on time and do not leave before the end of class (in person or remote). You should not be using your cell phone, listening to music, and using your laptop for anything other than course related work (e.g., using Zoom to participate in class). If you are repeatedly disrupting class, you will automatically receive a 5-point deduction and may be asked to leave class. **NO TEXTING** during class. I will follow the same rules and be fully involved in each class session.

#### **Learning and Teaching during a Pandemic**

We all have to navigate what is happening across the world as best we can. For those of us who have decided to be on campus this academic year, that involves additional obligations to keep oneself and others safe. This means decreasing our risk of exposure to and transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. So:

- 1) We collectively agree to behave in ways that take care of one another in terms of both physical and emotional health.
- 2) When you come to class, you will come prepared with your "Covid Care Pack" properly stocked. The pack should include two masks, the one you will wear when required and your back-up, and a bottle of hand sanitizer.
- 3) When we meet in the classroom, whether that classroom is inside or outside, we will wear face masks in compliance with College guidelines. Proper wearing requires covering your

mouth and nose! If you do not come to class with a mask, I will ask you to secure and wear one so that you can take a seat as quickly as possible. I will not allow you to be in class without a mask.

- 4) You will be asked to sanitize your respective spaces before class begins and, if time allows, at the end of class upon leaving the classroom.
- 5) You cannot bring food or drinks into the classroom (tent counts as classroom).
- 6) During class we will all be mindful to maintain 6' of distance.
- 7) All tests and assignments will be administered and submitted via Moodle.
- 8) There are no participation points – meaning, if you miss class you will not be penalized. You can demonstrate your continuous interest and engagement in the course by submitting weekly reflections via Moodle. If you are unable to submit a reflection by the deadline please contact me as soon as possible.
- 9) Please note that even if you do not believe that you have COVID-19 but are still feeling unwell, please refrain from attending in-person classes in the name of public health and the comfort level of others. In other words, please participate remotely when you do not feel well. Please send me an email to indicate that you will be participating remotely.
- 10) If I exhibit symptoms and need to quarantine/isolate until test results arrive, our class will meet virtually. If that is the case, I will send an email before class. Similarly, if a student exhibits any symptom and needs to quarantine/isolate, accommodations will be made for that student to progress in our class while being remote. What these accommodations are will depend on a student's individual circumstances. You will be able to Zoom into our class. If you cannot attend class, you must contact me and we will have a virtual meeting to figure out the next steps.
- 11) My office hours will be virtual.
- 12) I may be recording class discussions. According to College policies, you are allowed to view these but cannot share them with others who are not enrolled in the course or on social media. I will obtain permission from students when recording a class discussion.
- 13) Even with the physical distancing required to be on campus safely, we will create a supportive and inclusive class environment.
- 14) Streaming and Recording of Course Lectures & Discussions: Because of COVID-19, the College has installed cameras in classrooms to support students participating remotely in classes. We have made this decision because not every student will be present in the classroom this semester, and therefore, we think it equally important to advise you that class content, including discussions, may be streamed and/or recorded during this academic year. If you have questions or concerns, please discuss this with your course instructor.

### **Make Up Policy**

You are responsible adults, and I expect you to communicate with me about any interference (e.g., family emergency, medical condition, athletic/club event) that comes up during this course. Given the current circumstances, I will try my best to be as flexible as possible but please keep in mind that some of the assignments and tasks are staged (i.e., those related to the final term paper) and missing one can impact the quality of the subsequent one.

### **Honor Code**

I expect students to be familiar with Gettysburg College Honor Code. Each faculty member of this institution, including myself, takes the Honor Code very seriously and we expect you to do the same. Your assignments and quizzes should reflect your own work. Also, remember, **if you use outside sources at any time, you must clearly indicate and reference all quotations and cite all of your sources.** If you have any questions at all about whether something is permissible under the Honor Code, please ask me as soon as the question arises.

### **Fourth Hour Requirement**

At the completion of this course, you will earn one course credit or four semester hours. According to the college, each course should claim an average of twelve hours of student time per week and one hour of class time typically requires two hours of preparation (e.g., reading, small assignments). That means that for this course, **we meet for three hours a week, you have six hours of preparation for that, with three hours left to be devoted to the fourth hour!** The final paper serves to cover this Fourth Hour Requirement.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Please see me at the start of the semester if you have a physical or learning disability that may affect your ability to perform to your potential in this class. I will be happy to meet with you alone or in conjunction with the Academic Advising Office and arrange for necessary accommodations, according to your IEAP.

### **Grades**

You can calculate your own grade at any time – total your points and divide by the possible points.

***Letter grades are based on the following criteria:***

<b>Percent</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
>= 98	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
<= 59	F

**Course Schedule:** I will always keep you informed if/when there are changes to the course schedule. Unless otherwise indicated, classes will be in person (CUB 260)

Week	Day	Topic	Deadlines
Week 1	Aug 18	Introductions and Syllabus <a href="#">[Zoom]</a>	
	Aug 20	Hidden Brain Podcast: Creativity & Diversity: How exposure to different people affects our thinking	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 2	Aug 25	What is Autoethnography? <i>Tatum, 2000</i> <i>Wall, 2006</i>	
	Aug 27	<i>Clash</i> : Introduction and Ch 1	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 3	Sep 1	<i>Clash</i> : Ch 2 and Ch 3	
	Sep 3	<i>Clash</i> : Ch 4 and 5 <i>[did not discuss chapters]</i>	Weekly reflection due SUNDAY
Week 4	Sep 8	NO CLASS – Semester paused	
	Sep 10		
Week 5	Sep 15	<i>Clash</i> : Ch 4, 5 and 6	
	Sep 17	<i>Clash</i> : 7, 8, 9, 10	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 6	Sep 22	<i>Blindspot</i> : Preface, Ch 1 and 2	
	Sep 24	Zoom Library Workshop <a href="#">[Zoom]</a>	Topic Selection Due
Week 7	Sep 29	<b>Test 1</b>	<b>Test 1 Due</b>
	Oct 1	<i>Blindspot</i> : Ch 3 and 4	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 8	Oct 6	<i>Blindspot</i> : Ch 5 and 6	
	Oct 8	Guest Panel: Engaging with differences <a href="#">[Zoom]</a>	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 9	Oct 13	Student Guest Panel: PEEPs & Stress Management <a href="#">[Zoom]</a>	
	Oct 15	Student Guest Panel: Experiential Learning on Campus	
Week 10	Oct 20	<i>Blindspot</i> : Ch 7 & 8; Appendix 1 & 2	<b>Bibliography due</b> Breathe Reflection due
	Oct 22	<i>Righteous Mind</i> : Ch 3 & 4	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
	Oct 29	<b>Test 2</b>	<b>Test 2 Due</b>
Week 12	Nov 3	<i>Righteous Mind</i> : Ch 5 & 6	
	Nov 5	<i>Righteous Mind</i> : Ch 7 & 8	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 13	Nov 10	<i>Righteous Mind</i> : Ch 9 & 10	Identity core questions and interviews due
	Nov 12	<i>Righteous Mind</i> : Ch 11 & 12	Weekly reflection due FRIDAY
Week 14	Nov 17	Opinion Science Podcast: <i>Political Persuasion</i>	
	Nov 19	Opinion Science Podcast: <i>Persuasion via story telling</i>	Draft of final paper due
Week 15	Dec 1	Peer review of draft papers	Peer Review of final papers due
	Dec 3	Wrap Up	<b>Test 3 Due</b>
Week 16	Dec 11	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE by 6:30 pm</b>	

