

CCS/ED 611 – CULTURE, COGNITION AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

INSTRUCTOR:

Ray Barnhardt



Fall Semester, 2007

**Center for Cross-Cultural Studies
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775**



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CCS/ED 611 – CULTURE, COGNITION AND KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

Course Prospectus
by
Ray Barnhardt

Course Description

The course will examine the relationship between learning, thinking and perception in multicultural contexts. Emphasis is on the implications of these relationships for schooling, focusing on cultural influences on perception, conceptual processes, learning, memory, and problem solving, as well as practical teaching problems.

Course Purposes

1. To examine how learning, thinking and perception influence the way we come to know about and understand the world around us.
2. To explore how learning occurs in and out of school.
3. To examine the role of experiential learning in formal and informal educational settings.
4. To examine how cultural differences in perceptions of time, space and relationships influence our behavior.
5. To explore current developments in the study of culture, cognition and behavior from a social science perspective.
6. To develop a curriculum framework for schools that integrates indigenous peoples beliefs, values and ways of knowing into the processes associated with formal education.

Course Credit

Completion of the course will lead to three semester hours of graduate credit at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The course will fulfill the State of Alaska certification requirement for “multicultural education,” and may be applied toward an M.Ed. or M.A. at UAF.

Course Design

The course is designed to acquaint students who are located at sites distant from the UAF campus with the same course content they would be exposed to if they were enrolled in the course on campus. In addition, the course attempts to capitalize on the field-based learning opportunities available to off-campus students by incorporating exercises that engage students in on-site data gathering and issue analysis. Since the primary focus of the course is centered in Alaska, many of the readings utilize examples drawn from Alaska Native and rural school situations, though the issues addressed are relevant and readily generalizable to other cultural contexts and school settings as well. If students find an assignment inappropriate to their particular situation, they are invited to contact the instructor to explore a more suitable option. (Please note that the last assignment requires a fair amount of advance reading, so check it out and get started early in the semester).

Course Administration

The course will be administered through readings, practical exercises, written assignments, and six audio-conferences. Students are expected to read the assigned materials before each audio-conference and participate in the subsequent discussions. **The audio-conferences are scheduled from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. on every other Thursday (9/27, 10/11, 11/1, 11/15, 11/29, 12/13).**

The bridge number to call for the audio-conferences is listed inside the cover of your syllabus. Students will work independently, with academic assistance available from the instructor (474-1902) and administrative support offered through the Center for Distance Education in Fairbanks (474-5353 or racde@uaf.edu), or the local rural campus. Course assignments should be sent to the instructor, addressed as follows (e-mail submission is preferred, with a shorter turn-around time):

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Course Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of the written material turned in to the instructor (please stay within the page length of each assignment). The material will be read, evaluated and returned to the student as soon as possible after receipt. The assignments are worth a total of 100 points, with an additional five points available for the bonus assignment.

Grades for the course will be assigned on the basis of the following point/grade scale:

90 - 100 = A
80 - 89 = B
70 - 79 = C
60 - 69 = D
0 - 59 = additional work

Course Materials

The following books and articles are required for this course:

Gardner - *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*

Kawagley - *A Yupiaq World View: A Pathway to Ecology and Spirit*

Roth – *The Naturalist Intelligence: An Introduction to Gardner’s Eighth Intelligence*

ANKN – *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*

ANKN – *Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally Healthy Youth*

Checkley – “The First Seven . . . and the Eighth: A Conversation with Howard Gardner”

Kawagley/Barnhardt - “Education Indigenous to Place”

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/EIP.html>

Ross - “Being Indian Is a State of Mind”

Hopkins - “Possibilization and Process”

Barnhardt - “Domestication of the Ivory Tower: Institutional Adaptation to Cultural Distance”

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/rol/IvoryTowerFinal.html>

Barnhardt, C. - “Tuning-In: Athabaskan Teachers and Athabaskan Students”

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/tuningin.html>

Lipka - “Expanding Curricular and Pedagogical Possibilities: Yup’ik-Based . . .”

Ascher - “The Organization and Modeling of Space”

Harris - “Contexts for Teaching and Learning About Time”

Merculieff - “Western Society’s Linear Systems and Aboriginal Cultures”

Thomas - "Developing Community and Social Psychology for Aotearoa....."

Barnhardt/Kawagley – “Indigenous Knowledge Systems/Alaska Native Ways of Knowing”

http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/rol/AEQ_Indigenous_Knowledge_.html

ANKN—“Native Values and Worldview”

<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/Values/>

Course Requirements

The course is organized around the following topics:

Unit 1 - Ways of Knowing and Thinking	(10 points - Due Oct. 10)
Unit 2 - Learning and Schooling	(15 points - Due Oct. 24)
Unit 3 - Learning Through Experience	(15 points - Due Nov. 7)
Unit 4 – Constructing and Maintaining an Orderly World	(20 points - Due Nov. 21)
Unit 5 – Understanding Culture, Cognition and Behavior	(10 points - Due Dec. 12)
Unit 6 - Indigenous Paradigms of Being and Becoming	(30 points - Due Dec. 19)
Bonus - Optional	(1 point - Due Dec. 19)

Unit 1 - Ways of Knowing and Thinking - 10 points

Required reading:

Gardner - *The Unschooled Mind* (Chapters 1-5)

Kawagley - *A Yupiaq World View* (Chapter 1)

Kawagley/Barnhardt - “Education Indigenous to Place”

Ross - “Being Indian Is a State of Mind”

The way we perceive and think about the world around us is shaped by many factors, including our propensities as individuals and our upbringing as members of a society. People who grow up in different cultural contexts may interpret the same experiences in radically different ways, depending on how they have learned to make sense out of their world. These differences can also influence how we judge other peoples competence and intelligence, because the criteria we select to make such judgements are themselves the product of a particular cultural outlook. Nowhere are such issues more influential in peoples lives than in schools, where critical judgements about students abilities and performances are made on a regular basis. It is toward improving the quality of those judgements that this course is directed.

In this first unit, you will be reading about some of the different ways in which people can come to know the world around them and apply their intellectual capacities to carry on the tasks of everyday life. Based on the readings outlined above, your task is to **write a 3-5 page paper in which you compare and contrast the notions of multiple intelligences outlined by Gardner with the ways of knowing/thinking described by Kawagley, Barnhardt and Ross.** What kinds of intelligences are Native people utilizing as depicted in the Kawagley, Kawagley/Barnhardt and Ross articles, and how do they come to acquire these intelligences? Try to identify some of the characteristics that distinguish Native ways of knowing from those favored in Western society, particularly in schools. In what ways are they similar or different? Include examples from your own experience to illustrate your points where applicable.

Unit 2 - Learning and Schooling - 15 points

Required reading:

Gardner - *The Unschooled Mind* (Chapters 6-9)

Kawagley - *A Yupiaq World View* (Chapters 3-4)

Checkley/Gardner – “The First Seven . . . and the Eighth”

In this unit you will extend the ideas raised in Unit I into the school setting to explore how they play out in the way we do formal education.

Your task for this unit is to read the chapters in Gardner and Kawagley and the Checkley/Gardner article, and then examine some aspect of how learning takes place in and out of school in your community. To do this you will have to take some time to observe a learning situation in your community, or interview someone about how children are expected to learn the things they need to know to be contributing members of the community. Based on your observations/interview about learning processes in the community and your experience with the approach to learning in school, **prepare a 4-5 page paper in which you provide a detailed description of the way learning occurs in the out-of-school settings, and then compare and contrast that with the way learning occurs in the school.** What is the relationship between “teaching” and “learning” in each setting? How does naturalistic intelligence fit into that picture? The authors will give you plenty of ideas to reflect on, so draw on the readings to help you with your analysis and discussion.

Unit 3 - Learning Through Experience - 15 points

Required reading:

Hopkins - “Possibilization and Process”

Barnhardt - "Domestication of the Ivory Tower"
Gardner - Review Chapter 1 in *The Unschooled Mind*
Kawagley - Review Chapter 1 in *A Yupiaq World View*

In this unit, we will be taking a look at the role of experiential learning in the educational process.

Read/review the above articles and then **write a one-page paper in response to each of the questions listed below** (5 pages altogether). Please keep each paper to one page, and back up your responses with references to the readings.

1. What are some of the characteristics that distinguish experiential learning from the way we typically approach teaching/learning in a classroom/school setting?
2. How does experiential learning relate to the notion of multiple intelligences outlined by Gardner in *The Unschooled Mind* and in the Checkley/Gardner article in Unit 2?
3. How does experiential learning relate to schooling in cross-cultural situations?
4. Describe at least three ways in which schools/teachers can utilize experiential learning approaches to teach the conventional curriculum.
5. Provide a detailed description of at least one example of how you have utilized experiential learning in your own work, including what you did, why you did it, and how well it worked.

Unit 4 – Constructing and Maintaining an Orderly World - 20 points

Required reading:

Lipka - "Expanding Curricular and Pedagogical Possibilities: Yup'ik-Based . . ."
Ascher - "The Organization and Modeling of Space"
Barnhardt, C. - "Tuning-In: Athabaskan Teachers and Athabaskan Students"
Harris - "Contexts for Teaching and Learning About Time"
Mericulieff - "Western Society's Linear Systems and Aboriginal Cultures"

Relativity theory notwithstanding, the way people perceive and bring order to their world varies enormously from one culture to the next. In each of the five articles you will be reading about how people have developed systems of thought to suit their needs in the context of a particular physical and cultural environment. You will also read about what happens when different systems of thought come in conflict with one another. After reading the articles, please address the following tasks.

1. **Write a one page critique of each of the five articles as they might relate to your role as an educator.** Give examples from your own experience to illustrate your points where possible. (5 pages)
2. After reading the Lipka, Ascher and Harris articles, take a stroll around your community and talk to some local people about their traditional ways of counting, or reading the weather, or forming patterns, or determining direction/distance, or reading the stars, or viewing time, or estimating dimensions, or anything else related to the issues raised in the readings. **Then, write up a summary of what you have learned and prepare a sample curriculum unit**

outlining ways in which you could incorporate the information that you have gathered into your class/school. (2 - 3 pages)

Unit 5 – Understanding Culture, Cognition and Behavior - 10 points

Required reading:

Kawagley - *A Yupiaq World View* (Appendix: Research Considerations)

Thomas - "Developing Community and Social Psychology for Aotearoa....."

Barnhardt/Kawagley – "Indigenous Knowledge Systems/Alaska Native Ways of Knowing"

ANKN – *Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally Healthy Youth*

The readings by Kawagley, Thomas and ANKN illustrate different approaches to understanding the role of culture and cognition in shaping human behavior (that of an indigenous researcher, a non-indigenous researcher and Native educators). Based on the issues raised in these and previous readings, and drawing on your own experiences and reflections, **write a 2-3 page paper in which you identify some of the research topics you would like to see addressed to help you be more effective as an educator in a cross-cultural situation.** What are some of the problems with the kind of research that has been done in these areas in the past?

Unit 6 - Indigenous Paradigms of Being and Becoming - 30 points

Required reading:

Kawagley - *A Yupiaq World View* (Chapter 5)

Gardner - *The Unschooled Mind* (Chapters 10-13)

Roth – *The Naturalist Intelligence: An Introduction to Gardner's Eighth Intelligence*

Checkley – “The First Seven . . . and the Eighth: A Conversation with Howard Gardner”

ANKN – “Native Values and Worldview”

Indigenous people around the world, including Alaska Natives, have been actively seeking ways to integrate their own beliefs, values and ways of knowing into the framework of a formal educational system in ways that are culturally appropriate. The most recent expression of this is the work of Kawagley, who offers a new paradigm, or way of thinking about the role of schooling in indigenous societies. At the same time, Howard Gardner has expanded his list of intelligences to include “naturalistic intelligence,” which has many of the same features that Kawagley talks about as “Native ways of knowing.” As you read through the materials you will find many common themes with regard to the view of education shared by indigenous people such as Kawagley, and contemporary social scientists such as Gardner. This commonality of outlook or paradigm for making sense of the world around us is also reflected in the sets of values and the cultural standards that have been adopted by various Native groups around Alaska.

Your task for this unit is to **review the *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools* and select one of the lists of values included in the materials and use it as a basis for developing a revised curriculum framework for the school(s) in your community.** How would you go about revising the current curriculum in your school or developing a new curriculum using as its foundation the values outlined on the list of values you have selected? Provide a general description of how the curriculum would be structured and then choose any five of the values from your list to provide specific examples of how your curriculum structure would translate into practice. Make use of the Cultural Standards as well as Kawagley and Gardner to bolster your ideas, and relate the examples to specific situations/conditions in your community. The final paper for this unit should be in the 6-8 page range. Give the assignment some careful thought and where appropriate, make use of any of the ideas we have covered in this course.

Optional Bonus Assignment - 1 point

Please write a one page critique of this course, including critical comments on both the format and the content, as well as your assessment of the readings. This assignment is worth one point no matter what you say, so say what you think. I won't read it until after the other assignments have been graded.

Good luck!