Syllabus

Course: Understanding Culture and Race  
Presenter: Venita Kelley

Overview

Interactions in classrooms and schools that recognize and respond to the cultures that shape the student and teacher are crucial to student learning and teaching success. In *Understanding Culture and Race*, participants study the building blocks of culture and why cultural differences can obstruct effective interactions between students and teachers. They learn how acknowledging cultural behavior and expectations should inform curriculum development, instructional and assessment strategies, and classroom management.

Participants learn how culture shapes both the student and the educator. They learn to interpret, understand, and incorporate culture into the education setting and study how culture shock can affect a teacher’s interpretations of behavior, discipline decisions, and assessment of a student’s ability to learn. The course provides a framework that participants can use to pursue their learning about culture, behaviors, and expectations in their classrooms and school environments. Participants will also increase their capacity to develop their students’ awareness of these issues and their skills at negotiating them.

Presenter’s Bio

**Venita Kelley** is former representative to the Governor for Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) in Ohio. Dr. Kelley’s expertise is interdisciplinary and includes intercultural communication, media, organizational design/diagnosis, and leadership development. She has worked in the education and communication fields for several years and served as urban scholar for the cultural competency professional development training segment of the Governor’s Initiative. Her experience includes: associate deanship of leadership and student development; noted professor in teaching and learning; curriculum and program development; professorate positions in communication and ethnic studies with affiliated status in film and women’s studies; secondary education as a 9-12 English teacher, career counselor, and life skills; and consultant and/or trainer in intercultural communication in state and federal government, K-12 and university systems, medical schools, and foundations. She is noted as a master teacher. Her publications span book chapters, performance pieces, news columns, articles, and peer reviewed journals.

Dr. Kelley holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science from the University of California at Berkeley; a Master of Arts in Mass Communication and Public Policy from Howard University; a doctorate in Intercultural and Public Communication from the University of Kansas. She has also completed post-doctoral fellowships at Cornell University and Harvard University. She is founder of a consulting firm focused on leadership development, media, cultural literacy, and proficiency and holds ASPIRE certifications in administration, budgets and supervision.

Objectives
After completing this course, educators will know:

- Culture and its effects in the classroom
- Racism and its effects in the classroom
- Critical cross-cultural communication skills
- Tools and skills necessary to be an effective educator in intercultural contexts

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, educators will apply the following skills:

- Employ cultural competence in their teaching practice
- Meet students’ needs as determined by their worldviews
- Recognize and counter racism and its impact in the classroom
- Communicate effectively with all their students

Units

1. Introduction to Cultural Competency and the Heart of Culture

In this unit, Dr. Kelley argues that educators need a theoretical understanding of culture, which leads to cultural competence, engaged students, and higher student achievement. Participants learn such key terms as worldview, epistemology, ontology, and cosmology and how each can affect a classroom’s culture.

2. Eight Sectors of Culture, Part 1

In this unit, participants explore how different aspects of worldview and culture can affect a teacher’s practice and the critical relationships between the teacher and his or her students. She begins by focusing on beliefs values, and attitudes; schema; temporality; and space.

3. Eight Sectors of Culture, Part 2

In this unit, participants continue to explore how different aspects of worldview and culture can affect a teacher’s practice and the critical relationships between the teacher and his or her students. The four sectors of culture Dr. Kelley focuses on in this unit are myths, religion, and expressive forms; social and communication networks; interpolation patterns, and language.

4. Article: “Studying Students Studying Calculus: A Look at the Lives of Minority Mathematics Students in College”

In this unit, participants read the article “Studying Students Studying Calculus: A Look at the Lives of Minority Mathematics Students in College,” in which author Uri Treisman describes the evolution of a project he developed at the University of California, Berkeley, to address the high
rate of failure of black and Hispanic students in calculus. After reading the article, they respond
to reflection questions that follow.

5. Dimensions of Worldview

In this unit, participants study the relationship between worldviews and their own and their
students’ classroom behavior. Dr. Kelley explores individualism and collectivism, masculine and
feminine cultural patterns, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, fatalism, and face in this
context.

6. The Impact of Culture Shock on Teaching Practice

In this unit, participants explore what culture shock is, how it can manifest in the classroom, and
how to manage those manifestations. Dr. Kelley takes participants through the stages of culture
shock, positioning adaptation or acculturation as the ultimate target.

7. Insights into Race and Racism

In this unit, participants explore race and racism, how they can manifest in the classroom, and
how to effectively limit the impact of those manifestations. They watch the film Ethnic Notions
in order to generate discussion and comprehension of a range of issues involving the
representation of race in culture media.

8. Article: “What Are Your Expectations? The Challenge of Teaching Across Race”

In this unit, participants read an article from Scholastic.com, “What Are Your Expectations? The
Challenge of Teaching Across Race,” in which the authors argue that “black students are getting
a raw deal in American schools when it comes to discipline,” which in turn affects their academic
achievement. After reading the article, they respond to the reflection questions that follow.

9. Addressing Our Societal Inheritance in Educational Settings

In this unit, participants explore class and gender, how they can emerge and affect dynamics in
the classroom, and how to navigate these phenomena to lessen or improve their impact on
student learning.

10. Cultivating and Achieving Cultural Competency in Educational Settings

In this unit, participants prepare to incorporate course concepts into their teaching practice in
order to affect both their own and their students’ cultural competence. In this context, Dr.
Kelley explores cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and cognitive intelligence.

11. Article: “Cultural Identity and Teaching”

In this unit, participants read “Cultural Identity and Teaching,” by Kim Kennedy White, Shelley
Zion, and Elizabeth Kozleski, which offers educators some tactics to increase their own and their
students’ cultural awareness. After reading the article, they address the reflection questions
that follow.
12. Article: “Exploring Cultural Variation”

In this unit, participants read “Exploring Cultural Variation,” by Joseph Jones, Mary Margaret Overbey, Alan Goodman, Carol Mukhopadhyay, Yoland Moses, and Amy Beckrich, which details lesson plans designed to “address some of the major themes or conceptual points students need to ‘get’ if they are to understand that race is both a cultural invention and profoundly real.”

13. Communication Practices to Encourage Cultural Awareness and Competence

In this unit, participants scrutinize how modifying their communication with students can affect student learning, engagement, and achievement.

14. Article: “Active Listening Skills”

In this unit, participants read the article “Active Listening Skills,” which describes ways to improve communication. Participants are tasked with designing a brief lesson plan or activity that invites students to engage in the acts of attending, paraphrasing, clarifying, perception-checking, summarizing, and expressing empathy.

Methods of Instruction

- Videos (presentations consisting of lecture, interviews, and classroom footage)
- Text (units based on required reading)
- Reflection questions (open-ended questions at intervals throughout the video presentations where participants are asked to reflect on the course content, their own practice, and their intentions for their practice)
- Quizzes (selected-response quizzes to assess understanding of the video presentations and content in the reading materials)
- Discussion forum (prompts after each unit that engage participants in online dialogue with their cohorts)
- Midterm (a project intended to get teachers to begin to develop their practice by putting to work in the classroom what they have learned)
- Final (a project that enables educators to reflect on their practice and assess their students’ work through the lens of what they have learned)

In order to complete the requirements of the course, the participant must complete all course work (e.g., reflections, quizzes, and any midterm and/or final), including watching all videos and participating in all discussion forums. We do not award partial credit.

Percentage of Course Credit

- Reflection questions 25%
- Quizzes 15%
- Midterm 25%
- Final 35%
Plagiarism Policy

KDS recognizes plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else’s work as one’s own and includes failing to cite sources for others’ ideas, copying material from books or the Internet (including lesson plans and rubrics), and handing in work written by someone other than the participant. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and may have additional consequences. For more information about plagiarism and guidelines for appropriate citation, consult plagiarism.org.

Grading Policy and Rubrics

A: 3.4 – 4.0  
B: 2.7 – 3.3  
C: 2.0 – 2.6  
F: <2.0

Quiz/Reflections Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Distinguished (4)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Participant has provided rich detail and supporting examples from the course content.</td>
<td>Participant has included appropriate content from the course content.</td>
<td>Participant has included little that indicates consideration and comprehension of course content.</td>
<td>Participant has included little to no content indicating consideration and comprehension of course content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection questions</td>
<td>Participant has made thoughtful comments in response to prompts personally meaningful and relevant to his or her teaching practice.</td>
<td>Participant has answered most questions directly but some too briefly.</td>
<td>Participant has addressed the specific questions posed.</td>
<td>Participant has not responded to all reflection questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant has copied from the course transcript without synthesis or analysis.

Midterm

The goal of this midterm is to explore your own ontology, epistemology, cosmology, or worldview for its impact on your performance in the classroom. For this assignment you will choose one of the terms, define it in your own words, and describe how it influences your instruction, assessment, classroom management, and relationship with students. Be sure to illustrate each assertion with several examples.
Please do the following:
1. Define one of the following terms in your own words: ontology, epistemology, cosmology or worldview.
2. Explore how the concept you chose to define influences the following in your classroom:
   a. Instruction.
   b. Assessment.
   c. Classroom management.
   d. Your relationship with students.
Include several examples for each assertion.

### Midterm Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Distinguished (4)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define ontology, epistemology, cosmology, or worldview.</td>
<td>Participant clearly and completely defines chosen term in his or her own words, demonstrating a deep understanding and thorough consideration of the meaning.</td>
<td>Participant clearly and completely defines chosen term in his or her own words, but uses vague language, and/or omits some necessary details.</td>
<td>Participant has not defined chosen term, has paraphrased an existing definition, or has incorrectly defined the word according to the course content.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore how the concept influences your instruction.</td>
<td>Participant explains in significant detail how the concept influences his or her instruction and includes several illustrative examples.</td>
<td>Participant clearly explains how the concept influences his or her instruction and includes a few illustrative examples.</td>
<td>Participant describes how the concept influences his or her instruction though the description is unclear and no meaningful examples are included.</td>
<td>Participant has not described how the concept influences his or her instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore how the concept influences your assessment.</td>
<td>Participant explains in significant detail how the concept influences his or her assessment, and includes several illustrative examples.</td>
<td>Participant clearly explains how the concept influences his or her assessment and includes a few illustrative examples.</td>
<td>Participant describes how the concept influences his or her assessment though the description is unclear and no meaningful examples are included.</td>
<td>Participant has not described how the concept influences his or her assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore how the concept influences your classroom management.</td>
<td>Participant explains in significant detail how the concept influences his or her classroom management and includes several illustrative examples.</td>
<td>Participant clearly explains how the concept influences his or her classroom management and includes a few illustrative examples.</td>
<td>Participant describes how the concept influences his or her classroom management though the description is unclear and no meaningful examples are included.</td>
<td>Participant has not described how the concept influences his or her classroom management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Explore how the concept influences your relationship with students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant explains in significant detail how the concept influences his or her relationship with students and includes several illustrative examples.</th>
<th>Participant clearly explains how the concept influences his or her relationship with students and includes a few illustrative examples.</th>
<th>Participant describes how the concept influences his or her relationship with students though the description is unclear and no meaningful examples are included.</th>
<th>Participant has not described how the concept influences his or her relationship with students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Formal issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant has made no grammatical errors or typos. Participant has organized paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas. Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure and made careful word choice.</th>
<th>Participant has made a few grammatical errors or typos. Participant has organized most paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas. Participant has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure though not always found the right word.</th>
<th>Participant has made some distracting grammatical errors and/or typos. Participant has organized some paragraphs around main ideas but not others. Participant has written in a style that communicates his or her thoughts but with no marked eloquence and insufficient attention to word choice.</th>
<th>Participant has made multiple grammatical errors and/or typos. Paragraphs are not organized around main ideas. Participant has written in a style that does not effectively communicate his or her thoughts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Final**

For this final you will develop a learning project for your students, appropriate to a chosen grade level or subject area, designed to help cultivate your students’ cultural competency. Be sure to create a full lesson plan with all of the following: objectives, detailed activities, and assessment tool.

Please do the following:

1. Identify the grade level and/or subject area for which the projected will be aimed.
2. Identify the project’s learning objectives.
3. Explain the steps of the project.
4. Explain how the project will incorporate students’ diverse experiences.
5. Explain how the project will incorporate aspects of students’ different cultures.
6. Explain how the project will help students make connections between the content and their own lives, goals, and societal concerns.
7. Create an assessment tool to help you evaluate students’ work on the project and any student work.
8. Write a reflection addressing how the project would cultivate students’ cultural competency.

**Final Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Distinguished (4)</th>
<th>Proficient (3)</th>
<th>Basic (2)</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the grade level and/or subject area for which the projected will be aimed.</td>
<td>Participant has clearly identified the grade level and/or subject area for which the project is aimed and it is developmentally appropriate.</td>
<td>Participant has indicated the grade level and/or subject area for which the project is aimed.</td>
<td>Participant has in some way alluded to the grade level and/or subject area for which the project is aimed.</td>
<td>Participant has not identified the audience for the project and has not stated learning objective(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the project’s learning objectives.</td>
<td>Participant has stated clear and challenging learning objective(s).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the steps of the project.</td>
<td>Participant has explained in significant detail all of the different steps of the project.</td>
<td>Participant has listed and explained the steps of the project.</td>
<td>Participant has listed the steps of the project.</td>
<td>Participant has not indicated the steps of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain how the project would incorporate students’ diverse experience.</td>
<td>Participant has explained in significant detail how the project would incorporate students’ diverse experience in a manner that is specifically in line with the course content.</td>
<td>Participant has explained how the project would incorporate students’ diverse experience.</td>
<td>Participant has indicated though not adequately explained how the project would incorporate students’ diverse experience.</td>
<td>Participant has not indicated how the project would incorporate students’ diverse experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain how the project would incorporate aspects of students’ different cultures.</td>
<td>Participant has persuasively explained how the project would incorporate aspects of students’ different cultures in a manner that is specifically in line with the course content.</td>
<td>Participant has explained how the project would incorporate aspects of students’ different cultures.</td>
<td>Participant has indicated though not adequately explained how the project would incorporate aspects of students’ different cultures.</td>
<td>Participant has not indicated how the project would incorporate aspects of students’ different cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain how the project would help students make</td>
<td>Participant has persuasively explained how the project would help</td>
<td>Participant has indicated though not adequately explained</td>
<td>Participant has not indicated how the project would help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connections between the content and their own lives, goals, and societal concerns.</td>
<td>project would help students make connections between the content and their own lives, goals, and societal concerns in a manner that is specifically in line with the course content.</td>
<td>students make connections between the content and their own lives, goals, and societal concerns.</td>
<td>how the project would help students make connections between the content and their own lives, goals, and societal concerns.</td>
<td>students make connections between the content and their own lives, goals, and societal concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an assessment tool to help you evaluate students’ work on the project and any student work.</td>
<td>Participate has included an assessment tool that describes, in detail, how he or she will assess the project; the alignment of the assessment tool to the objective(s) of the project is clear.</td>
<td>Participate has included an assessment tool that can be used effectively to assess the project in relation to the objectives(s).</td>
<td>Participate has minimally described how he or she will use an assessment tool to assess the project and/or the assessment tool included is not clearly aligned to the objectives of the assignment.</td>
<td>Participate has not described how he or she will assess the project and has not included an assessment tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a reflection addressing how the project would cultivate students’ cultural competency.</td>
<td>Participate has persuasively addressed with ample detail how the project would cultivate students’ cultural competency.</td>
<td>Participate has effectively addressed how the project would cultivate students’ cultural competency.</td>
<td>Participate has referred to some extent to how the project would cultivate students’ cultural competency.</td>
<td>Participate has not addressed how the project would cultivate students’ cultural competency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal issues</td>
<td>Participate has made no grammatical errors or typos. Participate has organized paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas. Participate has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure and made careful word choice.</td>
<td>Participate has made a few grammatical errors or typos. Participate has organized most paragraphs around clearly articulated main ideas. Participate has written in an effective and eloquent style—i.e., has varied his or her sentence structure though not always found the right word.</td>
<td>Participate has made some distracting grammatical errors and/or typos. Participate has organized some paragraphs around main ideas but not others. Participate has written in a style that communicates his or her thoughts but with no marked eloquence and insufficient attention to word choice.</td>
<td>Participate has made multiple grammatical errors and/or typos. Paragraphs are not organized around main ideas. Participate has written in a style that does not effectively communicate his or her thoughts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>