

Ethnic Studies Course Terms & Concepts:

1. Frame of Reference is the context, viewpoint, or set of cultural beliefs or understanding that we base our view of the world on. People interpret information or make sense of things based on their values, beliefs and past experiences
2. Culture - a group which shapes a person's values and identity. It is any patterned set of behaviors, knowledge, values, beliefs, experiences and traditions shared by a particular group of people.
3. Cultural identities can stem from the following differences: race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, country of origin, and geographic region. Culture is not genetic; it is transmitted by communicating symbols.
4. Values - group's deeply held beliefs that are expressed in their day to day behaviors
5. Cultural beliefs are the commonly held norms and moral standards of a culture, the standards of right and wrong that set expectations for behavior. These beliefs are usually rooted in the culture's symbolic inheritance and include the roles that are appropriate for particular persons
6. Norms are the rules and expectations of conduct in a group that prescribes or forbids the conduct of the members of the group.
7. Cultural Assumptions are beliefs about the internal workings and external environment of a group which, having worked well in the past, have gradually come to be taken for granted, and which provide the basis for group understanding and consensus about common events and circumstances.
8. Mores are the fundamental values of a group and are considered essential to the welfare of all members of a society. Mores are usually the unwritten code of conduct of a group that ensures the survival of that group. Mores determine the norms for individual behavior. Violating a more is a serious offense, usually punishable in that society. In highly organized societies like the United States, most mores are formally written into laws, examples include laws for murder, incest, child molestation, theft, etc.
9. Ethnic groups- a group of people who identify with one another or are identified by others based on specific cultural characteristics like race, religion, language, economic level-share common cultural norms, values, identified patterns of behavior, and language.
10. Geocentric refers to the Earth or your geographic position as the center of human experience
11. Egocentric refers to the inability to understand, “see” and/or accept different opinions, beliefs, and values because it does not support our thinking. Viewing the world from an individual perspective without considering other individuals, groups, or societies way of thinking.
12. Cultural Context refers to the thoughts and feelings we have about a situation based upon who we are and our cultural background.
13. Cultural Conflict – when a person acts according to the values and norms of his or her culture; another person holding a different worldview might interpret his or her behavior from an opposite standpoint. This situation creates misunderstanding and can lead to conflict.
14. Cultural Shock - is the anxiety and feelings (of surprise, disorientation, uncertainty, confusion, etc.) felt when people have to operate within a different and unknown culture such as one may encounter in a foreign country

15. Xenophobia is an excessive and irrational fear of anything foreign. This fear is most often of foreign people, places or objects. People who are xenophobic may display fear or even anger toward others who are foreign. While xenophobia is often used interchangeably with terms such as prejudice and racism, these terms have different meanings.
16. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to look at the world primarily from the perspective of one's own ethnic culture. People feel pride in the culture in which they have grown up and from which they have adopted their values and standards of behavior so they judge other cultures based on their perceptions, values, and beliefs of their own culture. . Problems arise when individuals view other cultures not only as different, but also as inferior, with a great danger of behaving in ways that are damaging to those from other culture
17. Cultural diffusion is the process by which a cultural trait, material object, idea, language, or behavior pattern is spread from one society to another. Diffusion is the movement of things and ideas from one culture to another. When diffusion occurs, the form of a trait may move from one society to another but the trait does not mean the same thing it meant in its original culture.
18. Acculturation is what happens to an entire culture when traits from a different culture diffuse into the home culture on a large scale and replace the home cultures traditional patterns of behavior.
19. Trans-culturation is what happens to an individual when he or she moves to another society and adopts its culture. Immigrants who successfully learn the language and accept as their own the cultural patterns of their adopted country have trans-cultured.
20. Cultural change occurs in two important ways: 1) new ideas, things and norms are always being introduced into a culture either by invention and innovation or more frequently, by diffusion (widespread distribution); 2) old things, ideas and norms that are already a part of culture will die out and be replaced.
21. Assimilate - become part of the dominant culture. Minority cultures tend to become part of the dominant culture or risk being perceived as different, difficult or a threat to the dominant culture. Example – Japanese Americans assimilated into the American culture more quickly after WWII due to the Japanese internment camp experience during WWII.