

## **Sample Syllabus for Culture & Communications FYE**

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### **Course Description**

The purpose of this First-Year Experience course is to explore issues of culture and communications through participation with the West Chester University DNA Discussion Project. Together, students will explore how genetic ancestry information influences racial identification. The goal of the course is to encourage a greater understanding of the roles that genetics, language, and culture play on the construction of race, the perception of ethnicity, and the relationship between social power and identity. In other words, what stories do we tell ourselves about who we are and what does this mean for how we relate to others within our communities and outside of them?

### **FYE Learning Outcomes**

1. Media & information literacy
2. Specialized writing & performance skills
3. Technological competence
4. Intercultural communication competence

### **Course Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to articulate how they see themselves racially, and how the genetic DNA test influences their identification.
2. Students will engage in dialogue with classmates regarding their commonalities and differences, what this means to how they perceive their individual selves, and how these relate to socio-cultural themes.
3. Students will be able to articulate new discoveries about the relationships between language, culture, social power, and identity.

### **Assignments**

**Online Modules:** Prior to the start of class each week, students are expected to complete readings and/or watch videos related to session learning objectives. Each session will include a short online quiz (4 online modules total, worth 10 points each) to ensure that students are prepared for that week's activity. Quizzes can be accessed on D2L under the "Online Learning Module" tab. Failure to complete the online module prior to the class session will result in a 10-point deduction from the grade, as well as an attendance penalty.

**Who Am I? Narrative:** Students are expected to watch videos on the Ancestry.com website (<http://www.ancestry.com/cs/us/videos>) to learn more about how [genetic DNA is processed](#). After watching the video, students will reflect upon the results they expect in their own DNA tool-kit. Specifically, students should answer:

- a. How do you identify racially?

- b. What are some narratives that have been passed down in your family?
- c. Are there any family secrets or gaps in your family narrative?
- d. How do you identify in the census?
- e. What ancestry would be unexpected in your results?

Reflections should be 2-3 pages in length and proofed for grammar.

#### Group Activity 1 - Unpacking the individual DNA experience:

After an in-class discussion of what the ancestry DNA results may (or may not) mean in terms of identifying background, students will break into small groups select three cards from a deck for discussion.

##### Card questions include:

- With whom have you shared your results?
- Were there elements of your background that were unexpected?
- Were you surprised about the reaction of others to your profile?
- How is your stated identity challenged or supported by your profile?
- Do you see yourself differently as a result of your DNA profile?
- Were you at all surprised about your own reaction to your profile?
- Can you think of a possible narrative that might explain unexpected ancestry?
- Is there anything in your behavior that might change a result of what you have learned about your or others' ancestry?
- Do you have questions for others?

#### Group Activity 2:

After an in-class discussion linking the DNA Project to larger socio-cultural themes, students will break into small groups and each group selects three cards from a deck for discussion.

##### Card questions include:

- Do you see this culture/country differently based on the DNA findings you are hearing about?
- Do you see any implications of racial secrets in families and/or in our culture?
- Are there narratives in your own background that have separated you from others?
- Might any of these results reflect secrets at the family or social level?
- What benefits have you received from your public identity?
- What challenges have come as a result of your public identity?
- Can you think of cases in the news that bring to the forefront the nature of contested race?
- Do you have questions for others?
- How important is a "bloodline"?
- Should we be proud of our "bloodline"? Why?
- Which is more relevant, culture or genetics?

- a) In closing, each group will be asked to identify two statements for moving forward. The two statements will begin, “We resolve that...”
- b) Finally, participants will be given an opportunity to make a closing statement or ask a final question.

#### Language and Identity Reflective Project:

Now that you have your Ancestry results, pick one of the bloodlines represented in your results and learn a few key words or phrases in that language. Learn how to say hello and goodbye, please and thank you, and a common blessing or toast from that language. Now, compare the translated literal meanings of those common sayings to your first/home language. What buried stories are carried in the language and grammar of your bloodline? After you’ve done this, interview an elder in your family to share with them what you’ve learned about the language resources available in your bloodline. See if they can add to your stories of linguistic/rhetorical innovation through an addition of family stories and/or old home language sayings. From these two data sites (your research into a new language of your bloodline and your oral history with an elder), produce a public rhetoric project that uses a common genre of the internet (buzz feed article; storified tweets; listicle; Onion piece/satire) to teach an audience of your choosing a lesson about what you learned.

#### Final Video Submission:

This course asked you to explore issues of culture and communications to learn more about your own ancestry and identification narrative. The purpose of this assignment is to create a 3-5 minute video sharing your journey.

In this video, answer the overarching question, “Who are you?”. Think of this video as a multimodal story that sets your family’s personal story in the web of cultural and socio-political relations you’ve learned about in order to begin healing and commit to right relationships in word and deed going forward.

Following the genre example provided in class discussions, reflect on where you came from and how personal past experiences have shaped who you are as a person today. Where do you hope to be in 5, 10, or even 50 years? What are your responsibilities to your own communities and to others? Upload your completed video to your e-portfolio on D2L. Please let the course instructor know if you need assistance with technology. Please note that videos will be graded on reflection, not the quality of production.

## Course Outline

Date	Topic	Assignment
<u>Week 1</u>	Topic: What is culture? -Review syllabus -Purpose of DNA Activity -Introduce 'Who Am I? Narrative Project'	Online Learning Module 1 (Ancestry.com Videos & Q's) opens at 8:01 am. <b>Readings:</b> -Ch. 1 of "The Truth About Stories" by Thomas King, "There is no such thing as Western civilisation" by Kwame Anthony Appiah -"Human Communication as Narration" by Fisher, W.R.
<u>Week 2</u>	-Collect DNA Kits -Common Content	<b>Readings:</b> -"Liberal Arts in the Data Age" by J.M. Olejarz "Global diversity, population stratification, and selection of..." by Sudmant, et.al."
<u>Week 3</u>	-Common Content	
<u>Week 4</u>	-Common Content	
<u>Week 5</u>	-Common Content	
<u>Week 6</u>	-Common Content	

<u>Week 7</u>	-Common Content	
<u>Week 8</u>	<p>Topic: Multilingual realities of our world</p> <p>-Who Am I? Narrative Project Due on D2L</p> <p>-Distribute DNA Results</p>	<p>Online Learning Module 1 Closes at 7:59 am.</p> <p>Online Learning Module 2 opens (Language Literacy &amp; Q's) at 8:01 am.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>-“‘Gates Locked’ and the Violence of Fixation” by Ralph Cintron</p> <p>-“Gallery of Casta Paintings” (view images)</p> <p>"A polyphony of Voices: The dialectics of Linguistic Diversity and Unity in the Twentieth-Century United States", by Judith Rodby</p>
<u>Week 9</u>	<p>Topic: Multimodal literacies</p> <p>-Group Activity 1 (Unpacking the DNA Experience)</p> <p>-Introduce Reflective Project</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <p>-“Axolotl” by Julio Cortázar</p> <p>-“Nobody Mean More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan” by June Jordan</p> <p>-“How To Tame a Wild Tongue” by Gloria Anzaldúa</p>
<u>Week 10</u>	<p>Topic: Language and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture and linguistic diversity</li> </ul>	<p>Online Learning Module 2 Closes at 7:59 am.</p> <p>Online Learning Module 3 (Video Formats &amp; Q's) opens at 8:01 am.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>-”There’s no translation for it:...” by Lyons, Scott.</p> <p>-”What if we occupied language?” by Alim, H. Samy</p> <p>- Archaeology, Genetics and Linguistic Diversity by Colin</p>

		<p>Renfrew. New Series, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Sep., 1992), pp. 445-478</p> <p>Linguistic Diversity by Jasone Cenoz, Durk Gorter and Kathleen Heugh. Journal of Behavioral Education, Vol. 20, No. 4 (December, 2011), pp. 221-223</p> <p>Lippi-Green, R. (1997). "Teaching children how to discriminate." English with an Accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States. London and New York: Routledge (<a href="https://freerangeresearch.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/ic-lippi-green-1997-teaching-children-how-to-discriminate.pdf">https://freerangeresearch.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/ic-lippi-green-1997-teaching-children-how-to-discriminate.pdf</a>)</p>
Week 11	<p>Topic: Multimodal literacies</p> <p>-Reflective Project Due on D2L</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>- "What I Pledge Allegiance To" by Kiese Laymon</p> <p>- "Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century" by Paula Moya</p>
Week 12	<p>Topic: Differences between race, ethnicity, identity</p> <p>-Group Activity 2 (Linking to sociocultural themes)</p> <p>-Introduce Final Video Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intersection between culture, religion and race</li> <li>• Cultural relativism, ethnocentrism and universalism</li> </ul>	<p>Online Learning Module 3 Closes at 7:59 am.</p> <p>Online Learning Module 4 (Sociocultural themes &amp; Q's) opens at 8:01 am.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>- "Racial and Ethnic Identity and Development" by Chávez and Guido-DiBrito</p>

		<p>Brown, M. F. (2008). Cultural Relativism 2.0. Cultural Anthropology, Vol. 49 #3</p> <p>Choudhury, C. A. (2015) Beyond Culture: Human Rights Universalisms Versus Religious and Cultural Relativism in the Activism for Gender Justice. Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law &amp; Justice, Vol 30 issues 2</p>
<u>Week 13</u>	-Common Content	
<u>Week 14</u>	-Common Content	
<u>Week 15</u>	-Final Video Submission Due on D2L	Online Learning Module 4 Closes at 7:59 am

### Course Bibliography

Alim, H. (2011). What if we occupied language? The New York Times. from <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/21/what-if-we-occupied-language/>.

Appiah, K. (2016). There is no such thing as Western civilisation. The Guardian. from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/09/western-civilisation-appiah-reith-lecture>

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<http://www.csun.edu/~ss24912/Brown2008CulturalRelativism.pdf>

“Gallery of Casta Paintings.” (17th-18th Century). Wikipedia. from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casta>

Chávez, A., and Guido-DiBrito, F. (1999). Racial and Ethnic Identity and Development. from <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic551690.files/Chavez%20and%20Guido%20Debrito.pdf>

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Fisher, W.R. (1989). Human Communication as Narration. South Carolina Press

Jordan, J. (1985). Nobody Mean More to Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan, On Call.

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Laymon, K. (2016). What I Pledge Allegiance to. Fader, from <http://www.thefader.com/2016/09/19/my-mississippi-pledge-kiese-laymon>

Lyons, S. (2010). There’s no translation for it: The rhetorical sovereignty of indigenous languages. Southern Illinois University Press.

Moya, P. & Markus, H. (2010). Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century. Stanford University.

Olejarz, J.M. (2017). Liberal Arts in the Data Age. Harvard Business Review, from <https://hbr.org/2017/07/liberal-arts-in-the-data-age>

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Rodby, Judith. "A Polyphony of Voices: The Dialectics of Linguistic Diversity and Unity in the Twentieth-Century United States." English in Its Social Contexts: Essays



in Historical Linguistics. Ed. Tim W. Machan and Charles T. Scott. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. 178-203.

Sudmant, P., Mallick, S., Nelson, B., et.al., (2015). Global diversity, population stratification, and selection of human copy-number variation., Science, 349(6253), aab3761.

Lakeoff, R. (1973). Language and WOmAn's place. Language in Society 2(1) 45-80

Lippi-Green, R. (1997). "Teaching children how to discriminate." English with an Accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States. London and New York: Routledge  
<https://freerangeresearch.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/ic-lippi-green-1997-teaching-children-how-to-discriminate.pdf>

Tannen, D. (1992). That's not what I meant: How conversational style makes or breaks relationships.

Tannen has studied language and communication rituals for decades, and has a list of articles that are interesting and easy to read, if reading her books is not an option. A partial list can be seen here  
<http://www.deborahannen.com/general-audience-articles/>

Course Videos for Online Learning Modules:

1. Ancestry.com from <http://www.ancestry.com/cs/us/videos>
2. History of the entire world, I guess from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuCn8ux2gbs>

### Course Modalities

This course utilizes various modes of instruction, including traditional face-to-face lectures, small group breakout sessions, and online learning modules. Failure to participate with any of these modalities will result in an absence and/or assignment penalty for that particular day. If you have any specific concerns regarding your participation or course requirements, please contact the instructor prior to the class session.

Self-motivation and self-discipline are critical to the success of this course. Please check the course schedule and assignments early, be proactive with questions, and submit assignments on time.

**Technology skills:** Students are expected to be competent in the use of computers, the World Wide Web, popular social media platforms, and commonly used software programs such as the Microsoft Office Suite of applications. Students without experience using the university's learning management system

(Desire2Learn) can contact the instructor and/or the Student Help Desk to arrange instruction. Students will also be given instruction on the first day of class on how to successfully navigate and complete assignments within the Desire2Learn system. Students must have access to the most current version of Internet Explorer/Safari/Mozilla. It is expected that all students will be able to open Microsoft Office 2007 files. Students are encouraged to contact the student help desk to ensure that their computer equipment is sufficient for the D2L operating system. Students must be able to readily access the Internet via cable or broadband as files may be large in this course. In this course we will be using the D2L Learning Management System. If you are new to D2L please read the support manual explaining the various tools and functions. If you have questions about using D2L please contact me, D2L tech support (open 24/7) or the WCU technology helpline at 6104363350.

### **Course Requirements and Policies:**

	Total points	Percent of final grade	
Online Modules			
4 Due at 10 points each	40	20%	
Who Am I? Narrative	25	15%	
Group Activity		20%	
2 Due at 25 points each	50		
Reflective Project	20	15%	
Final Video	40	20%	
Participation	25	10%	*additional information about each assignment can be found on D2L

### **Course Information**

#### **Course Texts**

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, students are required to purchase an Ancestry DNA kit to be used as a central tool for discussions surrounding diversity, racial identification, and socio-cultural themes.

#### **Other Course Materials**

Additional course materials will be made available on D2L (Desire 2 Learn) (<https://d2l.wcupa.edu>) or through Library eReserves.

### Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Attendance is taken in this class. This will constitute for 25 participation points of your final grade. Students with more than 1 weeks' worth of missed classes will not receive their 25-point participation grade. Just attending class does not guarantee these points. Attendance is expected for all students for every class meeting. If you must miss class, all assignments are due as scheduled and on time. Deductions will be made for students who arrive late or leave early. Chronic tardiness and/or disruptions will not be tolerated. If you miss the attendance sheet while due to a tardiness, simply let me know at the end of the class, and I will mark you as tardy. Two tardy penalties equal one absence. Official attendance records may not be amended retroactively.

### Late, Incomplete, and Make-Up Assignments Policy

Excused absences are to be cleared in advance with the instructor. Excused absences are only for religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond the student's control -i.e., a death in one's immediate family or some other similarly serious matter in which the cause is verifiable. It is the responsibility of the student to verify any documentation of absences with the instructor.

Students are advised to carefully read and comply with the excused absences policy for university- sanctioned events contained in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog. In particular, please note that the "responsibility for meeting academic requirements rests with the student," that this policy does not excuse students from completing required academic work, and that professors can require a "fair alternative" to attendance on those days that students must be absent from class in order to participate in a University- Sanctioned Event.

**Assignments.** All students are expected to learn how to access Desire 2 Learn, which contains all of the assignments, handouts, and documents for the course. No assignments will be accepted after the due date and time (see below).

**Missed Deadlines/Due Dates.** Missed assignments, exams, or presentations due to unexcused absences result in a "0" for ALL aspects of the missed work.

Evaluation Policy  
WCU Final Grade Scale

LETTER GRADE	PERCENTAGE	GPA POINTS
A	100-93	4.0
A-	92-90	3.67
B+	89-87	3.33
B	86-83	3.0
B-	82-80	2.67
C+	79-77	2.33
C	76-73	2.0
C-	72-70	1.67
D+	69-67	1.33
D	66-63	1.0
D-	62-60	0.67
F	<60	0.0

Statements Common to All Syllabi (Undergraduate Courses)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is the responsibility of each student to adhere to the university's standards for academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include any act that violates the rights of another student in academic work, that involves misrepresentation of your own work, or that disrupts the instruction of the course. Other violations include (but are not limited to): cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, which means copying any part of another's work and/or using ideas of another and presenting them as one's own without giving proper credit to the source; selling, purchasing, or exchanging of term papers; falsifying of information; and using your own work from one class to fulfill the assignment for another class without significant modification. Proof of academic misconduct can result in the automatic failure and removal from this course. For questions regarding Academic Integrity, the No-Grade Policy, Sexual Harassment, or the Student Code of Conduct, students are encouraged to refer to the Communication Studies Department Undergraduate Handbook, the Undergraduate Catalog, the Ram's Eye View, and the University website at [www.wcupa.edu](http://www.wcupa.edu).

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please present your letter of accommodations and meet with me as soon as possible so that I can support your success in an informed manner. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively. If you would like to know more about West Chester University's Services for Students with

Disabilities (OSSD), please visit them at 223 Lawrence Center. The OSSD hours of Operation are Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Their phone number is 610-436-2564, their fax number is 610-436-2600, their email address is [ossd@wcupa.edu](mailto:ossd@wcupa.edu), and their website is at [www.wcupa.edu/ussss/ossd](http://www.wcupa.edu/ussss/ossd).

## EXCUSED ABSENCES POLICY FOR UNIVERSITY-SANCTIONED EVENTS

Students are advised to carefully read and comply with the excused absences policy for university-sanctioned events contained in the WCU Undergraduate Catalog. In particular, please note that the “responsibility for meeting academic requirements rests with the student,” that this policy does not excuse students from completing required academic work, and that professors can require a “fair alternative” to attendance on those days that students must be absent from class in order to participate in a University-Sanctioned Event.

## REPORTING INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

West Chester University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator, Ms. Lynn Klingensmith. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the person designated in the University protection of minors policy. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at the webpage for the Office of Social Equity at [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_admin/social.equity/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_admin/social.equity/).

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

All students are encouraged to sign up for the University's free WCU ALERT service, which delivers official WCU emergency text messages directly to your cell phone. For more information, visit [www.wcupa.edu/wcualert](http://www.wcupa.edu/wcualert). To report an emergency, call the Department of Public Safety at 610-436-3311.

## ELECTRONIC MAIL POLICY

It is expected that faculty, staff, and students activate and maintain regular access to University provided e-mail accounts. Official university communications, including those from your instructor, will be sent through your university e-mail

account. You are responsible for accessing that mail to be sure to obtain official University communications. Failure to access will not exempt individuals from the responsibilities associated with this course.

For more information, please visit our department website at <http://communication.wcupa.edu>