

PSYC 4360—Advanced Topics in Psychology
Topic: Cross Cultural Psychology
Summer 2026
Professor: Lauren Deaton, MA, MBA

Instructor information:

Lauren Deaton

Office: HPR 209

Email: ldeaton@uttyler.edu

Course Description (from catalog for PSYC 4360): Thorough explorations of topics of substantial scholarly interest in psychology. Prerequisite: Senior standing in psychology or consent of instructor.

Topic: Cross Cultural Psychology

This course explores concepts of mental health and well-being through a comparative examination of Eastern and Western perspectives, with particular attention to the Japanese cultural context. Students will analyze how cultural values, philosophical traditions, and social norms shape understandings of mental health, emotional expression, and psychological resilience in Japan and Western societies. Drawing on insights from psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, the course examines topics such as collectivism and individualism, mindfulness and selfhood, stigma and help-seeking behaviors, and community-based versus individual-centered approaches to care. Through theoretical discussions, cross-cultural case studies, and reflective exercises, participants will develop a deeper understanding of how cultural frameworks influence mental health and well-being, and how these perspectives can inform more culturally responsive practices in a global context.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of key concepts and theories related to mental health and well-being from both Eastern and Western psychological perspectives, with particular attention to the Japanese cultural context.
- Analyze how cultural values, social norms, and philosophical traditions—such as collectivism and individualism, emotional expression, and concepts of selfhood—influence approaches to mental health in Japan and Western societies.
- Evaluate the role of culturally specific concepts and practices (e.g., *ikigai*, *amae*, mindfulness, and community harmony) in shaping attitudes toward mental health, coping strategies, and help-seeking behaviors.
- Compare and critically assess Eastern and Western models of mental health care, including prevention, treatment, and stigma reduction, and their effectiveness within different cultural and societal contexts.

- Apply cross-cultural mental health frameworks to personal, academic, or professional contexts by engaging in reflective practices and developing culturally informed strategies to support psychological well-being.

Required Texts:

Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life

By: Francesc Miralles, Hector Garcia Puigcerver, Héctor García

ISBN: 9780143130727

Grade Breakdown for Undergraduate Students:

Pre-Departure Daily Reflection	10%
Presentation	20%
Reflective Reading Assignments	20%
Attendance/Participation	30%
Travel Journal	20%

Assignments:

In Tyler:

- **Pre-Departure Daily Reflection**
 - Each night there will be a short reflective prompt that you will answer in journal. Journals will be passed out on Monday, May 11th. Prompts will be listed in Canvas.
 - These activities and reflection will be worth 10% of your grade.
- **Presentation**
 - During the last 2 class periods in Tyler, students will be asked to give a 10 minute presentation on a cultural, social, or environmental factor that contributes to mental health in Japan.
 - This presentation will be worth 20% of your grade.
- **Reflective Reading Assignments**
 - Each evening after class, I will ask that you reflect over what you have learned in the previous class period or over an assigned reading. I will provide direction over what your reflections should entail on canvas.
 - You will complete 3 reflections and turn them in over canvas.
 - These reflections will be worth 20% of your grade.

In Tyler & Japan:

Participation/Attendance

- Attendance in this class is not only mandatory but also very important. Your contributions will be invaluable and you need to be here every day. Each absence will

result in a full letter-grade reduction (10%) of your grade. Obviously, this is a serious matter, so try to plan. Unquestioned absences include sickness, job interviews, personal matters, etc. Therefore, if you anticipate having to miss class at any point, please plan accordingly. If a University activity will cause you to miss more than two classes, please see your instructor. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform me before the class begins. Attendance will be counted at both the Tyler location and mandatory events/excursions while in Japan.

- Participation/attendance will be worth 30% of your grade.

In Japan:

Travel Journal

- While participating in the travel study portion of the class, students will keep a journal. This journal will contain responses to prompts that the instructor gives throughout the course. You will turn in your journal at the concluding dinner in Japan.
- This will be graded on completion and effort. I'm not going to read your innermost thoughts, so you are free to write openly.
- Your Travel Journal will be worth 20% of your grade.

Grading Scale: 100–90%=A, 89–80%=B, 79–70%=C, 69–60%=D, and any grade below 60%=F.

Make-up and Late Work: Deadlines and times are firm. Late assignments will not be accepted or awarded any credit.

Course Schedule:

Tyler Timeline

Class will meet everyday (May 11-15) from 9:30am-1:30pm.

	Topics Covered:	Assignments due:
Monday, May 11	Welcome & Expectations for the Program Cultural Psychology, Us Vs. Them Blue Zones (Japan vs. East Texas)	Reflective Reading Assignment #1
Tuesday, May 12	Western Approaches to Mental Health (US Perspective) Therapy in the US Field Trip: Andrews Center Summit, Brookshire Conference Center (11:30am- 1:30pm)	Pre-Departure Daily Reflection #1 Reflective Reading Assignment #2
Wednesday, May 13	Eastern Approaches to Mental Health (Japanese Perspective) Relationships and Connectiveness Guest Speaker: Kristie Allen	Pre-Departure Daily Reflection #2 Reflective Reading Assignment #3
Thursday, May 14	Ikigai/Cultural Rundown	Pre-Departure Daily Reflection #3 Reflective Reading Assignment #4 Presentations
Friday, May 15	N/A	Presentations Pre-Departure Daily Reflection #4

Fly to Tokyo on May 17 → Arrive on May 18

Japan Timeline

	Location:	Topic Planned:
Monday, May 18	Tokyo	Transfer to Accommodations
Tuesday, May 19	Tokyo	Introduction to Japanese Society & History
Wednesday, May 20	Tokyo	Introduction to Japanese Views on Mental Health
Thursday, May 21	Tokyo	Japanese Cultural Identity & Urban Green Space
Friday, May 22	Tokyo	Work-Life Balance and Stress Management in Japan
Saturday, May 23	Tokyo	Meditative Practice Through Art
Sunday, May 24	Hakone & Mt. Fuji	Day trip to Hakone & Mt Fuji
Monday, May 25	Kyoto	Kyoto & the Philosopher's Path
Tuesday, May 26	Kyoto	Kyoto & Arashiyama
Wednesday, May 27	Kyoto	Mt Koya Retreat
Thursday, May 28	Kyoto	Mt Koya Retreat, Continued
Friday, May 29	Kyoto-AM Tokyo-PM	Zen meditation experience and transfer back to Tokyo
Saturday, May 30	Tokyo	Cultural Perspectives

Sunday, May 31	Tokyo	Departure Day
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Fly to Dallas on 5/31 or extend your trip, whichever you have decided on.

Final grades for the course are due on June 2, 2026. Your grade will be finalized on this day.