

The Teaching Professor Conference

READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM



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WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

✓ **Reality Check:** You and only you are responsible for your success or failure in your classes. You are personally accountable for the choices you make. You are not a victim of circumstances and there are no excuses. It's simple - either you do what it takes to be successful or you don't.

In each one of your classes there are students and there are people who are *playing around at being students*. Some people "get it" and are making positive choices, doing what it takes to get off to a good start. Some people are struggling – out of touch with the realities of what it means to be a successful student. They seem to be moving in the wrong direction. The division between these two groups is very clear and it is quickly obvious to instructors and experienced students.

Read through the following scenarios and see if you can spot why each of these students should make some changes to get on the road to success.

- On the third day of class, a young woman arrives twenty minutes late for class. Even though the instructor is well into the day's activities, she walks noisily in front of him and takes a seat on the far side of the room. After she settles in she seems to be listening, although she does appear to be occasionally distracted by her phone – it is sitting out on her desk. About 15 minutes before the end of class she gets up and leaves the room taking her phone with her. She returns a few minutes later with a drink in her hand. After class, she approaches the instructor and asks for copies of anything she missed the first couple of days. She also indicates that she was late because there were no parking spaces. She assures the instructor that she is really excited to be in college.

SPOTLIGHT: This student's instructor is already concerned about her potential for success? Why?

- A professor has asked his students to fill out information forms during the first class session. In reviewing the forms later, he notices that some of his students are working nearly full time jobs as well as taking a full time load at the college. Before the start of the next class he announces that anyone who is working more than thirty hours each week and taking a full course load should be sure to stop by and see him in his office because he has serious concerns about overload. One student does follow through and stops in to see him. That student, an enthusiastic young man, assures the professor that he will have no problems handling his schedule. He is very motivated to do what it takes. He is not worried.

SPOTLIGHT: What does it mean to be overloaded and why do you think this professor has raised a concern about it?

- The middle of the third week of the semester, an instructor is taking attendance when she notices that there is an unfamiliar face in the class. She asks the quiet woman in the back of the room if she is here visiting the college. The woman replies that she is enrolled in the class but has been having some trouble with financial aid so she is here for the first time. She assures the instructor that she can catch up without any problem. After class the faculty member gives her a stack of materials and points out that she has already missed three assignments and a quiz. The student promises to catch up right away and says it will all be turned in next class.

SPOTLIGHT: What is it about starting late that signals a real disconnect with what it takes to be successful in college?

- An English instructor notices that one of his better students did not turn in the first paper. He checks to see if he missed an electronic submission but finds nothing. When he emails the student about it he does not get a response. The instructor does not accept late papers – a policy that is clearly laid out in his syllabus and thoroughly explained at the start of the semester. A week later after the papers have been graded and returned the student stops on the way out of class and indicates that his paper will be ready to turn in the next day. The student looks confused when the instructor says he is sorry but he cannot accept it. He says, “What do you mean you aren’t going to accept it? I didn’t have time to get it done before – some things came up. This is going to wreck my grade. You have to accept it.”

SPOTLIGHT: It’s not unusual for 1st semester students to misinterpret course requirements and end up on the wrong track. Why do you think this happened?

Textbook Marking Practice

Your first textbook marking practice is a very short excerpt from a Sociology textbook. The section we will work on is a three page segment from a chapter on **Culture**.

PREVIEW:

1st: Look over the pages to see what you can learn about the topic of culture before you start reading. Make sure that you look at the picture and read the caption; look over the map that shows the rates of child marriages around the world; read through the Recap & Review at the end. Before you start to read think about what you already know about culture.

2nd: Use your contrast color highlighter and mark ALL of the headings. Use that same color to locate and highlight the terms that you find in this section (there are 7 of them). They are in boldface and should be easy to spot.

READ & HIGHLIGHT:

1st: Begin reading slowly & carefully, paragraph by paragraph. You already have the terms identified – remember to find a good definition for each & highlight it as you work through the text pages. Find an example for each term that will help you connect to something in everyday life.

2nd: Don't forget to highlight ONE main idea in those paragraphs that come between the terms. (HINT: each term has two or three paragraphs of additional explanation) DON'T skip them!!

STUDY NOTES:

1st: For this assignment we will be trying out Term Charts. Jot down each term then copy the definition into the next column.

2nd: The next step is putting that definition into your own words. Finally you will need to add an example – one from the book or one that you come up with on your own.

PREDICTING TEST QUESTIONS:

1ST: In material that is mostly focused on terminology you should anticipate that test questions will focus on definitions and examples for those terms. These are often in multiple-choice format....

2nd: You will work on the predicting questions portion of this assignment. Make sure you complete that work before turning this in.

QUIZ:

You will get to use your Term Chart on the quiz – that's why it is so important to carefully fill it out, making sure you understand what you're writing down.

FOCUS: Read / Think / Highlight:

Take it One Paragraph at a Time

☐ IS THERE A TERM?

Your job when you highlight a key term paragraph is to mark just the essential information. Here it is:

- ☐ Highlight the **TERM**
- ☐ Highlight the **DEFINITION**
- ☐ Highlight **ONE CLEAR EXAMPLE**

Try reading and highlighting this paragraph:

While ethnocentrism means evaluating foreign cultures using the familiar culture of the observer as a standard of correct behavior, **cultural relativism** means viewing people's behavior from the perspective of their own culture. It places a priority on understanding other cultures rather than dismissing them as "strange" or "exotic." It stresses that different social contexts give rise to different norms and values. Thus we must examine practices such as polygamy and bullfighting within the particular context of the culture in which they are found.

☐ IS THERE A LIST?

If you have just finished reading a paragraph and you see that there are no key terms being defined, then you should look for a list. Lists are just a bit harder to spot, but they are extremely important to highlight because lists make excellent test questions.

Your job when you come across a list is to **HIGHLIGHT** this essential information:

- ☐ Highlight the **TOPIC OF THE LIST**
- ☐ Highlight the **ITEMS THAT ARE PART OF THE LIST**

Here are a number of ways that **LISTS** appear in textbooks. Practice highlighting. Make sure that you remember to highlight the topic **AND** each item in the list.

Nevertheless, conflicts occasionally do go away if left alone. There appear to be two types of situations where withdrawal may work. The first is when the withdrawal represents temporary disengagement used for the purpose of letting the heated emotions brought on by the conflict cool down. For example, when Bill and Margaret begin to argue about having Bill's mother over for Thanksgiving dinner, Margaret feels herself getting angry about what her mother-in-law had said to her recently about the way she and Bill were raising their daughter. Margaret says, "Hold it a minute, let me make a pot of coffee. We can both relax a bit and

then we'll talk about this some more." A few minutes later she returns, ready to approach the conflict more objectively. Margaret's action is not true withdrawal; it is not meant as a means of avoiding confrontation. Rather, it provides a cooling-off period that will probably benefit both of them. The second case where withdrawal may work is when a conflict occurs between people who communicate infrequently. Suppose Jack and Mark work in the same office. At two office gatherings they have gotten into arguments about whether the company really cares about its employees, so at the next office gathering Mark avoids sitting near Jack. Withdrawal is a negative behavior pattern only when it is a person's major way of managing conflict.

IF THERE ARE NO TERMS AND NO LISTS:

☐ What's the main point of this paragraph?

Try to be flexible as you mark this type of paragraph, but remember that normally one sentence will be enough to highlight. Don't go overboard.

Your job when you highlight a main idea paragraph is to:

- ☐ Find and Highlight the **SENTENCE** that sums up the point of the paragraph **OR**
- ☐ If you can't find a sentence that works Highlight a *series of phrases* that pull the point together **or** Highlight *more than 1 sentence or jot some words in the margin*.

Try highlighting the main point in the following paragraph:

The English language makes extensive use of words dealing with war. We speak of "conquering" space, "fighting" the "battle" of the budget, "waging war" on drugs, making a "killing on the stock market, and "bombing" an examination; something monumental or great is "the bomb." An observer from an entirely different and warless culture could gauge the importance that war and the military have had in our lives simply by recognizing the prominence that militaristic terms have in our language. On the other hand, in the Old West, words such as gelding, stallion, mare, piebald, and sorrel were all used to describe one animal – the horse. Even if we knew little of that period in history, we could conclude from the list of terms that horses were important to the culture. Similarly, the Slave Indians of northern Canada, who live in a frigid climate, have 14 terms to describe ice, including 8 for different kinds of "solid ice" and others for "seamed ice," "cracked ice," and "floating ice." Clearly language reflects the priorities of a culture (Basso 1972; Haviland 2002).

Reading and Analyzing Articles

Step One: Identifying the Author's Central Message or Claim and Supporting Points

Most college students expect that they will be required to read and process textbook content for most of their classes. It can be a surprise when an instructor also assigns extra reading – from journals, on-line publications, even from magazines. This content relates to a topic that is being covered in class but provides a particular point of view or an interesting twist on an issue.

The instructor expects that students will consider the perspective/argument presented with a critical eye, breaking down the author's take on an issue. They will be able to work out how this fits with what they are learning in class and offer an accurate summary, response, or analysis.

No matter what the end product looks like the first step in getting started with this kind of reading is always the same. It is critical that you carefully read the article and systematically identify the author's core argument – the central message or claim. Next you must be able to identify the points he/she is using to support that argument.

This information is the basis for any assignment you might have to deal with connected to this kind of reading. You will have to start there whether you have to do a simple summary or a more complex response or analysis. You cannot respond to what an author has to say unless you first figure out exactly what the author's message is.

Here are some terms that you will need to understand and apply as you learn to analyze articles:

Topic: **the subject of the article (what it is about)**

The topic is written as a phrase and is usually just a few words.

The topic is not the same thing as the title of the article.

The topic answers the question, "What is the article about?"

Claim: **the author's point of view or message about the topic**

The author's claim should be written in one or two complete sentence.

This claim answers the question, "What is the author's opinion about the topic?"

or "What is the author's overall message about the topic?"

You may or may not agree with the author's message, but that is not the issue. You are figuring out what the author has to say about the topic or issue and when you write the claim you are echoing back the author's ideas, not expressing your own.

A CLAIM IS NEVER:

- **A Question:**

NOT What has changed that has made tattooing so much more acceptable?

A claim cannot be a question because it must make a clear statement of the author's message. The author is telling you something, not asking you what you think.

- **A Phrase:**

NOT Tattooing now an art form

A claim cannot be a phrase because a phrase is an incomplete thought that does not have a clear message. This is more like a topic than a claim. A phrase will tell you what the article is about, but you need a complete sentence to clearly express the author's point of view on the topic.

- **A Word for Word Quote from the Article**

NOT "For various reasons over the years tattoos became taboo in Western cultures but this is rapidly changing. Today tattoos are considered by aficionados as "art," not skin graffiti."

A claim must not be copied directly from the article. That is plagiarism. Although the author may make statements that seem to sum up his/her point fairly well, you have to put things in your OWN words. A sentence like the one above is clearly not coming from you and it doesn't sound right.

- **Informational (with no point of view on the topic expressed)**

NOT Tattooing has become increasingly common with 16 percent of adults reporting that they have at least one. At

36 percent adults who are between 25 – 29 years old have the highest percentage of tattoos. There are now an equal number of males and female with body art.

Although all of these trends have been discussed in the article this simply lists facts without expressing any type of point of view. It does not answer the question, “What is the author’s **opinion** about tattooing?”

- **A Statement that Begins by Mentioning the Author**

NOT The author thinks that tattooing has come a long way in western cultures and has moved into the main stream. The author believes that the stigma is gone and “ink” is now considered art.

Your version of the author’s central claim should not mention the author. It needs to be written as if you were speaking with the author and you asked him, “What is your opinion tattooing?” His response to you might be, “Our attitudes towards tattooing has changed dramatically. This is now an important art form, appreciated and enjoyed by a wide range of people.”

So, how does an APPROPRIATE CLAIM sound?

Tattooing has become increasingly accepted as an important art form in our culture. People no longer need to be worried about getting one because our attitudes have changed.

It’s possible that you will be asked to read articles that you disagree with. You may find them annoying but it is important to set that aside. When you summarize an article it is your job to echo the author, not express your point of view on the topic.

Support Point: one in a series of convincing arguments intended to persuade the reader to agree with the author’s view

Most readers are fairly skeptical and begin reading an article with their own point of view on the topic. Authors know that if they are going to convince their readers to agree with their take on an issue, it will be important to do more than just express their central idea and leave it at that. They need to add in enough strong points or arguments, backed up with clear evidence that will sway the reader. These are called the author’s support points.

Before writing an article, most authors figure out not just their overall message about the topic (their claim), but also how they will go about convincing readers to agree with their point of view.

For example: If an author decides to write an article with the message: **Cigarette smoking should be banned from all public places** (his claim), he realizes that some readers might need convincing. So, he might decide to write a *section of the article about the dangers of secondhand smoke*. In this section he might include quotes from experts in the field, statistics about deaths attributed to second hand smoke, and perhaps an example of a bartender who, although never a smoker herself, suffers from lung cancer after many years of exposure to secondhand smoke. He might write *another section of the article about the inconvenience of exposure to secondhand smoke*. In this part, he might include statistics about how much money is spent each year on dry-cleaning by non-smokers exposed to secondhand smoke. He might also interview non-smokers and include their statements about personal inconvenience. He would go on and plan additional sections of his article, each intended to lead the reader toward agreeing with his thesis that cigarette smoking should be banned from all public places.

A support point summarizes one of the author's arguments. Sometimes the editors of publications divide an article before it goes to print or gets posted online by inserting headings which separate the author's support points. By grouping the paragraphs of the article into sections with headings, the editor has helped the reader follow the author's points. Not all articles have headings, but when headings are included they are very helpful.

A support point answers the question, "What argument is the author making in this section of the article to convince me to agree with his/her point of view?"

REMEMBER THESE KEY IDEAS ABOUT SUPPORT POINTS:

- **Support points must match the central message/claim of the article; they never contradict it**

An author's support points are intended to convince the reader to accept the central message/claim. Support points always agree with that claim. So, in the example above about the article with the thesis "Cigarette smoking should be banned from all public places", the author would not have a section of the article about smokers' rights. A support point for that article would not be "Smokers are being discriminated against unfairly in a number of ways" because that would not match the thesis.

SUPPORT POINTS ARE GENERALIZED STATEMENTS AND ARE *NEVER*:

Statistics

"Recent studies show that 54% of non-smoking bartenders have had serious physical damage as a direct result of their years of exposure to secondhand smoke on the job."

Examples

"Mary Taylor, a stewardess at US Airways for nearly eighteen years, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer last May."

Quotes from Experts

Carl Hopkins, a professor at Highgrove University, feels that secondhand smoke poses grave dangers for young children. "When parents smoke around a child, they might just as well hand the child cigarettes and matches", he said in a recent speech before a group of educators.

- **Support points are never copied directly from the article**

Again, this would be plagiarism. A support point is a generalized statement and is usually not stated directly in the article anyway.

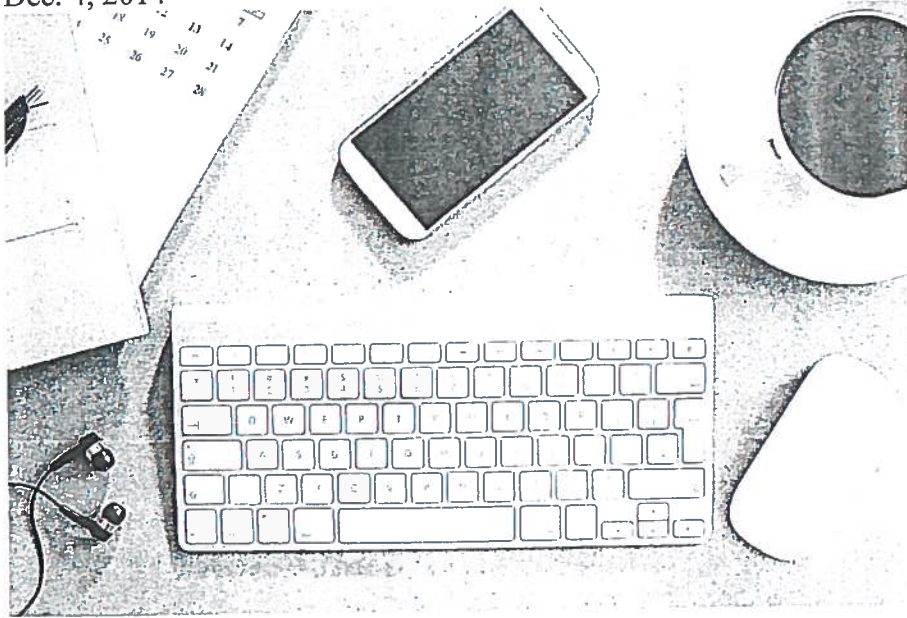
So, what does a support point sound like?

Secondhand smoke has been found to be a dangerous health hazard for both adults and for young children.

The Powerful Distraction of Cell Phones - Even When You're Not Using It – Or When You Know You Shouldn't.

- Justin Worland @justinworland

Dec. 4, 2014



Even if you go all day without touching your cell phone once, just having it nearby may distract you from complex tasks. No matter what your intentions if your phone is close by it can also pull you into using it when it's not just a bad idea but is plainly dangerous to you and everyone around you.

Cell phones play a significant role in today's world but people should just put the device away for a while especially in the car. "I'm not sure how many people's text messages are that important," he said. "Unless you're an advisor to the president and we have a national emergency, you can wait an hour to get a text."

When it's Visible

Social Psychology's study of cell phone distraction looked at a group of more than 50 college students. Participants were first asked to complete different motor tasks with the study leader's cell phone visible. In the second part of the study, participants completed motor tasks with their own cell phones visible. Performance on complex tasks suffered in both conditions when compared to control groups with no visible cell phone.

The sight of a cell phone reminds people of the "broader social community" they can access via texting and the internet, says study author Bill Thornton. "With the presence of the phone, you're wondering what those people are doing," says Thornton, a University of Southern Maine

professor. "Even if it's just mental, your focus is not on the task at hand, whether it be trying to write an article, pay attention in class or just socializing; your mind is elsewhere."

The study builds on previous research that suggests that having your cell phone out reduces the quality of social interaction, even if you don't engage with your phone. Having the phone out stifled "interpersonal closeness and trust" and kept study participants from feeling empathy for one another, a 2012 study in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* found.

Mobile communication devices such as phones may, by their mere presence, add to connections to those we are calling or texting but at the same time disrupt or derail a chance to interact with the people we're with.

On the Road

If you've turned on the TV or glanced up at a billboard lately, you know that texting while driving is a bad idea. More than 40 states have banned the practice and a new study found that 98% of those asked who text every day and drive frequently say the practice is dangerous. Still, nearly 75% say they do it anyway. "There's a huge discrepancy between attitude and behavior," says David Greenfield, a University of Connecticut Medical School professor who led the study. "There's that divide between what we believe and what we do."

The lure of text messages is actually a lot like the appeal of slot machines, Greenfield explains: both can be difficult compulsions to overcome for some people. The buzz of an incoming text message causes the release of dopamine in the brain, which generates excitement, Greenfield says. If the message turns out to be from someone appealing, even more dopamine is released.

Curbing this compulsion could take years for the text-obsessed, and doing so might resemble efforts to stop drunk driving, Greenfield says. People need to realize they're part of the problem before they change their behavior, he adds. "In order to really include oneself in a group that has a problem with texting and driving, they have to admit their own bad behavior, and we're not very inclined to do that," Greenfield said.

Multiple public awareness campaigns have taken to the airwaves and internet to target the texting and driving problem, but it's unclear how effective they are, given that the public seems to be largely aware of the issue. Maybe there's a better way to make a difference. There's an app that will switch on when you're driving more than 15 mph and silence all of your incoming text message alerts. As technology improves this might be the key to finding a solution for all other times when we can be our own worst enemy in terms of distractions.

STEP ONE ARTICLE SUMMARY SHEET

Title of the Article: _____

Author(s): _____

Topic: _____

Author's Claim in the Article: *[What is the author's message to me about _____ Topic _____?]*

Heading: _____

Support Point: *[What point is the author making in this section to convince me to agree with his/her claim?]*

Heading: _____

Support Point: *[What point is the author making in this section to convince me to agree with his/her claim?]*

Step One Article Score Guide

Criteria	Superior	Acceptable	Needs Work
Identification of the Author's Central CLAIM	Clear understanding and accurate paraphrase of the author's point of view/central message on the topic.	General understanding of the author's point of view/central message on the topic.	Explains the author's message incorrectly States the topic of the article rather than the author's main point Claim is informational and does not express a point of view Focuses on a narrow detail and misses the overall message of the article Claim has been copied directly from the article - paraphrase! The author's claim needs to be expressed more clearly
Communication of Key Support Points	Includes all relevant support points, written clearly in your own words	Includes most of the author's relevant support points, written in your own words.	Some of the points you have listed are misinterpretations or inaccurate. You have statistics, examples or quotes rather than generalized support points Points have been copied directly from the article - paraphrase!

Study Note Options

1st - Term Charts

Term charts are a great way to organize and study text material that seems to focus strongly on key terms. The chart is just a table – a place to collect all the terms with room for their definitions, along with a paraphrased definition that you create for yourself and examples that help you connect the term to the real world. Here is a sample of what one might look like with all of the information filled in.

Term	Definition	Paraphrased	Example
Culture	-the totality of learned socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects and behavior	- the sum total of all the things we know, what we do, what we have, and how we act.	Movies, our flag

We will be using this study approach for our first textbook assignment - *What is Culture?* You will find a blank term chart in the Appendix section of this book. It will work for the terms you find in this text excerpt.

2nd - Annotated Outlines

1st the headings....

The title of the chapter is *Stress: The Constant Challenge*. The section we will be working on starts on the first page and is entitled *What is Stress?* – it will be Roman Numeral I. in our outline. After that you'll notice the heading *Physical Responses to Stressors*....it is smaller than the title but still in boldface. We will label that A. As you continue you will see the beginning of a list that provided the details on those physical responses – we will be numbering those.

Stress: The Constant Challenge

- I. What is Stress?
 - A. Physical Responses to Stressors
 - 1. The Nervous System
 - 2. Actions of the Nervous & Endocrine Systems Together
 - 3. The Return of Homeostasis
 - 4. The Fight or Flight Reaction to Modern Life
 - B. Emotional & Behavioral Responses to Stressors

And so on....

2nd the notes to go with the headings.

Look at what you have highlighted in the section under each heading. Ask yourself – what do I need to remember about this? If there is a term – you will want to remember the definition – you should also make sure you capture how it works in the real world – an example! For lists – look for how the breakdown of the information fits together....

3rd - Index Cards

Index cards are a good way to collect and group text information, especially when there are a number of terms in the material. Remember – there are two major goals for any study note system – a way to put together key information and an option for testing yourself as you study. Index cards are great for self-testing.

1stlook for terms.

Go through your highlighting and notice how terms are grouped under headings. Use the heading of a section to come up with a prompt for the list of terms you will collect on the back.

2ndon the back (lined side)

Fill in the detail – the information you need to know about each term – definitions, examples, explanations for key concepts, information that is part of a larger list. Paraphrase the text version so things are worded in ways that make sense to you.

3rdwhen you test yourself

Use the prompt on the front of the card – see if you can recite the information on the back of the card without looking. When you can go through the stack without flipping over to look you will know you're ready for the real test.

Here's what one of your cards might look like for the *Families* assignment:

Front of card:

Kinship & Descent Patterns

Back of card:

Kinship: being related to others ex. Aunts & Uncles

Bilateral Descent: both mother's and father's side of family equally important

Patrilineal Descent: only father's side is important

ex. Land, money, emotional ties with father's side of family

Matrilineal Descent: only mother's side is important

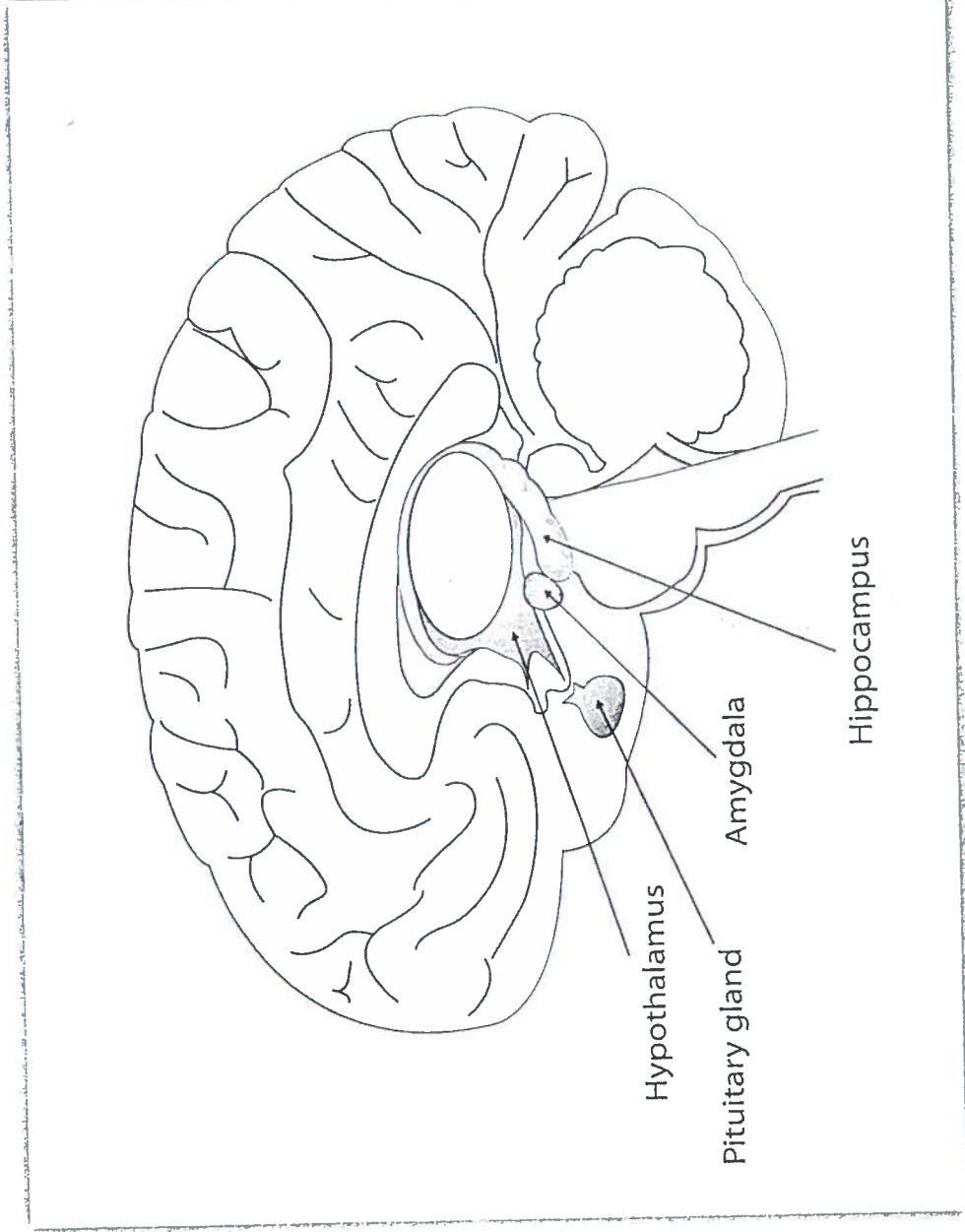
4th Graphic Organizers - Charts and Diagrams

Charts and diagrams are excellent tools when a strong visual connection is essential to understanding text information. This type of “concept mapping” allows us to organize and condense text information so that connections and flow of ideas is more clearly obvious.

There are many kinds of “maps” – some look like classification charts – like the technical term chart we used for our first textbook assignment on Culture. Others may be straightforward timelines where information is organized sequentially along a horizontal line. Process diagrams are another version of mapping that reflect the steps and variables in a process. You might be able to create this kind of diagram to show the steps used to solve a math problem or to explain how decisions are made where you work.

For our text assignment on *The Brain* we will be using a classification chart to collect information on the testing that is used to study the brain. To collect information on the parts of the brain and their functions we will use images of the brain, adding labels and key information provided in the text. The classification chart and the brain diagrams are in the back of the text in the appendix section.

The Limbic System:



5th – Bullet Notes

When you find the right section of the chapter, re-read what you highlighted in that part. You should have all of the information you need to answer the outcome. If you don't, your highlighting is incomplete and you will need to read the section again and add the key information that you missed.

Once you find the answer, jot it on the right side of your bullet note sheet.

REMEMBER THAT BULLET NOTES ARE ALWAYS:

- **In phrases, not complete sentences**
- **In your own words, never copied directly from the text**
- **A clear, complete and specific answer to the learning outcome**
- **In "bullet" or listing form**

After you have written in the answer to the first outcome, draw a line under that part and begin work on the second learning outcome. Usually between one and three learning outcomes can be included on each page of bullet notes, depending on how involved the answer is. *Notice the sample bullet notes provided.*

Learning Outcome	Answer
Why do people take the risks of entrepreneurship?	*Opportunity - a chance at American dream *Profit - making money *Independence - like to work for themselves *Challenge - willing to go after what they want - success
What are the attributes of successful entrepreneurs?	*Self-directed - self-disciplined, able to be your own boss *Self-nurturing - believe in yourself *Action-Oriented - able to get past the idea to the "doing" *Highly energetic - able and willing to work long & hard *Tolerant of uncertainty - willing and able to take risks

Predicting Questions from Text

Why? To focus your study notes and prepare effectively for exams

The key information that you have focused on as you highlighted (terms, lists, key connecting concepts and main ideas) is important because it covers the information you are likely to be accountable for on the exams and assignments that you will face in your college courses. Having a sense of that connection and using it to predict those questions ahead of time can be a huge boost in your confidence because it will allow you to focus your study efforts where you are likely to see the most benefit.

1st: Multiple-Choice Questions

It is easy to predict multiple-choice test questions if you focus on the key terms and lists in text. We will take a look at three types of questions that are frequently found on multiple-choice exams.

- Definition questions
- Example questions
- List questions

Definition Questions: Most college courses stress the importance of mastering the vocabulary of the discipline you are studying. Text chapters are full of terms and teachers want to be sure that you know them. The most basic way to find out is to write questions that directly ask you to identify the definition.

Example Questions: Another way to test your understanding of a term is to check and see if you recognize how it might be applied to a real life situation.

List Questions: Lists can also be the basis of multiple-choice questions. These questions require that you remember what belongs together and what does not fit. With an "all of the following...except" format the trick is to make sure you know what list the question is based on and then look for the one that is a mismatch.

2nd: Essay Questions

Once you locate the lists, turn the list into a question. It is very tempting to just tack on the words "what are the" or "list the names of"..... remember this is an essay question – think in terms of the realistic direction words that involve more writing. Here are a few possibilities:

- Describe or Explain or Discuss
- Compare or Contrast
- Assess or Evaluate or Analyze

An effective essay question often has a part that asks students to link concepts or ideas to their own life experience or to show that they understand how this might apply to the real world. Remember to add something to your question that pulls in the "give an example" piece.

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior. It includes the ideas, values, and artifacts (for example, DVDs, comic books, and birth control devices) of groups of people. Patriotic attachment to the flag of the United States is an aspect of culture, as is a national passion for the tango in Argentina.

Sometimes people refer to a particular person as “very cultured” or to a city as having “lots of culture.” That use of the term *culture* is different from our use in this textbook. In sociological terms, culture does not refer solely to the fine arts and refined intellectual taste. It consists of *all* objects and ideas within a society, including slang words, ice-cream cones, and rock music. Sociologists consider both a portrait by Rembrandt and the work of graffiti spray painters to be aspects of culture. A tribe that cultivates soil by hand has just as much culture as a people that relies on computer-operated machinery. Each people has a distinctive culture with its own characteristic ways of gathering and preparing food, constructing homes, structuring the family, and promoting standards of right and wrong.

The fact that you share a similar culture with others helps to define the group or society to which you belong. A fairly large number of people are said to constitute a **society** when they live in the same territory, are relatively independent of people outside their area, and participate in a common culture. Metropolitan Los Angeles is more populous than at least 150 nations, yet sociologists do not consider it a society in its own right. Rather, they see it as part of—and dependent on—the larger society of the United States.

A society is the largest form of human group. It consists of people who share a common heritage and culture. Members of the society learn this culture and transmit it from one generation to the next. They even preserve their distinctive culture through literature, art, video recordings, and other means of expression.

Sociologists have long recognized the many ways in which culture influences human behavior. Through what has been termed a tool kit of habits, skills, and styles, people of a common culture construct their acquisition of knowledge, their interactions with kinfolk, their entrance into the job market—in short, the way in which they live. If it were not for the social transmission of culture, each generation would have to reinvent television, not to mention the wheel (Swidler 1986).

Having a common culture also simplifies many day-to-day interactions. For example, when you buy an airline ticket, you know you don’t have to bring along hundreds of dollars in cash. You can pay with a credit card. When you are part of a society, you take for granted many small (as well as more important) cultural patterns. You assume that theaters will provide seats for the audience, that physicians will not disclose confidential information, and that parents will be careful when crossing the street with young children. All these assumptions reflect basic values, beliefs, and customs of the culture of the United States.

Today, when text, sound, and video can be transmitted around the world instantaneously, some aspects of culture transcend



Cultural practices vary across societies. In China, married couples rarely wear wedding rings. To signify their commitment, couples who appear in public often sport matching or complementary outfits.

national borders. The German philosopher Theodor Adorno and others have spoken of the worldwide **culture industry** that standardizes the goods and services demanded by consumers. Adorno contends that globally, the primary effect of popular culture is to limit people's choices. Yet others have shown that the culture industry's influence does not always permeate international borders. Sometimes the culture industry is embraced; at other times, soundly rejected (Adorno [1971] 1991:98–106; Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002).

Cultural Universals

All societies have developed certain common practices and beliefs, known as **cultural universals**. Many cultural universals are, in fact, adaptations to meet essential human needs, such as the need for food, shelter, and clothing. Anthropologist George Murdock (1945:124) compiled a list of cultural universals, including athletic sports, cooking, dancing, visiting, personal names, marriage, medicine, religious ritual, funeral ceremonies, sexual restrictions, and trade.

The cultural practices Murdock listed may be universal, but the manner in which they are expressed varies from culture to culture. For example, one society may let its members choose their marriage partners; another may encourage marriages arranged by the parents.

Not only does the expression of cultural universals vary from one society to another; within a society, it may also change dramatically over time. Each generation, and each year for that matter, most human cultures change and expand.

Ethnocentrism

Many everyday statements reflect our attitude that our culture is best. We use terms such as *underdeveloped*, *backward*, and *primitive* to refer to other societies. What “we” believe is a religion; what “they” believe is superstition and mythology.

It is tempting to evaluate the practices of other cultures on the basis of our perspectives. Sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) coined the term **ethnocentrism** to refer to the tendency to assume that one's own culture and way of life represent the norm or are superior to all others. The ethnocentric person sees his or her group as the center or defining point of culture and views all other cultures as deviations from what is “normal.” Westerners who think cattle are to be used for food might look down on India's Hindu religion and culture, which view the cow as sacred. Or people in one culture may dismiss as unthinkable the mate selection or child-rearing practices of another culture. In sum, our view of the world is dramatically influenced by the society in which we were raised.

Ethnocentrism is hardly limited to citizens of the United States. Visitors from many African cultures are surprised at the disrespect that children in the United States show their parents. People from India may be repelled by our practice of living in the same household with dogs and cats. Many Islamic fundamentalists in the Arab world and Asia view the United States as corrupt, decadent, and doomed to destruction. All these people may feel comforted by membership in cultures that in their view are superior to ours.

Cultural Relativism

While **ethnocentrism** means evaluating foreign cultures using the familiar culture of the observer as a standard of correct behavior, **cultural relativism** means viewing people's behavior from the perspective of their own culture. It places a priority on understanding other cultures, rather than dismissing them as “strange” or “exotic.” Unlike ethnocentrists, cultural relativists employ the kind of value neutrality in scientific study that Max Weber saw as so important.

Cultural relativism stresses that different social contexts give rise to different norms and values. Thus, we must examine practices such as polygamy, bullfighting, and monarchy within the particular contexts of the cultures in which they are found. Although cultural relativism does not suggest that we must unquestionably accept every cultural variation, it does require a serious and unbiased effort to evaluate norms, values, and customs in light of their distinctive culture.

Consider the practice of children marrying adults. Most people in North America cannot fathom the idea of a 12-year-old girl marrying. The custom, which is illegal in the United States, is common in West Africa and South Asia. Should the United States respect such marriages? The apparent answer is no. In 2006 the U.S. government spent \$623 million to discourage the practice in many of the countries with the highest child-marriage rates (Figure 9-1).

From the perspective of cultural relativism, we might ask whether one society should spend its resources to dictate the norms of another. However, federal officials have defended the government's actions. They contend that child marriage deprives girls of education, threatens their health, and weakens public health efforts to combat HIV/AIDS (Jain and Kurz 2007; B. Slavin 2007).

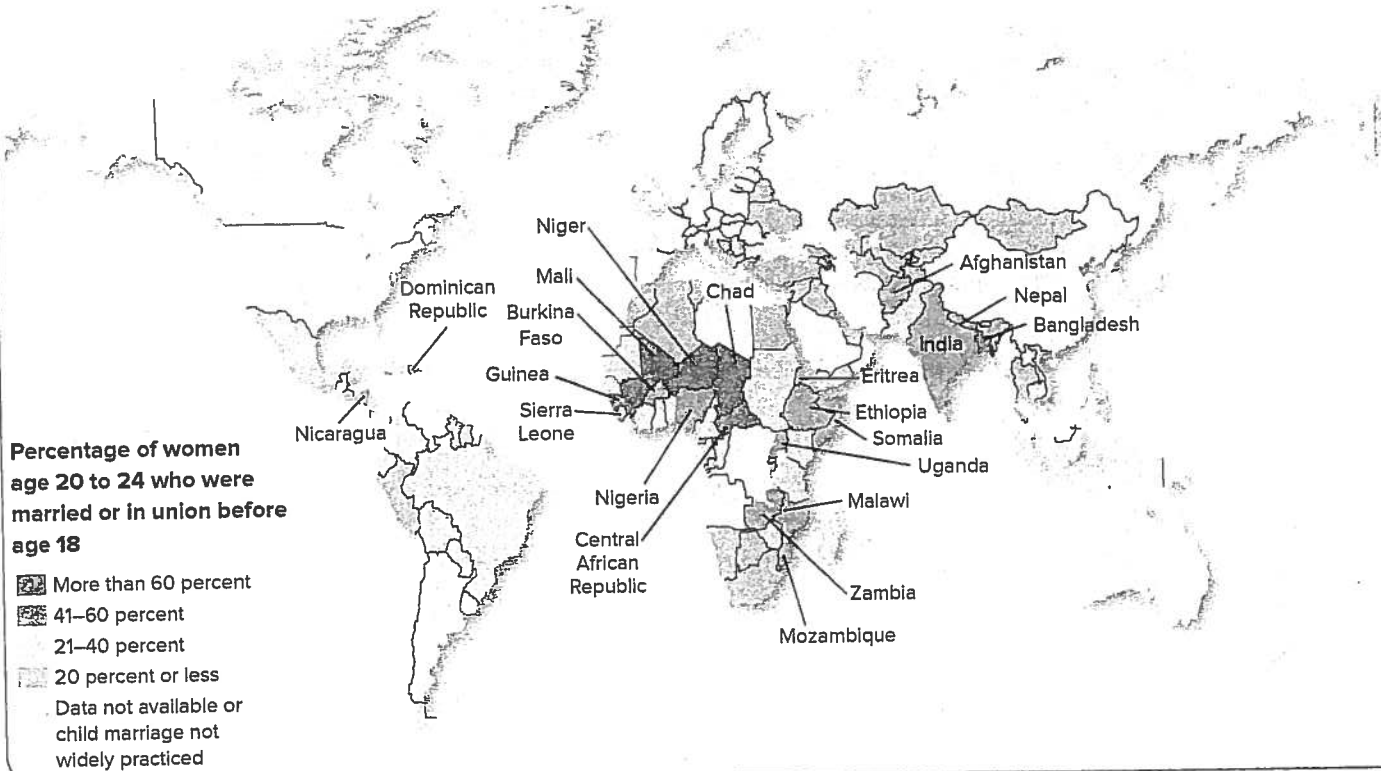
Sociobiology and Culture

While sociology emphasizes diversity and change in the expression of culture, another school of thought, sociobiology, stresses the universal aspects of culture. **Sociobiology** is the systematic study of how biology affects human social behavior. Sociobiologists assert that many of the cultural traits humans display, such as the almost universal expectation that women will be nurturers and men will be providers, are not learned but are rooted in our genetic makeup.

Sociobiology is founded on the naturalist Charles Darwin's (1859) theory of evolution. In traveling the world, Darwin had noted small variations in species—in the shape of a bird's beak, for example—from one location to another. He theorized that over hundreds of generations, random variations in genetic makeup had helped certain members of a species to survive in a particular environment. A bird with a differently shaped beak might have been better at gathering seeds than other birds, for instance. In reproducing, these lucky individuals had passed on their advantageous genes to succeeding generations. Eventually, given their advantage in survival, individuals with the variation began to outnumber other members of the species. The species was slowly adapting to its environment. Darwin called this process of adaptation to the environment through random genetic variation *natural selection*.

MAPPING LIFE WORLDWIDE

FIGURE 9-1 Countries with High Child-Marriage Rates



Note: Data are the most recent available, ranging from 1987 to 2006.
Source: UNICEF 2010.

In 21 countries, 40 percent or more of the women under 18 are married.

Sociobiologists apply Darwin's principle of natural selection to the study of social behavior. They assume that particular forms of behavior become genetically linked to a species if they contribute to its fitness to survive (van den Berghe 1978). In its extreme form, sociobiology suggests that *all* behavior is the result of genetic or biological factors, and that social interactions play no role in shaping people's conduct.

Sociobiologists do not seek to describe individual behavior on the level of "Why is Fred more aggressive than Jim?" Rather, they focus on how human nature is affected by the genetic composition of a *group* of people who share certain characteristics (such as men or women, or members of isolated tribal bands). In general, sociobiologists have stressed the basic genetic heritage that *all* humans share and have shown little interest in speculating

about alleged differences between racial groups or nationalities. A few researchers have tried to trace specific behaviors, like criminal activity, to certain genetic markers, but those markers are not deterministic. Family cohesiveness, peer group behavior, and other social factors can override genetic influences on behavior (Guo et al. 2008; E. Wilson 1975, 1978).

Certainly most social scientists would agree that there is a biological basis for social behavior. Like interactionists, however, conflict theorists and functionalists believe that people's behavior rather than their genetic structure defines social reality. Conflict theorists fear that the sociobiological approach could be used as an argument against efforts to assist disadvantaged people, such as schoolchildren who are not competing successfully (Freese 2008; Machalek and Martin 2010; E. Wilson 2000).

MODULE 9 | Recap and Review

Summary

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior. This module examines the social practices common to all cultures.

1. A shared culture helps to define the group or **society** to which we belong.
2. Anthropologist George Murdock compiled a list of **cultural universals**, or common practices found in

STUDY NOTES: TERM CHART – TEXTBOOK ASSIGNMENT #1

TERM	DEFINITION	PARAPHRASED DEFINITION	EXAMPLE

Predicting Test Questions: What is Culture?

Our first textbook assignment focuses almost exclusively on terms. It is appropriate to assume that much of what you would be accountable for is connected to that terminology. We'll focus this time on multiple-choice questions.

Definition questions:

1. What is the definition of **culture**?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Example questions:

2. A student spending a semester studying in Spain skyped home after arriving at his new campus. He told his parents that "everything is old-fashioned and rundown, like nobody cares about staying up to date in this school." What cultural perspective could he be experiencing as he is trying to adjust to this new environment?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

List questions:

3. All of the following are examples of cultural universals except:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Textbook Assignment "What is Culture?"

SCORE GUIDE

	Outstanding	Acceptable	Needs Work
Presentation Up to 5 pts	Typed cover sheet included, work is neatly done, well organized, & stapled or bound	Typed cover sheet included, work is reasonably neat, organized, & together	No cover sheet &/OR work is messy and incomplete
Previewing Up to 5 pts	Headings and boldface terms are highlighted in a contrast color	Headings are highlighted in a contrast color	Headings have not been highlighted in a contrast color
Highlighting Up to 40 pts	Highlighting reflects careful application of system guidelines. Terms have def & ex, lists have topics & items, main ideas are highlighted in other paragraphs.	Highlighting reflects reasonable application of system guidelines. Terms have def & ex, lists have topics & items, main ideas are highlighted in other paragraphs. Improved focus may be helpful.	Highlighting does NOT reflect application of system guidelines. Terms, lists & main idea paragraphs need work.
Study Notes Up to 30 pts	Term chart is neat and accurately filled in. Paraphrasing is evident & well done	Term chart is filled in and is reasonably accurate. Some paraphrasing is evident but may need work	Chart is incomplete &/or inaccurate
Question Predicting Up to 10 pts	Appropriate and likely questions have been framed from the text content. Portions of the activity that were not completed in class have been completed effectively.	Generally likely questions have been included based on the text content. Portions of the activity that were not completed in class have been finished.	Predicted questions are not complete or do not fit the format presented in class.
Quiz Up to 10 pts	Excellent score on the quiz – accurate responses to questions reflect effective connections between the term chart and the actual questions.	Good score on the quiz – most responses accurate with reasonable connections made between the term chart and the quiz questions.	Connection between term chart and quiz questions not effective. Corrections must be made.

TOTAL: _____

Outstanding

Acceptable

Must be revised