Unit Project: Culture

Consider your membership in the following four groups: gender, class, and race, plus choose one group that also has a major impact on your life. The assignment is to describe the impacts of your membership in each of these groups on your life.

1. **Rank** them in order of their impact on you and **explain** why you ranked them as you did. In other words, why did you rank one as more or less important than others, not just why each one is important.

2. For each group, **discuss** how being a member has had an impact on your life.
   - Describe the impacts of your membership in each of the four groups on you. For gender, class & the group you chose (but not for race), should include, but not be limited to, identifying and explaining two norms and two values you get from being a member of each of these three groups.
   - Include two concrete examples of your actual behavior that clearly demonstrate the impacts of the each of the four groups on you, i.e., two examples for gender, two for race, etc.
   - Identify two advantages and two disadvantages of your membership in each of the four groups, i.e., two advantages and two disadvantages for class, two of each for gender, etc.

**Grading criteria:**
- identification of impacts supported by examples (clarity of ties to the group; strength of support based on specific behavior rather than general statements of impacts; clarity of ties between the impacts and the examples; personalization);
- identification of your norms and values (clarity; personalization)
- explanation and evaluation of advantages and disadvantages for you (breadth and depth; clarity; precision; plausibility; creativity; personalization);
- readability (grammar; spelling; organization; clarity);
- adherence to instructions, including format.

**Format:** word-processed, double spaced, 1-inch margins, stapled; cover sheet with name, course name, assignment name, date; your name should appear only on the cover sheet, not inside the paper; length: 5-6 pages (not including cover sheet) using 11 point Arial font; page numbers; signed Honor Pledge on the cover. Submit an electronic copy on Blackboard and a hard copy in class.
TIPS for Writing a Strong Paper

Two major problems often lead to lower grades on this paper: lack of **concrete examples** that demonstrate clearly the impacts on you (they provide the "proof" for the general statements you make), and lack of **depth** in analyzing the impacts of group membership on you.

On the issue of **concrete examples**, in this paper I might say that one way my class has affected me was by instilling a sense of responsibility in me. Then I could give a concrete example, such as, "last Thursday my roommate asked me if I wanted to go out with her, but since I had homework to do, I thought going out would have been irresponsible, so I told her no." (How's that for an example?!) Here I've got a general statement about an impact on my life (an ideal: makes me responsible) as well as proof that the impact is clearly evident in my daily life (it's real: I didn't go out). [Note: It would be stronger for you to use a different example in your paper rather than simply copying this one, even if it is true!]

This paper is about **you**, so be sure to personalize it. As often as you can and as is appropriate, use **first person pronouns** rather than referring to others. The instructions ask about impacts on you: it asks about your norms and values, etc. I don’t want to see a lot of “People do …” or “Boys think …”; I want to see a lot of “I do…” or “I think...”. It’s about YOU, not THEM!

Explore the impacts in **depth**. Take the opportunity to explore yourself, your perspectives, your behavior. It’s easy to come up with superficial reflections on advantages/disadvantages and norms/values, as well as clichéd examples, but I’m looking for something deeper. Take time to think deeply and look for meaningful insights. The readings on unpacking our knapsacks may have opened you up to unexpected ways that your membership in various groups impacts you. Use them as a starting point, but come up with your own ideas. Be original!

Don’t just state your insights. **Analyzing** them in depth provides a stronger indication that you’ve thought about them and understand them.

Look for **your own insights**; create your own knowledge. You’ll get more credit for identifying your own insights rather than repeating other people’s insights. You’ll get more credit for going beyond platitudes and clichés to demonstrate perceptive self-awareness.

For the **ranking**, you must explain why one is **more or less important** than the others, not just why each one is important. It’s the “more than” that’s key.

Make sure that you follow ALL the **instructions**: failure to do so will lower your grade. Respond to every part of the assignment; follow all the formatting requirements. Spell and grammar checkers will NOT catch all mistakes.