Culture

The shared products of society.
Material culture—artifacts, physical objects
Non-material culture—language, beliefs, customs, music, art, etc.
Norms

- Norms: Shared rules or guidelines that prescribe behavior, how one “ought to” behave. Sanctions are the ways societies get individuals to internalize norms—to make conformity to a society's norms taken-for-granted, internalized. There are sanctions which reward conformity and punish nonconformity.
Kinds of norms

- Includes folkways—conventions of everyday life, example wearing matching shoes; mores—morally significant norms which if violated have serious consequences, example wearing clothes; taboos—can’t do under ANY circumstances, example cannibalism.
Laws

Laws are socially constructed norms which are codified by the political authority for use by the state. Laws are parts of systems of social control which are the means by which a society ensures that individuals adhere to norms and values.
Values

Values: Socially shared ideas about what is good, right, desirable, and are abstract, general concepts. Nations have “core values,” values which the society should share. American core values include individualism, democracy, equality, personal achievement, hard work, romantic love. Japanese core values include humility, respect for tradition, hard work, loyalty, communalism. Values can be contradictory.
Language

- Words that are symbols (representations that stand for something else) giving meaning to ideas, objects and rules.
- Makes culture possible. Language is the keystone of culture.
- Shapes our perception of the world. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is that the words and grammar of our language structures how we think about the world. No gendered pronouns means no gender?
Cultural universals

- Cultural universals are elements of culture which everyone in the world shares, example values of universal human rights or norms against murder.
Cultural relativity

Cultural relativity is the view that there are elements of culture specific to that culture and a “relativism” is necessary to understand the uniqueness and value of differences. Developed to counter ethnocentrism—the tendency to judge other cultures negatively by the standards of one’s own culture as “superior.” Multiculturalism developed from the need to hold a worldview encompassing cultural relativism and diversity.
Cultural contradictions

- Contradictory core values? Americans value rights of individual yet punish individuals when they don’t conform, example?
- Ideal culture—what people say they believe in and do vs. real culture—what people actually do
- Struggle between perception of cultural universals and cultural relatives, example fgm.
Cultural variations—variations between cultures and within cultures

- High culture—artifacts and beliefs of elites, opera
- Low culture or popular culture—artifacts and beliefs of everyone else, wrestling
- Subcultures—small cultures within a larger culture
- Countercultures—subcultures rejecting norms/values of larger culture.
Cultural change

- Discovery—a new perception of an aspect of reality that already exists.
- Invention—a combination or new use of existing knowledge to produce something that did not exist before.
- Diffusion—spread of cultural elements from one culture to another.
Theories

- Functionalist theory says culture functions to maintain social order. Religious rituals keep communities together and ensure social solidarity. Conflict theory argues that competition for scarce resources creates cultural conflict.