Teaching for Cultural Understanding

- Developed for the NRCAL Professional Development Seminar (April 14-16, 2015) by James Hussar, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, CSUF
Session Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- **Describe** the different components of “culture.”
- **List** and **explain** strategies for incorporating cultural instruction in their lessons.
- **Locate** and **adapt** authentic materials for use in class.
Culture and culture
What is culture?

- **little “c” culture**: everything in human life. Also known as “Hearthstone culture” or “culture BBV” (beliefs, behavior, and values)

- **Big “C” Culture**: the best of everything in human life. Also known as “Olympian culture” or “culture MLA” (musical, literary, and artistic masterpieces)
According to the Standards...

• “the philosophical perspectives, the behavioral practices, and the products—both tangible and intangible—of a society.”
According to the Standards...

- **Perspectives**: meanings, attitudes, values, and ideas
- **Practices**: patterns of social interactions (“what to do when and where”)
- **Products**: books, tools, foods, laws, music, games, etc.
Best Practices for Incorporating Cultural Instruction in Your Lessons

- For Novice and Intermediate students, emphasize the “patterns for living” component of culture.
- **Incorporate** cultural instruction in your vocabulary and grammar lessons, rather than teaching culture in isolated, trivial tidbits.
- Deliberately “**place**” or “**locate**” lessons (geographically, philosophically) in the target culture.
More “Best Practices”

- Design cultural instruction that allows students to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the target language.
- Have students use their own cultures as a point of comparison or frame of reference.
- Use realia, or authentic materials.
- Assess cultural understanding as carefully as language is assessed.
Some examples of *realia* (authentic materials)

- Magazine and television ads
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Children’s books
- Television shows and movie clips
- Songs and music videos
- Conversations between native speakers
- Schedules
- Websites
- Labels
Resources and examples

- Instructor samples (PDF)
- Merlot.org
- Video clips of simple conversations
Now it’s your turn!

- In small groups, locate an authentic material and develop an activity for use in class.