

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology

POWER, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY (SOCI 356-20)

Winter 2021
Lecture Room: MULH2030
Time: Wednesdays: 12:45 – 2:00pm
Fridays: 11:15am – 12:30pm

Instructor: Stephen Marmura
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Office Hours: Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:00am-1:00pm; Wednesdays 10:00am-11:00am;
Fridays 1:00pm-2:00pm
(or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course emphasizes the need to address questions of cultural identity in conjunction with relevant social, economic, and political realities. Relations of power have a direct bearing on identity formation, and the local and global contexts within which individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds interact are changing rapidly. Today, questions of inter and intra communal conflict and solidarity alike are linked to such realities as the mass migration of worker and refugee populations, America's ongoing 'War on Terror', a resurgence of religiously and ethnically based politics, and the proliferation of new media technologies. These and related developments have reignited debates about multiculturalism, immigration, cultural protectionism and the changing meanings and importance of such contentious terms as race, ethnicity, and nation. We address the importance of these issues at the levels of individual subjectivity, localized community, national identity, and de-localized networks, and in relation to power dynamics rooted in colonialism, nationalism and economic globalization.

Required Course Material

Mirrlees, Tanner (2016). *Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

All other readings for this course (listed below) are posted on the Moodle site for SOCI 356

Evaluation:

Mid-term test: 30%

Final exam: 40%

Critical book review: 30% (see description at back of syllabus)

COURSE OUTLINE

Jan. (13, 15) (20, 22) Introduction: Dilemmas of Culture

Moral Dispute or Cultural Difference?

Carol Rovane

The Cultural Politics of the Sociobiology Debate

Neil Jumonville

Human Nature and Social Order

Francis Fukuyama

Jan. (27, 29) Bases of Identity: Traditional vs. Modern

'Living in the world': dilemmas of the self

Anthony Giddens

Secularization RIP

Rodney Stark

Feb. (3, 5) The enduring legacy of colonialism

How Britain stole \$45 trillion from India

Jason Hickel

Number in the Colonial Imagination

Arjun Appadurai

Stolen Sisters, Second Class Citizens, Poor Health: The Legacy of Colonization in Canada

Kubik et al.

Feb. (10, 12) (17) Nationalism and Collective Identity

The Origins of National Consciousness

Benedict Anderson

Technological Nationalism

Maurice Charland

The Verdict is "Guilty" – the Sentence is "Death"

Eric C. Lincoln

Feb. (19) test

Feb. (24, 26) Local and Global aspects of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Palestine, Israel, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer
Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar

How the Battle over Israel and Anti-Semitism Is Fracturing American Politics
Nathan Thrall

Mar. (3, 5) 'Framing' Race and Culture: Foreign Conflict and Visible Minorities in the News

Television News and Audience Understanding of War, Conflict and Disaster
Greg Philo

When Race Matters: What Newspaper Opinion Pieces say about Race and Poverty
El-Burki, Porpora & Reynolds

March (10, 12) Globalization and Identity: the Cultural Imperialism Thesis

Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry (Introduction, Chapters 3 & 4)
Tanner Mirrlees

March (17, 19) (24, 26) Globalization and Identity cont.

A Universal Civilization? Modernization and Westernization
Samuel Huntington

From Hard Goods to Soft Goods
Benjamin Barber

The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: the role of digital media
Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain

(Mar. 31; April 7, 9) Dilemmas of Politics and Culture in Liberal Democracies

Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life
Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life

Rethinking Recognition
Nancy Fraser

Final Assignment (Critical Book Review):

Mirrlees, Tanner (2016). *Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

30% of final grade

Due Date: Friday, April 9 (in class); Length: 7 – 10 pages

In his book *Hearts and Mines: The US Empires Culture Industry*, Tanner Mirrlees builds upon the 'cultural imperialism' thesis first articulated by Herbert I. Schiller during the 1970s. Essentially, Schiller argued that the American state, working in tandem with the major culture industries of popular film, music and television had come to exert a disproportionate influence over the attitudes, habits, and values of people around the world. Furthermore, Schiller held that this situation was created deliberately, enabling the expansion of US strategic and economic interests and the consolidation of US global power. Over the past few decades, the notion of cultural imperialism has fallen in and out of favour, with some suggesting that the forces driving intercultural exchange are too complex to capture through reference to this concept, and/or that global culture is becoming less and not more homogeneous. Mirrlees cites present day cooperation between the American military and culture industries to emphasize the ongoing importance of Schiller's ideas.

This assignment requires that you draw upon your knowledge of concepts and theories covered in the course to critically assess Mirrlees's contribution to the study of global culture. As your papers are expected to be between 7 to 10 pages in length, you should avoid spending too much time summarizing content. Rather, your response should focus upon the main lines of the author's analysis and the potential strengths and weaknesses of his arguments. At least four academic sources should be cited in your paper. These may include but are not limited to other readings from the course. We will discuss this assignment further in class.

Late policy: As a general policy (barring exceptional circumstances), there is a 5% deduction from the final assignment grade per day late including weekends – with no assignments accepted more than one week after the deadline.