

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Sociology

SOCI 356-20
INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS: CONTEXTS AND CONTROVERSIES
Winter 2018

Lecture Room: SNP 018
Time: Wednesdays: 9:45am – 11:00am
Fridays: 8:15am – 9:30am

Instructor: Stephen Marmura
Email: smarmura@stfx.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00am – 12:00pm; Thursdays 11:00am – 2:00pm;
Fridays 10:00am – 11:00am (or by appointment)

Office: Annex 111C

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The contexts within which individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds interact are evolving rapidly; both within and across societies. Today, sources of communal conflict and solidarity alike are affected by 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 changing bases for maintaining and creating identities afforded by 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. This course considers these and related matters at the levels of individual subjectivity, localized community, national identity, and de-localized networks. We view contemporary dynamics of cultural interaction in light of enduring political processes and related social upheavals rooted in colonialism, nationalism and the global spread of capitalist markets. Emphasis is placed upon the necessity of addressing questions of cultural identity and intercultural relations in light of relevant social, economic and political processes.

Required Course Material

CSPI Coursepack: SOCI 356 Intercultural Relations

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

Evaluation:

Participation: 10%

Mid-term test: 25%

Final exam: 40%

Critical book review: 25% (see description at back of syllabus)

COURSE OUTLINE

Human nature, Culture and Identity

Jan. (3, 5) Subjectivity, Objectivity and Truth: Competing Paradigms

Shakespeare in the Bush

Laura Bohannon

Moral Dispute or Cultural Difference?

Carol Rovane

Jan. (10, 12) Bases of Identity: Traditional vs. Modern

'Living in the world': dilemmas of the self

Anthony Giddens

Jan. (17, 19) The Enduring Legacy of Colonialism

Number in the Colonial Imagination

Arjun Appadurai

Neoliberal settler colonialism, Canada and the Tar Sands

Jen Preston

Jan. (24, 26) Nationalism and Collective Identity

The Origins of National Consciousness

Benedict Anderson

Technological Nationalism

Maurice Charland

(Jan. 31; Feb. 2) Racism: Universal Scourge or Modern Aberration?

Patriotism and Racism
Benedict Anderson

Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond
Walker Connor

Feb. (7, 9) 'Framing' Race and Culture: Visible Minorities and Foreign Conflicts 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

Feb. (14) **Test 25%**

Feb. (16) What is a Culture War?

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

Feb. (21, 23) *reading week*

(Feb. 28; Mar. 2) (Mar. 7, 9) The Cultural Imperialism Thesis

Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry (Introduction, Ch. 1 – 2)
Tanner Mirrlees

Film: *Control Room*

March (14, 16) Globalization and Identity cont.

Universal Civilization? Modernization and Westernization
Samuel Huntington

The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective
Manuel Castells

March (21, 23) Reflections on the Arab Spring Uprisings

Explaining the Arab uprisings: transformations in comparative perspective
Steven Heydemann

Political Science and the New Arab Public Sphere
Marc Lynch

March (28); (April 4, 6) Dilemmas of Politics and Culture in Liberal Democracies

Boutique Multiculturalism
Stanley Fish

The 2015 Charlie Hebdo Killings, Media Event Chains, and Global Political Responses
Annabelle Sreberny

Final Assignment (Critical Book Review):

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

35% of final grade

Due Date: TBA

Length: 8 – 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, or that global culture is becoming less and not more homogenous. Mirrlees cites present day cooperation between the military and the film industry 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 the value of Mirrlees's contribution to the study of global culture. As your papers are expected to be between 8 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) 2% will be deducted from the final grade for any assignment per day late including weekends – with no assignments accepted more than one week after the deadline.