CULTURE AND WORLD POLITICS

Course Details
Optional, 4 Credits
Class Hours: 9 AM- 11 AM (Tuesday, Friday)
Contact Hours: TBC

Instructor Details
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The objective of the course is to acquaint students with the complex ways in which the cultural and political realms interact. It undertakes a critical enquiry into the academic and political endeavours that offer cultural interpretations of world politics in both historical and contemporary contexts. It is based on the implicit assumption that politics is negotiated and interpreted through the lens of culture, as are cultural interpretations often imbued with power and political intent. Intended to equip students with the analytical skills to problematise the immediate contexts in which some of the major issues of international politics are embedded, the course covers a broad sweep of issues ranging from strategic culture and diaspora studies to multiculturalism and popular culture. Although it frames culture largely within the IR discourse, it will draw on research and debates from farther afield and hence will be overtly inter-disciplinary in its orientation.

The course is divided into four units that address distinct but interrelated themes. Unit one introduces students to the contending definitions and conceptualisations of culture within IR. While unit two examines the central role culture played in 19th and 20th century politics, unit three extends the analysis to explore current issues in contemporary world politics. Unit four explores the cultural history of South Asia and the extent to which contemporary regional politics impacts its popular manifestations.

Required readings for each unit to be covered in class will be provided by the course instructor. Students are strongly advised to follow up with some of the recommended readings to augment their understanding of the issue under discussion.
COURSE STRUCTURE

Unit I: Debating Culture in IR

Unit Description
Unit one serves as an introduction to the field of culture studies in IR. It offers insights into competing approaches to culture by exploring the motivations and political contexts that informed such theorisations.

1. Understanding culture

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


2. **Strategic culture and political culture**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


3. Culture as ‘soft power’

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Unit II: Cultural Interpretations of World Politics- I

Unit Description

Unit two is an enquiry into the cultural expressions of significant ‘political’ projects and trends of the 19th and 20th centuries. It invites students to explore the cultural hegemony of imperialism, the significance of intercultural communication and the role of the diaspora that mediates between two worlds.
4. Imperialism

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


5. The politics of pluralism

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Bhabha, Homi (ed.) (1990), Nation and Narration, Abingdon: Routledge.

6. Role of the diaspora

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Varadarajan, Latha (2010), The Domestic Abroad: Diasporas in International Relations, New York: Oxford University Press.


**Unit III: Cultural Interpretations of World Politics- II**

**Unit Description**

Unit three is a critical assessment of some of the more recent political developments. It examines the debate over the homogenising force that globalisation is seen as representing and the role of media in a globalising world. It further explores the return of cultural knowledge to the centre stage of international politics in recent years.
7. Assessing globalization

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Abu-Lughod, Lila (2006), Local Contexts of Islamism in Popular Media, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.


Pieterse, Jan Nederveen (2009), Globalisation and Culture: Global Melange, Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield.


8. The return of cultural knowledge

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Weldes, Jutta, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson and Raymond Duvall (eds.) (1999), Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Ross, Marc Howard (2009), ‘Culture in Comparative Political Analysis, in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman (eds.), Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Unit IV: Debating Culture in South Asia

Unit Description
Unit four sets out to investigate the cultural history of South Asia and its traditions as inherited and practiced today. It explores the possibility of reimagining the region through the transformative impact of popular culture.

9. Cultural Pasts and Present

Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


10. **Role of popular culture**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Markovits, Claude et al. (eds.) (2003), Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750-1950, Delhi: Permanent Black.


