

Perspectives on Comparative Cultural Studies

ANTH 4394 RELS 3394 LAST 3396

**Provisional syllabus – providing sequence of topics, lecturers,
and brief statement on expectations of students.**

Professor Andrew J. Gordon

The term “culture” is the foundation of many academic fields. It is a term that elicits inquiry on shared thoughts and practices of a people. It invites exploration of what yields harmony and conflict. In this course, our study of culture may address a single creative work, like a book, or a family, or what is shared more extensively—in a tribe, region, a nation or geographic area like “The Mediterranean World.”

The course exposes students to three outlooks on culture: a) observations of everyday life as in cultural anthropology, b) critical perspectives on artistic work as from the visual arts on literary criticism, and, c) analyses of discourses that create culture, this being the sort of forcible communication that may come from medical institutions, politicians, religious leaders, or politically motivated artists.

The course brings together lecturers from across the university, mainly in the humanities and social sciences. Lecturers present case study material and explicitly draw on their disciplines and intellectual commitments. Students will understand diverse ways to approach the subject of culture and appreciate the importance of the cultural paradigm, whether it is applied to art forms, diplomacy, business, discussion of evolution or countless other activities in today’s world

Week 1 : Introduction: Culture, The new department, and the course Profs. Zamora and Gordon

Weeks 2 - 5

Part I CULTURE AS PRACTICE

a) The constructionist approach

- Cultural constructions of race, Prof. Janis Hutchinson
- Cultural constructions of gender, Prof. Susan Rasmussen

b) Reconstructing the past

- Archeology discovers kinship, Prof. Randolph Widmer
- Physical anthropology, demography, and class, Prof. Rebecca Storey
- Plantation and African-American culture, Prof. Kenneth Brown

c) Observing culture

- Drinking in the bars, Prof. Andrew Gordon
- Drug smuggling, Prof. George Diaz
- Organizational culture and an expression of Islam, Prof. Helen-Rose Ebaugh

Weeks 6-8 CULTURE AS ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Perspectives from theatre: Suzi Lori Parks views on African-American life, what a dramaturge can tell us, Prof. Robert Shimko

Perspectives from Architecture and Culture: The case of Italy between the Wars, Prof. Micheangelo Sabatino

The Visual in Mesoamerica, Prof. Rex Koontz

Weeks 9-10 CULTURE FROM DOCTRINES

Science, Religion and Culture, Prof. Lyn Mitchell

Fundamentalism and the 21st Century, Prof. Mehdi Abedi

Weeks 11- 14 CULTURE WORLDWIDE

a) The Culture Area Concept: The examples of the Americas

- Transculturation and European patterns, Prof. Lois Zamora
- Transculturation and Indigeneity, Prof. Sue Kellogg

b) Diaspora and Culture

- The Case of India, Prof. Michelle Verma
- The African Atlantic, Prof. James Conyers

c) Global Traditions and Meta-narratives:

- Classical foundations, Prof. Richard Armstrong
- The Enlightenment, Prof. Thomas Behr

- Post-colonial narratives, Prof. Hossam Aboul-Ela

Expectations of Students: Attendance, class participation, short submissions weekly via Blackboard and a final report.