

## Vesalius College

### Course description

**Course title:** Major Texts and Key Issues in Intercultural Communication

**Course code:** CMM 291

**Teacher responsible:** Jan Walravens, Professor

**Course description:**

This course offers a sampling of major texts and key cases that are representative of the main challenges that Intercultural Studies as an academic discipline faces. The texts are drawn from chapters in books and articles in academic journals. One of the criteria for selecting a text is its proved international scholarly acclaim. In addition, the texts for this course are chosen so that they reflect the wide scope of issues covered by Intercultural Studies. As a result, topics in a variety of fields will be discussed: History, Politics, Literature, Economics, and, of course, Cultural Studies (this list is not exhaustive). Hence, our approach will be primarily ‘interdisciplinary’.

Students will be asked to prepare reading materials at home and will critically analyse relevant passages with the professor in class.

**Course objectives:**

This is a course for students with a keen interest in studying cultural phenomena at an intermediate level.

We wish to confront students with longer passages from the original writings of specialists in the field (not summaries of main ideas or brief capita selecta – as is the case in CMM271). Thus, students will have first hand knowledge of some of the main ideas in the field; in addition, they will become familiar with the scholarly jargon needed to embark on future intercultural academic voyages. They will also acquire a better feeling of the methodological complexity involved.

Specific emphasis will be put on transferability of knowledge so that students are equipped to do research in advanced cultural studies independently.

This course is informed by the most recent developments in the field of (cross-)cultural studies and LAIC (Language and Intercultural Communication); students become familiar with contemporary theoretical, methodological and practical issues in this typically interdisciplinary field.

**Grade weighting scheme:**

**One short paper** (to be handed in the week *before* **Midterms**) of 2pp. (10% of the final grade)

**One longer paper** (to be handed in **THREE WEEKS *before* Finals**) of 3pp. (**30%** of the final grade)

**A piece of creative writing** (to be handed in **THREE WEEKS *before* Finals**) of at least 10 pages of typed, running text (double spaced). (**20%** of the final grade.)

Students are asked to respond in a highly ‘personal’ manner to one of the ideas put forth in the Reader. They are invited to relate one of the Major Texts to their personal (intercultural) experience. They may also challenge one of the texts, *or* discuss ‘evidence’ supporting it. This is as much an exercise in creative writing as it is one in critical and academic thinking.

**Late hand-ins (papers and journal) are NOT accepted! The exact dates for submission of papers will be given in class.**

**A midterm and a final examination** (respectively **10%** and **20%** of the final grade): the goal of these two examinations is to see whether the students can explain the methodology, theories and cases discussed in class (**from memory**) and whether they have understood the (sociological, political, historical, linguistic etc.) implications of said materials.

**Permanent evaluation (10%** of the final grade): attendance is required and students are expected to participate in discussions in class. Active participation will result in a higher grade; disturbing class (for instance by frequently being late) will result in a lower grade.

**Used course material (handbooks, readers, readings, newspapers, magazines) and references:**

Reader provided by the professor