

Vesalius College

Course description

Course title: Cultural Studies and Cross Cultural Capability

Course code: CMM 302E / CMM 302

Teacher responsible: Jan Walravens, Professor

Course description:

The first part of the course highlights major theoretical issues in the discipline of *Cross-Cultural Capability* (or *Language and Intercultural Communication*) and illustrates the difficulty of studying ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ in an academic manner.

In the second part, fundamental insights thus gained are applied to the case of Flanders within the Belgian and European contexts. The ‘building blocks’ of Flemish (and Belgian) identity are highlighted and intercultural differences with the Netherlands and the United States are examined in particular. Through our contrastive/comparative approach we will examine political, economic, geographical, historical, religious, etc. data.

Course objectives:

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

Our main goal is to study major theoretical and methodological issues within one specific branch of ‘Cultural Studies’: *C-CC* or *LAIC*. We will examine which theoretical paths are travelled today and which courses are likely to be sailed tomorrow. Those theoretical frameworks are then applied to the specific contexts of Belgian, Dutch and US cultural identities. We will compare and contrast these identities in order to
a) increase our students’ insight(s) in them; b) give our students a first hand feeling of how theory can meet practice in this field (and *vice versa*).

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 capability and *LAIC* (Language and Intercultural Communication); students become familiar with contemporary theoretical, methodological and practical issues in this typically interdisciplinary field.

A student having taken this course can claim to be a specialist in *C-CC* or *LAIC*. In addition, he or she will have a highly informed view on the cultural identities studied.

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 15 pages of typed, running text (double spaced). (**20%** of the final grade.) Questions that may be addressed include: What does it mean to study at Vesalius College as a (non-)Belgian? How does my own cultural background compare to Flemish/Belgian/Dutch culture? (This list is *not* exhaustive!) The main goal is for students to put their personal impressions into the theoretical context of the course. As such, 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