Contemporary political debates

Number of ECTS credits: 6

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Course Description

This course intends to provide tools, skills and theoretical models to understand, interpret, contextualize and evaluate contemporary political controversies. It proposes to understand contemporary discussions and polemics on cultural and religious diversity by relating them to theoretical models that intend to analyze the role of social identities in the post-Cold War globalized international order. In addition, it purports to contextualize these debates on the understanding of cultural diversity in general are rooted in a broader theoretical and historical perspective.

Course Prerequisites (if any)

POL101P

Learning Objectives

The objectives of this course are the following:

Knowledge (cognitive level)

- Theoretical interpretations of globalization and cultural diversity
- The problem of cultural bias and stereotypes in representations of other cultures and cultural diversity.
- The role of cultural diversity in international affairs
- The contextualization of debates on globalization and cultural diversity within broader political and intellectual traditions, including multiculturalist and postcolonial perspectives
- Tools and methods of analysis of cultural diversity in the social sciences
- Opinions of classic thinkers like Montesquieu and de Tocqueville on globalization and cultural and religious diversity

Skills
- To increase the capacity for close reading and critical interpretation of political theory texts
- To acquire an in-depth acquaintance with a specific topic related to the course and to able to analyze and critically evaluate it on the basis of a broad range of information sources and academic literature
- The general ability to critically compare, contrast and synthesize the theories and concepts discussed in the course and to apply them in a creative manner to conceptual debates and real-life global problems
- To manage to draft autonomously a 5,000 words paper that includes a critical reading and an independent, theory-grounded analysis of a topic related to the course.

Attitudes
- To acquire a passion for life-long learning, commitment to one’s work and the ability to be open and critical towards one’s own and others’ perspectives
- To acquire through the close reading, contextualization and comparison of these authors an international mind-set, multicultural openness and a strong capacity for interaction and networking in a variety of professional and cultural settings (including networking skills).

Course schedule

The course will have the following components:
section 1: theories on globalization and cultural identity
section 2: historical contextualization: "classic" thinkers on globalization and cultural identity
section 3: religious identities in a global context: the "Islam" debate
section 4: identities in Europe

Course Materials

Textbook:
- None

Case Studies and Additional Readings:
• The course will work with Barrie Axford, Theories of Globalization (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012) but also include excerpts from theoretical texts on identity and globalization, e.g. M. Castells, The Power of Identity (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997), S. Huntington, The Clash of Civilization (Foreign Affairs, 1993); texts on the interpretation of Islam (e.g. E. Alsultany, “Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11, American Quarterly, 2013); on identities in Europe (e.g. B Stráth, “Multiple Europes: Integration, Identity and Demarcation to the Other”, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2000).

Course Assessment
The students will be evaluated on the basis of their performance as follows:
- Presence and in-class participation: 10%
- Mid-term exam: 25%
- Term paper: 40%
- Final Exam: 25%

TOTAL: 100%

Grading Scale of Vesalius College

Vesalius College grading policy, in line with the Flemish Educational norms, is now as stated follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Scale of 20</th>
<th>Scale of 100</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17.0-20.0</td>
<td>85-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>16.1-16.9</td>
<td>81-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>15.3-16.0</td>
<td>77-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14.5-15.2</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>13.7-14.4</td>
<td>69-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>13.1-13.6</td>
<td>66-68</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12.3-13.0</td>
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Further description of assessment activities and Grading Criteria

The following criteria will be applied in assessing your written work:
Criteria
**Additional Course Policies**

Add policies on late papers, coming late to class, etc.

**Academic Honesty Statement**

Academic dishonesty is **NOT** tolerated in this course.

Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.

Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean for Students and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action.

If you refer to someone else's work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.