

St. Francis Xavier University  
Department of Sociology

**POWER, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY (SOC 356-20)**

Winter 2021

Lecture Room: MULH2030

Time: Wednesdays: 12:45 – 2:00pm

Fridays: 11:15am – 12:30pm

Instructor: Stephen Marmura

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Office Hours: Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:00am-1:00pm; Wednesdays 10:00am-11:00am;

Fridays 1:00pm-2:00pm

(or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course emphasizes the need to address questions of cultural identity in conjunction with relevant social, economic, and political realities. Relations of power have a direct bearing on identity formation, and the local and global contexts within which individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds interact are changing rapidly. Today, questions of inter and intra communal conflict and solidarity alike are linked to such realities as the mass migration of worker and refugee populations, America's ongoing 'War on Terror', a resurgence of religiously and ethnically based politics, and the proliferation of new media technologies. These and related developments have reignited debates about multiculturalism, immigration, cultural protectionism and the changing meanings and importance of such contentious terms as race, ethnicity, and nation. We address the importance of these issues at the levels of individual subjectivity, localized community, national identity, and de-localized networks, and in relation to power dynamics rooted in colonialism, nationalism and economic globalization.

**Required Course Material**

Mirrlees, Tanner (2016). *Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

All other readings for this course (listed below) are posted on the Moodle site for SOCI 356

**Evaluation:**

Mid-term test: 30%

Final exam: 40%

Critical book review: 30% (see description at back of syllabus)

## COURSE OUTLINE

Jan. (13, 15) (20, 22) Introduction: Dilemmas of Culture

Moral Dispute or Cultural Difference?

*Carol Rovane*

The Cultural Politics of the Sociobiology Debate

*Neil Jumonville*

Human Nature and Social Order

*Francis Fukuyama*

Jan. (27, 29) Bases of Identity: Traditional vs. Modern

'Living in the world': dilemmas of the self

*Anthony Giddens*

Secularization RIP

*Rodney Stark*

Feb. (3, 5) The enduring legacy of colonialism

How Britain stole \$45 trillion from India

*Jason Hickel*

Number in the Colonial Imagination

*Arjun Appadurai*

Stolen Sisters, Second Class Citizens, Poor Health: The Legacy of Colonization in Canada

*Kubik et al.*

Feb. (10, 12) (17) Nationalism and Collective Identity

The Origins of National Consciousness

*Benedict Anderson*

Technological Nationalism

*Maurice Charland*

The Verdict is "Guilty" – the Sentence is "Death"

*Eric C. Lincoln*

Feb. (19) test

Feb. (24, 26) Local and Global aspects of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Palestine, Israel, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer  
*Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar*

How the Battle over Israel and Anti-Semitism Is Fracturing American Politics  
*Nathan Thrall*

Mar. (3, 5) 'Framing' Race and Culture: Foreign Conflict and Visible Minorities in the News

Television News and Audience Understanding of War, Conflict and Disaster  
*Greg Philo*

When Race Matters: What Newspaper Opinion Pieces say about Race and Poverty  
*El-Burki, Porpora & Reynolds*

March (10, 12) Globalization and Identity: the Cultural Imperialism Thesis

Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry (Introduction, Chapters 3 & 4)  
*Tanner Mirrlees*

March (17, 19) (24, 26) Globalization and Identity cont.

A Universal Civilization? Modernization and Westernization  
*Samuel Huntington*

From Hard Goods to Soft Goods  
*Benjamin Barber*

The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: the role of digital media  
*Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain*

(Mar. 31; April 7, 9) Dilemmas of Politics and Culture in Liberal Democracies

Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life  
*Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life*

Rethinking Recognition  
*Nancy Fraser*

**Final Assignment** (Critical Book Review):

Mirrlees, Tanner (2016). *Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

30% of final grade

Due Date: Friday, April 9 (in class); Length: 7 – 10 pages

In his book *Hearts and Mines: The US Empires Culture Industry*, Tanner Mirrlees builds upon the 'cultural imperialism' thesis first articulated by Herbert I. Schiller during the 1970s. Essentially, Schiller argued that the American state, working in tandem with the major culture industries of popular film, music and television had come to exert a disproportionate influence over the attitudes, habits, and values of people around the world. Furthermore, Schiller held that this situation was created deliberately, enabling the expansion of US strategic and economic interests and the consolidation of US global power. Over the past few decades, the notion of cultural imperialism has fallen in and out of favour, with some suggesting that the forces driving intercultural exchange are too complex to capture through reference to this concept, and/or that global culture is becoming less and not more homogeneous. Mirrlees cites present day cooperation between the American military and culture industries to emphasize the ongoing importance of Schiller's ideas.

This assignment requires that you draw upon your knowledge of concepts and theories covered in the course to critically assess Mirrlees's contribution to the study of global culture. As your papers are expected to be between 7 to 10 pages in length, you should avoid spending too much time summarizing content. Rather, your response should focus upon the main lines of the author's analysis and the potential strengths and weaknesses of his arguments. At least four academic sources should be cited in your paper. These may include but are not limited to other readings from the course. We will discuss this assignment further in class.

**Late policy:** As a general policy (barring exceptional circumstances), there is a 5% deduction from the final assignment grade per day late including weekends – with no assignments accepted more than one week after the deadline.