

## **Curs 1. Concepts and Terminology - Academic English for Political Science.**

## **Curs 2. Politics and Culture: Contemporary Issues and Debates.**

Introducing Political Science Terminology: Concepts, Issues, Debates

### **I. Cultural Studies: Culture and Politics**

#### **The Cultural Conundrum\***

The dominant European linguistic convention equates ‘culture’ largely with the idea of ‘civilization’: they are regarded as synonymous.

Romantic, elitist, view that *culture* specified the pinnacle of human achievement. Culture, in this sense, came to specify that which is remarkable in human creative achievement...

German *Kultur* pointed us exclusively to levels of excellence in fine art, literature, music and individual personal perfection.

“Cultural studies insist that culture must be studied within the social relations and system through which it is produced and consumed and that, thus, study of culture is intimately bound up with the study of society, politics and economics.

Cultural studies show how media culture articulates the dominant values, political ideologies and social developments and novelties of the era”. (Kellner, 10)

#### **The concept ‘culture’ through a four-fold typology.**

1. “Culture as a cerebral, or certainly a cognitive category: culture becomes intelligible as a general state of mind. It carries with it the idea of perfection, a goal or an aspiration of individual human achievement or emancipation.
2. Culture as a more embodied and collective category: culture invokes a state of intellectual and/or moral development in society. This is a position linking culture with the idea of civilization and one that is informed by the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin (1809–82) and informative of that group of social theorists now known as the ‘early evolutionists’ who pioneered anthropology, with their competitive views on ‘degeneration’ and ‘progress’, and linked the endeavor to nineteenth-century imperialism. This notion nevertheless takes the idea of culture into the province of the collective life, rather than the individual consciousness.
3. Culture as a descriptive and concrete category; culture viewed as the collective body of arts and intellectual work within any one society: this is very much an everyday language usage of the term ‘culture’ and carries along with it senses of particularity, exclusivity, elitism, specialist knowledge and training or socialization. It includes a firmly established notion of culture as the realm of the produced and sedimented symbolic; albeit the esoteric symbolism of a society.
4. Culture as a social category; culture regarded as the whole way of life of a people: this is the pluralist and potentially democratic sense of the concept that has come to be the zone of concern within sociology and anthropology and latterly, within a more localized sense, cultural studies.”

“Culture is often national in character. The culture of Japan is distinct in many respects from that of nearby China.

### **National vs. Multicultural**

The cultural traditions are different; the current political culture is different.

If one moves a little further away, to Indonesia, say, or to India, the differences multiply – according to religion, food tastes, language, literary and musical traditions, and so on. But one would also find similarities between these very different national locations.

The same shows might be on television, imports often from one country to the next, or the same Western - style clothing might be on sale in stores. On the radio, one might hear the same international pop music. In many places, culture is both national and transnational, a matter of local production or tradition and a matter of ‘flow’ between nations.” (Ryan & Musiol, 170)

### **II. The Construction of Identity Hybridity and Multi-layered Cultural Identities**

“Identity is a key concept in the contemporary world.

Since the Second World War, the legacies of colonialism, migration, globalization, as well as the growth of new social movements and forms of identity politics have put the question of identity at the centre of debates in the humanities and social sciences.”

(C.Weedon)

“Identity is a key concept in the contemporary world.

Since the Second World War, the legacies of colonialism, migration, globalization, as well as the growth of new social movements and forms of identity politics have put the question of identity at the centre of debates in the humanities and social sciences.”

(C.Weedon)

### **The Construction of Identity**

“Identity is people’s source of meaning and experience. By identity, as it refers to social actors, I understand the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning.

For a given individual, or for a collective actor, there may be a plurality of identities. Yet, such a plurality is a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action. This is because identity must be distinguished from what, traditionally, sociologists have called roles, and role-sets.

Roles (for example, to be a worker, a mother, a neighbor, a socialist militant, a same time) are defined by norms structured by the institutions and organizations of society.

Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation.” (Castells, 2010, 6-7)

### **White Hegemony**

Yet predominantly white societies, especially former colonial powers, have themselves been shaped by a history of contacts with their colonial others.

The current meanings of ethnic and racialized difference are often inflected by this legacy.

Recent critiques of Western cultural traditions – poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial – have each pointed to how meanings in Western culture are organized according to sets of binary oppositions that imply hierarchies of value.

For example, Western Europe’s image of itself as the most developed and modern political, social and cultural order is based on a set of binary oppositions between Europe and its ‘Others’, that is to say, people of Colour.

Colonialism is increasingly seen as the unspoken but necessary counterpart to Western European culture.

Thus, for example, Robert Young in his book *White Mythologies: Writing, History and the West draws on the work of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre* to argue that European claims to universalism developed at the expense of colonial others.

To make European or North American meanings and values universal is at the same time to render all other cultures merely particular and by implication inferior.

### **White Hegemony - Colonialism**

#### **Identity & Hybridity.**

Language is central to racism, colonialism and notions of identity and hybridity.

Colonialism imposed not just a language...but also a sets of meanings and values. The language used to justify the colonial enterprise was one of civilizing, Christianizing, developing and modernizing.

Implicit in this language was the assumption that the peoples in question were less civilized, less developed, pagan and either primitive or pre-modern.

This process of the dominant group constructing the ‘other’ as a homogeneous group lacking diversity can be found throughout Western societies.

It points to a major cultural political task both within multi-ethnic societies and beyond, that involves promoting recognition of the diversity of marginalized groups.

Invariably this relies on the positive intervention by people from the groups in question who challenge hegemonic constructions of their otherness.

### **Hybrid Subject - Plural Identities**

New forms of cultural production were important to the formation of new diasporic and hybrid forms of identity.

Cultural hybridity, the fusion of cultures and coming together of difference, the 'border crossing' that marks diasporic survival, signifies change, hope of newness, and space for creativity. But in the search for rootedness – a 'place called home' – these women, in the process of self-identification, disidentify with an excluding, racist British colonizing culture. They articulate instead a multi-faceted discontinuous black identity that marks their difference. (Mirza 1997: 16)

Within multi-ethnic Western societies, cultural practices, identities, meanings and values are often highly contested even among the white majority. For some, beauty pageants signify the celebration of apparently natural norms of female beauty – norms that are actually particular and tend to privilege hegemonic European and North American ideals of white beauty and hybrids derived from them.

## Hybridity

Cultural hybridity, the fusion of cultures and coming together of difference, the 'border crossing' that marks diasporic survival, signifies change, hope of newness, and space for creativity.

People who disidentify with an excluding, racist colonizing culture articulate instead a multi-faceted discontinuous black identity that marks their difference. (see Mirza 1997: 16)

In the debates on hybridity, Homi Bhabha (1990) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), among others, have argued for hybridity as a 'third space', which offers the possibility of moving beyond those binary oppositions that constitute differences in hierarchical ways.

They have argued for hybridity as a space from which it is possible to deconstruct and reshape the dominant hierarchies, be they of gender, sexuality, race or colonialism and to create new forms of identity.

Culture and new hybrid identities and cultural forms – particularly among subsequent generations – that emerge from engagement with the culture and society in which the original migrants settled.

These *new cultural forms, practices and identities* in their turn often challenge both assumptions based on ideas of traditional culture and those of the hegemonic white societies within which non-white, diasporic subjects are located.

In the past two decades, the media and other information arteries, traditional tools for stratifying cultures with the uncomplicated, and erroneous, shorthand of stereotypes, have been invaluable tools for breaking down stereotypes and reworking prevailing theories about cultural identity.

New mixes take shape at monster movie-plexes, super-bookstores and the alternative glitz of underground clubs (and the easy access to them).

Another approach to hybridity, emphasizes the discontents of marginalization and the ambiguities of acculturation.

Shorn of familiar anchorages, the experience of border life is uncomfortable, resulting in only partial forms of identification, producing ambiguous relationships with space and time in which, as Homi Bhabha writes, “there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory restless movement . . . hither and thither, back and forth,” estranged from “any immediate access to an originary identity or a ‘received’ tradition.” Even if all identities are in some ways syncretic and even if there has never been a pure state of cultural being, there *is a widespread sense of malaise* that results from *rejection of cherished identities*

### **III. Globalisation, Migration, Minority issues: The Making of Political Identities**

One of the main legacies of Western colonialism and the slave trade has been the creation of significant diasporic communities of people of African and South and East Asian descent.

There are, of course, also many white populations, both in settler colonies and throughout the developing world. Diasporic communities often display multiple and hybrid identities that draw both on relatively fixed ideas of traditional

#### **Migrants**

The second and third generation children of migrants are creating new modes of subjectivity and new hybrid identities.

These are emerging both from conflicts and contradictions between ‘traditional’ cultural values and lifestyles and those of mainstream society, and as a response to forms of racism and ethnocentrism on the part of white majority.

The establishing of minority cultural and religious institutions has led to an increase in forms of cultural racism, in the face of which it becomes difficult to develop a positive sense of belonging.

#### **INCLUSION**

Individual constructions of identity are affirmed by seeing something of oneself and one’s forebears in representations of the history of the nation.

Inclusion is important since having a history and set of traditions with which one can identify and within which one can position oneself other than as victim, gives the interpellated individual a position of dignity from which to speak

#### **ASSIMILATION**

The concept of assimilation far less cut-and-dried than it was in the past, when widespread use of the term melting pot suggested that a soul branded with “‘minority’” status in the United States had to “‘melt down’” his or her cultural trappings – language, dress, religious ritual or even body type – to aspire to the American ideal.

#### **DIVERSITY**

The Institute for the Study of Social Change, based at UC Berkeley, reported on diversity at the university level a year ago in a study called the Diversity Project.

The study's goal was to address "a vital and constantly unfolding development emerging

"Racial and ethnic identities are always formed in dialogue with one another," says George Lipsitz, professor of ethnic studies at UC San Diego and author of "Time Passages," a collection of essays on diversity and contemporary pop culture.

### ***DELOCALIZATION***

The concept of *de-localization*, encapsulating the idea that a dramatic increase in mobility is transforming the ways that people imagine their place in the world, their spatial and temporal location, their sense of belonging to a home or territory.

Although people have always traded, battled, and married with outside others, the accelerated pace and increased distance of interaction through the global reach of modernity is making abstract many of the commonly imported objects and ideas.

One way of looking at de-localization stresses the invasion of local space with distant social forces and processes.

### ***CULTURAL METISSAGE***

Cultural *metissage* produces a heightened sense of vulnerability among those *subjected to transition, those who are most* likely to invoke strident forms of collective reawakening.

### **IV. Cultural Communities. *Imagined Communities or Communal Images?***

Benedict Anderson (1991) has termed the 'imagined community' that constitutes a nation. In an attempt to define the concept of nation, Anderson proposes seeing it as: The Nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is *imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know* most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion. . . . In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (Anderson 1991: 6)

The key to Anderson's argument is the invention of the printing press and the subsequent rise of print media, which provided a technological means for the widespread dissemination of the idea of the nation.

Anderson remarks that the regular, synchronic shared reading of the daily or weekly newspaper produced the idea that readers shared a set of interests – the content and focus of the news for instance – in which they were explicitly and implicitly addressed as co-nationals.

The experience of the nation is rooted in the quotidian, for, as he pronounces, the newspaper bolsters the assumption that 'the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life' (Anderson, 36).

### **"Dependent on Community"**

“Barber\* sees both of these forces at war with his ideal, that of liberal democracy:

‘Belonging by default to McWorld, everyone is a consumer; seeking a repository for identity, everyone belongs to some tribe. But no one is a citizen. Without citizens, how can there be democracy?’ (34)

He speaks of a possible world in which “the only available identity is that of blood brother or solitary consumer,” (35 ) and worries how democratic nations can survive between the forces of Jihad and McWorld.”

(Gordon Mathews, *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*, 2013, 185.)

\*Benjamin Barber, *jihad vs McWorld*. Random House, 2010.

‘Human beings are so psychologically needy, so dependent on community, so full of yearning for a blood brotherhood commercial consumption disallows...that McWorld has no choice but to service, even to package and market Jihad.’ (36)

He suggests that we may have, in his evocative terms, not Jihad vs. McWorld—not tribalism vs. globalism—but rather Jihad via McWorld, as market transmits and hardens particular allegiances.

Particular culture, in a world of the cultural supermarket, must sell itself within the cultural supermarket to remain viable.” (Gordon Mathews, *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*, 2013, 185.)

## **V. Advertising History, Nation and Identity: Civil Religion and Media Events**

“Rather than the periodic displays of spectacle, the staging of tradition and the academic urge to classify races, customs and nature, this cultural process operates at a more mundane level.

For the idea of what constitutes the ‘national’ interest is part of that which grounds national identity in unreflexive forms of ‘common sense’. (Edensor 2002: 7 sqq.)

Benedict Anderson also adopts a set of assumptions about culture in his famous notion that the nation can be considered an ‘imagined community’, united by a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ (1983: 7) whereby national co-fellows are believed to constitute a bounded, ‘natural’ entity.

“While some have complained that Anderson’s focus on the imagined seems to ignore the socio-political realities of power and the organisational structures of the state, perhaps a more nuanced understanding is to consider that nations emerge out of contexts of social and cultural experience which are imaginatively conceived.” (Edensor 2002: 7 sqq.)

## **VI. Religion and Politics: Power Paradigms – Replacements and Cohabitation**

### **Religion and Politics: Power Paradigms – Replacements and Cohabitation**

The contemporary world is the product (although in a dynamic approach, as the production is a process, still in progress) of a series of power replacements.

Thus, theorists of the “disenchanted” world spoke of an institutional replacement (an interesting perspective here belonging to Thomas Szasz [1974] in relation to the ritualic *versus* scientific prohibition of drugs, discussing the substitution of a theological paradigm of power with a scientific and institutional one). Thomas Szasz, *Ceremonial Chemistry: The Ritual Persecution of Dugs, Addicts and Pushers*, (Garden City, New York, Anchor Press, 1974).

See also Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu “Disenchanted Drugs: Science, Cultural paradigm Switch and Prohibition (1900-1920)” in *Caietele Echinox*, vol. 17/2009 and Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, “The ‘Infernal Chemistry’ of the 19th Century. The Opiates Between the ‘Witchcraft Paradigm’ And The Development of Modern Toxicology”, *Caietele Echinox*, Issue no. 12/ 2007

## **Religion Survival**

However, “critics point to multiple indicators of religious health and vitality today, ranging from the continued popularity of churchgoing in the United States to the emergence of New Age spirituality in Western Europe, the growth in fundamentalist movements and religious parties in the Muslim world, the evangelical revival sweeping through Latin America, and the upsurge of ethno-religious conflict in international affairs”. (Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, (Cambridge University Press [2004] 201), 3

“The seminal social thinkers of the nineteenth century – Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud – all believed that religion would gradually fade in importance and cease to be significant with the advent of industrial society” Norris & Inglehart, 3

## **Religion and Politics: Power Paradigms – Replacements and Cohabitation**

Luckmann (See Thomas Luckman. *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan, 1967: 66–7) notes that *a sharp division between society and religion cannot be assumed*: “The history of the so-called higher civilisations shows a wide range of relationships between ‘religion’ and ‘society’ ranging from accommodation to conflict.”

The complexity of the interaction of religion with society and with the state creates a challenge for researchers attempting *cross-cultural* and *cross-national* comparisons of relationships between *church, state, and society*. The situation is further complicated when common terms used to describe the church–state relationship are shown to have different meanings, depending on the cultural and historical context” (Lord, 2008, 33-34)

“The overlap between religion, politics, and culture creates a problem of *definitions* and *boundaries* for researchers. Paradoxically, religious behaviour may be observed in *secular settings* and religious settings may contain examples of committed behaviour to secular concerns.” (34)

## **Religion Survival & Pluralism**

This present age is characterized, not by the triumph of either religious or anti-religious world-views, but rather by the fact of religious pluralism.

Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* maps the political and philosophical contours of the journey from a society in which belief in God was unchallenged to one in which it is one option among many, arguing



that if one can talk of this age as being a secular one it can only be in terms of religious uniformity ceding to religious pluralism.

### **Religion Survival & Pluralism**

For Taylor the most significant element in understanding the manner in which our world can be called secular lies in the changed nature of belief. There has been, he claims, a modification of what it means to believe.

Thus the critical factor globally today is that 'belief in God is no longer axiomatic . . . [that] there are alternatives'.

### **Pluralism**

Believers and unbelievers alike live with the fact of religious pluralism and have to cope with both its theological significance as well as its political ramifications.

According to Taylor we inhabit a global context which contains different milieux, 'within each of which the default option may be different from others, although the dwellers within each are very aware of the options favoured by the others, and cannot just dismiss them as an inexplicable exotic error'.

'Secularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual and religious experience and search takes place.' (Linda Hogan)

## **VII. "Gender Trouble": Gender and Politics**

Women were almost invisible in pre-1970s' gender-blind sociology, only featuring in their traditional roles as wives and mothers within families.

The 'people' [meant] mainly men and the topics were aspects of the social world especially significant for men, such as paid work and politics.

Differences and inequalities between women and men at this time were not recognised as an issue of sociological concern and were not seen as problems to be addressed.

In the context of second wave feminist critiques, however, a number of disciplines across the social sciences, the arts and humanities began to pay increasing attention to gender.

### **"Gender Trouble": Gender and Politics**

At this time in the 1960s and early 1970s, the sheer number of women concentrated in the humanities in comparison to other academic fields made it an area ripe for feminist critique, since women's existence in such numbers here was itself the result of the gendered logic of the workplace.

It is at this stage, during the late 1960s in the US and from the mid- to late 1970s in the UK, that women's studies as a specialised area of academic interest began to develop, as well as rapidly spreading elsewhere around the globe (the first British women's studies programmes were all taught MAs, emerging first in Kent (1980) and then York and Warwick).

Thus women's studies as a discrete area of study was born, even though the early days were characterised by a huge rush of energy, where 'such courses began to be taught, quite spontaneously and without substantial prior organisation, at many US colleges and universities beginning in 1969' (Tobias 1978: 86).

#### "Gender Trouble": Gender and Politics

At this time in the 1960s and early 1970s, the sheer number of women concentrated in the humanities in comparison to other academic fields made it an area ripe for feminist critique, since women's existence in such numbers here was itself the result of the gendered logic of the workplace.

It is at this stage, during the late 1960s in the US and from the mid- to late 1970s in the UK, that women's studies as a specialised area of academic interest began to develop, as well as rapidly spreading elsewhere around the globe (the first British women's studies programmes were all taught MAs, emerging first in Kent (1980) and then York and Warwick).

Thus women's studies as a discrete area of study was born, even though the early days were characterised by a huge rush of energy, where 'such courses began to be taught, quite spontaneously and without substantial prior organisation, at many US colleges and universities beginning in 1969' (Tobias 1978: 86).