

East/West Cultural Studies Course Outline (Fall Semester)

1) Introduction

What is East? What is West? Are they even possible to identify, distinguish or describe? What are some qualities and characteristics of each? What influences do they have? What are some similarities and differences? How and why should we compare them? What is a good starting point?

Assignment 1: Who are you? What makes up your character, identity and individual culture?

2) History Part I

How has history shaped Eastern and Western Civilization and Culture? Which important events or people have changed, affected and influenced the evolution of present day cultures? The 25 most influential people of the millennium video 60minutes.

Research Topic 1: Investigate a historical figure and outline their contributions and influence on the world today.

3) History Part II The New Millennium; Legacy and Future

The 20th century and beyond. What have we inherited from our ancestors? What will we pass on to our children?

4) Religion & Philosophy

How are Western and Eastern belief systems and thought different?

Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism

Research Topic 2: Comparative description and analysis of a major religion.

Assignment 2: What are your beliefs? Where did these come from?

5) Society & Law

What governs our lives? What influences our behaviour, choices and actions?

Common sense, rules, consensus, peer pressure and the way we live.

6) Language Part I Roots and Origins of Modern Languages

How has language developed? What influences language and why does it take the form it does? Is there a Universal Language or Grammar?

7) Language Part II Communication Styles

How do we communicate? Why do we miscommunicate, misunderstand and disagree? Communication strategies, Cultural Orientations, Meta-cultural awareness

Assignment 3: Create a Communication style/ Cultural Orientation profile of yourself.

8) Esthetics, Art, Architecture, Music, Literature

Is there a Universal Beauty? Are we being Americanized? Are Western values being adopted at the expense of culture?

9) Diversity & Perspective

What separates us also brings us together. Video: Baraka 90minutes

10) East meets West: The Middle East

Jews vs. Arabs: A 3000 year old crisis with no end in sight. What is the origin of middle eastern conflict? A look at current events, possible developments and resolutions.

11) Presentation Session I

(12) Presentation Session II