H303/H523 Cultural History

Study Guide

School of Media Communication & Culture
Murdoch University
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Aims and Objectives

1. The most immediate aim of Cultural History is quite simple: for students to understand a single work of contemporary thinking about what culture is, Ian Hunter’s paper, “Setting Limits to Culture”. This is a complex and advanced piece of writing, but one which is crucial to contemporary cultural thinking, especially in Australia. In this sense, understanding the paper takes a great deal more than a direct reading. Hence the second aim of the unit.

2. In order to unpack Hunter’s work, we will need to reconstruct the genealogy of the concept of culture on which Hunter himself relies. In fact, while Hunter’s main concern is with the 18th and 19th centuries — the crucial centuries in which the modern concept of culture was formed — we will need to go back a good deal further, in order to understand the situation with regard to culture prior to the 18th century and the central “moment” of the Enlightenment. To that end, the unit begins with the beginnings of modernity and modern socio-political thought in the work of Thomas Hobbes and Giambattista Vico. It then progresses through the Enlightenment itself, eventually moving on to what Hunter identifies as the two main forms of Romanticism (the Spiritual and the Material). Finally, the unit works through the main 20th century influence on Hunter’s paper, that of Michel Foucault.
Outline and Calendar

Note: all readings listed here are to be found in the Unit Reader, available from the University Bookshop. The Unit Reader is the only required text. However, students are expected to make extensive use of all of Perth’s libraries. Copies of the 2002 version of the Cultural History Unit Reader are different in some important respects from the 2003 version. Please consult the co-ordinator if you are having trouble acquiring the set text.

Lectures are held in EH 1.1 on Fridays between 9:00 and 10:30 am. Seminar times are: Fridays 12:30 and 1:30 in EH 3.24 and Fridays 13:30-14:30 in EH 3.24
The seminar groups will be arranged at the first lecture. If numbers permit, it may be possible to combine the groups into a single two-hour seminar.

Block 1: Culture Today

Week 1. Introduction: the problem of culture today.
Central concept: culture
Readings: from History of the Idea of Europe; the entry on “Culture” from Raymond Williams’s Keywords.

Week 2. Hunter
Central concept: limits

Block 2: Early Modernity

Week 3. Hobbes (1588-1679)
Central concept: the sovereign
Reading: from the Leviathan (1651)

Week 4. Vico (1668-1744)
Central concept: science
Reading: from The First New Science (1725)

Block 3: Modernity and Enlightenment

Week 5. Herder (1744-1803)
Central concept: nation
Reading: from the Ideas Concerning the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784-91)

ONE WEEK STUDY BREAK (24th-28th March)
First assignment (20%) due on return

Week 6. Rousseau (1712-78)
Central concept: individual
Reading: from The First Discourse (1750)

Week 7. Kant (1724-1804)
Central concept: aesthetics
Reading: from the Critique of Judgement (1790)

Block 4: Post-Enlightenment Spiritual Romanticism

Week 8. Hegel (1770-1831)
Central concept: dialectic and spirit
Reading: from On Art, Religion, Philosophy (1820-1835)

Week 9. Schopenhauer (1788-1860)
Central concept: representation
Reading: from The World as Will and Representation (1819)

ONE WEEK STUDY BREAK (28th April-2nd May)
Second assignment (40%) due on return

Block 5: Post-Enlightenment Material Romanticism

Week 10. Comte (1798-1857)
Central concept: positivism
Reading: from the Course of Positive Philosophy (1830-42)

Week 11. Marx (1818-1883)
Central concept: materiality
Reading: from On Literature and Art (1844-1893)

Week 12. Nietzsche (1844-1900)
Central concept: history and life
Reading: from On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life (1874)

Week 13. Foucault (1926-1983)
Central concept: the empirico-transcendental doublet
Reading: from The Order of Things (1970)

FIRST WEEK OF STUDY BREAK (2nd-6th June)
Examination (30%), due on the following Monday
Assessment

The letter grades used in Murdoch University unit assessment are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HD</td>
<td>High Distinction</td>
<td>80-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>50-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Conceded Pass</td>
<td>45-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Ungraded Pass</td>
<td>50% or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>below 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>45-49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in cases of extenuating personal circumstances such as serious personal illness or bereavement, there is provision for deferred assessment in the unit as a whole. Refer to the current University Handbook for details. Your attention is drawn to the Programme’s Progress Regulations, also in the current University Handbook.

General Policy on Assessment

Students should consult the University Handbook regulations under “Assessment” (regulations 40-48).

Plagiarism and Collusion

“The University regards most seriously any acts of dishonesty relating to assessment. Cheating includes plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration, examination misconduct and theft of other students’ work. Plagiarism and collusion are defined as including any of the following five types of behaviour, and apply to work in any medium (for example, written or audio text, film production, computer programs):

- Inappropriate/inadequate acknowledgement — material copied word for word which is acknowledged as paraphrased but should have been in quotation marks, or material paraphrased without appropriate acknowledgement of its source.
- Collusion — material copied from another student’s assignment with her or his knowledge.
- Verbatim copying — material copied word for word or exactly duplicated without any acknowledgement of the source.
- Ghost writing — assignment written by third party and represented by student as her or his own work.
- Purloining — material copied from another student’s assignment or work without that person’s knowledge.

Acting dishonestly in assessment is defined as misconduct under the Student Discipline Statute. Depending on the seriousness of the case, it can lead to a
requirement to undertake additional work, failure in a unit or in a part of it, suspension from the University or even permanent expulsion from the University. The University regards any form of cheating as a serious matter of academic dishonesty which threatens the integrity of the assessment processes and awards of the University, to the detriment of all other students and graduates of the University. In case of doubt as to what is acceptable, please check with your tutor”.

Non-Discriminatory Language

Note: the paragraphs below are the general University policy on non-discriminatory language. Students in H303 might like to consider how this could or should affect historical uses of language. Is it most important to be correct in 21st-century terms or to be historically accurate?

“Murdoch University is committed to the use of non-discriminatory language in all forms of communication. Students and staff should avoid the use of discriminatory language in units and in all other activities within the University. This applies to both oral and written communication.

“Discriminatory language is that which refers in abusive terms to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, citizenship or nationality, ethnic or language background, physical or mental ability, or political or religious views, or which stereotypes groups in an adverse manner. This is not meant to preclude or inhibit legitimate academic debate on any issue; however the language used in such debate should be non-discriminatory and sensitive to these matters. It is important to avoid the use of discriminatory language in your written work. The most common form of discriminatory language in academic work tends to be in the area of gender inclusiveness. You are therefore requested to check your work for this, and to ensure it is non-discriminatory in all respects”.

Assignments

1. Essay (c1500 words), 20%
   Due: Monday 31st March 2003
   Topic: Describe, as simply as possible, Hunter’s argument in “Setting Limits to Culture”.

2. Practical analysis (c2000 words), 40%
   Due: Monday 5th May 2003
   Topic: Each student will be required to analyse a specific popular cultural object or a collection of such objects using ideas from Blocks Two or Three of the unit. For example: an analysis of a soap opera based on Vico; a Kantian appraisal of a rock music album; an Hegelian critique of contemporary Australian immigration policy.... A form other than the traditional essay may be acceptable if pre-negotiated.

3. Examination (c1500 words), 30%
   Date: Monday 9th June 2003
Topic: The examination will take the form of a single short paper, revisiting the first assignment (on Hunter) in the light of the unit readings.

4. Seminar participation, 10%
In seminars, each student will, as their turn comes around, be required to take on the persona of one the historical/cultural thinkers we are reading from week to week. They will be interviewed by another student on what they see as their main contributions to the idea of culture. Following the interviews, questions will be allowed from the floor. During this period, each student will be expected to take a turn to question the week’s theorist.

Please note: students enrolled in the H523 version of the unit (usually MA or Honours students) may seek a variation to the above assessment in order to bring it into line with their research interests. This should be done as early in the semester as possible.