What you have as heritage, take now as task; for thus you will make it your own.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Course Description and Narrative Overview

This is the second semester of the two-semester Honors Seminar in the Humanities for the College of Engineering and it will be our task to advance our inquiry into the method and madness of civilization by exploring three concepts touched on but not developed in our earlier inquiry: self, nation, and world. Again our work will be conducted under the rubric of The Geography of the Other. “Geography” here is intended both literally and figuratively, although the latter will dominate in this semester. It is the compression of our familiar selves with unfamiliar others brought on by the pace and technics of the modern experience of civilization—what many today term “globalization”—that has joined the two senses of our geographic travels to this point in the seminar. It is the compression of our familiar selves with unfamiliar others brought on by the pace and technics of the modern experience of civilization—what many today term “globalization”—that has joined the two senses of our geographic travels to this point in the seminar. We have studied the narratives and interpretation of exemplary encounters of otherness---Polo, Colón, Cabeza de Vaca, Cortés, Jesuits in China—at the same time developing an analytical vocabulary provided by anthropologists, literary critics, philosophers, and social scientists such as Baudet, Eco, Gellner, Greenblatt, Lévi-Strauss, Sahlins, and Zhang. This interdisciplinary study has been conducted against the backdrop of a history of human curiosity, the chief consequence of which was the cultural confluence and conflict of the modern era. The inspiration for this next segment of the course was drawn from a line from Goethe’s Faust cited above. What we receive as a legacy (our conceptual inheritance) is only made ours by the active agency of using it. In the course of this term we will explore the significance of this reflection as we conduct an interdisciplinary inquiry into culture, history, ideas, language, and society. Once again, we will have occasion to read a selection of significant anthropological, historical, literary, philosophical, political, and theological texts in order that we might increase our fund of cultural understanding and deepen our self-knowledge.

Theme and Approach

The overarching theme of this second semester is “development” in the sense of change in pursuit of an objective. This concept has acted as the principal ideological force of world expansion, including the self-legitimating conceptual
inventions of “modernization” and “globalization.” Development of the planet for economic benefit or political gain—the principal result of the Enlightenment project—has brought nations into commerce and conflict at the same time that it has been abducted symbolically to describe the evolution of the human psyche. Under the aegis of this theme the course will follow the lines of modern development as they course through the self and the nation, two pillars of modern identity, pillars shaken by the tumultuousness of the definitive encounter of our contemporary moment: “terror.” With this in mind, our inquiry into development will take us along paths both within and without the self. A journey in a postmodern world carrying the heritage of a modern temperament amounts to an expedition of self-discovery. This journey will culminate in the completion of a group research and reflection project on development, “mapping the twenty-first century other—terror,” wherein each epistemic field team will help to reconstruct a twenty-first century community of danger. In this respect we will be concerned with grasping the complications in nationalism wrought by the recent phenomenon of globalization and its toxic, defensive reactionary cult of terrorism. At the same time, in parallel alignment with the group projects, we will be working on two other fronts: conducting an investigation into the psychological complex of modern selfhood (via Freud, Hegel, and Marx) while completing our critical exploration of cultural encounter (via Anderson, Gifford, Mazlish, and Perrin), by examining the phenomena of nationhood and nationalism.

As was the case last semester, our study of ourselves and others and the manner in which we have chosen to make sense of identity and difference is underwritten by a number of queries: who are we? how ought we to live? what obligations do we have to ourselves and to society? what is truth? These questions do not admit of definitive answers; every generation wrestles with them, and our wrestling in the twenty-first century may be more fruitful to the extent that we can learn from the experience of our predecessors. The pursuit of answers will be the driving force of our community of learners. We will always be learning and working to share what we have learned with each other, such is the ethos of the seminar.

Materials and Mechanics

The required texts for the course (presented in alphabetical order) are:


Along with these books the class will read a scattering of original works, selected essays and interpretations from the course’s electronic reserves archive (https://www.library.nd.edu/eresources/ereserves/course.cgi?course=2013S_ALHN_13951_06), but the bulk of our attention will be directed at these readings. As before, I may offer “mini lectures” on the week’s topic or on the interpretation advanced in a certain work; however, readings of our texts will emerge from an expectedly vigorous and rigorous class discussion. Consequently, each of you must read the assigned text and come to class ready to discuss it. Because students will assume more responsibility to lead class discussion each week, it is essential to attend all classes: any excuse for absence must be presented in writing before the next meeting of the class. **Students who miss more than two classes without supplying authoritative and compelling reasons for their absences are subject to the lowering of their final grades.**

Writing and Editing

In addition to class discussion, writing will again constitute an integral part of the course and we will be writing in multiple contexts: abstracts of readings, interpretations of film, blogs, and papers. In the case of abstracts and with the first paper,
students will be assigned a peer-editing task of the work of their cohort. There are two required papers, the due dates for which are noted on the syllabus: one 1800 word reflective essay paper written by each student and one final twenty-five-to-thirty-page paper prepared by each Epistemic Field Team as part of the final project. A formal paper proposal with an accompanying outline is requisite to the preparation of the first essay, about which we will learn more in the weeks ahead. The final group project, consisting of a PowerPoint presentation and the accompanying paper will be submitted at the end of the term. All referencing should follow the rules set out in the Sixth Edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Sixth Edition. Make sure that you make good use of this reference. Given that in the fall semester there were notable instances of the neglect of reading, it will be necessary to require written responses to our readings before they are discussed in class.

**Expectations**

As you have all learned in the first semester, the honors seminar in the humanities prizes fundamental academic virtues: critical self-observation, independence, creativity, insight, discipline, reflection, and active engagement both inside and outside the classroom. Equally important requirements are critical reading, avid discussion, and an impulse to question anything that is “accepted,” “authoritative,” and “obvious.” These virtues will be called on and the requirements met by the keeping of a class e-blog; student presentations and class-led discussions, as well as class interchange. Individual students as well as the epistemic field teams will make oral presentations of selected readings and lead class discussion of our works read in common (these individual and team presentation assignments are marked clearly on the syllabus.) The epistemic field teams, the composition of which will be different this semester, will work collaboratively on the final project for the class, which will be presented in the last two weeks of the semester. We will again obtain the unique satisfaction of the work of reading, reflection and discussion in the course of our collective inquiry into the reach and repression of human moral striving. As before, my principal advice is to work hard, but enjoy doing it! As a means of encouraging the development of a spirit of enjoyment, the volume of reading for this semester will be comparatively less and the range of our reflection more narrowly circumscribed.

**Learning Objectives**

This course has several different, though compatible, objectives: (1) to introduce a variety of critical works on a common theme, that of the tumultuous journey of self and other in cultural encounter, thereby obtaining a key grasp of a chief problematic of modern civilization; (2) to think about these themes and perspectives in an evaluative way by application to what we read; (3) to develop skills of critical reading, persuasive argument and clear writing; (4) to broaden and deepen our capacity for humane conversation both in and out of the classroom; (5) to be intellectually provocative in taking an interpretative stand in juxtaposition to conventional habits of mind; (6) to work collaboratively on a specific research topic linked to the dominant themes of the course.

**Honor Code**

“As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.” (www.nd.edu/~hnrcode); all of us must adhere to the University’s Honor Code. Throughout all academic production for this course: oral activities and written assignments, the Honor Code is in effect. In this very specific ethical context, the written work and the ideas presented must be your own; if they are not, you must indicate their sources fully and honestly. Collaboration, especially in the group projects is a necessity, but this must be distinguished from using other’s work as your own. Here are a few more specific guidelines for your written work: Whenever information or insights are obtained from secondary works, students should cite their sources. If secondary sources are used for any assignments, these sources should be listed in a bibliography at the assignment’s end, and any quoted material must be placed in quotation marks and clearly attributed in a footnote. Written assignments must be composed by the student and may not be turned over to another person for wholesale correction or revision. In order to re-familiarize yourself with the behavioral requisites of the Honor Code, please read the pertinent chapter in *Du Lac*, particularly the section entitled “Student Responsibilities under the Academic Code of Honor” (http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode/IV-Student_Resp.htm). Plagiarism (i.e., any written work presented as your own and original to the particular assignment that is not, in fact, your own and/or original to the particular assignment) is a very serious matter. If you have questions about this policy and how it applies to your work for our course, and if you are in doubt about the legitimacy of your activities with respect to this course, please don’t hesitate to ask the instructor — before any
problems can arise. You can consult http://www.nd.edu/~writing/resources/AvoidingPlagiarism/html or seek help directly from Notre Dame’s Writing Center.

Requirements and Evaluation

Grades will be determined by your performance in class discussion, on your writing assignments, your class presentations and on the final project. Determination of the final grade will be made according to the following allotments:

1) **Attendance** (10%): Daily attendance is compulsory and is one of the components in determining the final grade. While an excellent attendance record will be rewarded, any unexcused absences (without documentation from a legitimate authority) will affect your attendance/participation grade negatively. Valid reasons for absences include illness, hospitalization, emotional difficulties, family emergencies, participation in official University events, job and internship interviews, and religious holidays. This attendance policy includes days before and after holidays and vacations.

2) **Oral participation** (35%): As this is a discussion-oriented seminar, *attendance and participation are crucial* not only to your own learning, but to the success of the class as a whole. Students will be expected to contribute regularly to discussion and to adopt various facilitative roles during the semester. Especially valuable to class participation are contributions that note patterns and themes in the readings; compare and contrast readings with each other; point out strengths or weaknesses of other students’ or authors’ positions; help another student back up, extend, or question his/her idea; point out links between peoples’ contributions; build explicitly on what another student has said; or relate the readings to your own lives and to contemporary issues. On a regular basis, assignments will be given in which students practice their capacity for oral expression, for example, by making a presentation of an abstract of one of the common readings or sharing their response questions to individual readings.

3) **Production for the blogosphere** (20%): The keeping of an e-journal or weblog of your reflections and observations of the reading wherein you note patterns and themes in the readings; compare and contrast readings with each other; point out strengths or weaknesses of other students’ or authors’ positions; point out links between peoples’ contributions; or relate the readings to your own lives and to contemporary issues constitutes the compositional framework for class reading and discussion. Our course blogsite is at: http://mappingethnoalterity.blogspot.com/ All students are urged to post on the blog at any time, but there will also be specific assignments (noted on the syllabus) keyed to a theme or question and which bears a specific due date. Assigned webwork must be submitted punctually. The syllabus displays—in bold on the right-hand-side of the page—each of the weeks that an assignment is due, so please be mindful of these notations. This semester, EFT will be expected to create blogprompts for some of the class’s targeted assignments.

4) **Individual Papers and Group Projects** (35%): For the entire semester seminar members will be joined into teams for group projects: abstracts, debates, data gathering or mining, targeted Internet research inquiries, among others. The most significant of these collaborations will be the research into and completion of a final summary project on an instance of “terrorism.” These projects will be evaluated, along with the papers but this concluding project will constitute the more substantial portion of the grade for writing. To encourage candid, critical examination of individual student performance, self-evaluations for all written work will be undertaken. Peer editing exercises, in addition to paper proposals will provide an added dimension to our writing and presentations. Explicit criteria for the appraisal of written work may be found in “LMJ’s Grading Criteria” (which you already possess). Incomplete grades will not be given.

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