

reference to that framework. Its conceptual vocabulary emerged from (or against) this background. Did the humanities and social sciences emancipate themselves from this framework? If yes, how did they do so? To what extent have theories and concepts in these domains of study been shaped by questions and ideas inherited from centuries of Christian theorizing about human beings, human social life, and other cultures?

4. Differences between cultures manifest themselves in interactions between individuals. But which among the many kinds of differences between any two human beings are cultural differences rather than, say, biological, individual psychological, or social differences? If the goal is to examine the impact of cultural difference on (the study of) politics, society, literature, the human psyche..., we need insight into what makes certain differences into cultural differences.

5. How can we address the fact that Western thinkers have dominated theory formation in the humanities and social sciences for centuries? Today, this is being posed as a question of 'decolonization' But how can the 'decolonizing' of the humanities and social sciences be approached as a cognitive enterprise –for instance, as a challenge to uncover culture-specific assumptions and move beyond them in our understanding of human beings and societies?

Against the background of these general questions, the course will focus on different sets of issues and domains every academic year. In 2026-2027, its focus will be on a cluster of interrelated themes: emotions, experience, the self, desire, the human search for happiness, and the impact of culture on our thinking about these aspects of human life and experience. Guided by lectures, students will read and analyze primary and secondary texts concerning these themes, from different periods and cultures.

Initial competences

- Basic training in at least one of the disciplines in the humanities or social sciences.
- The ability to read social-scientific, philosophical, and historical texts in English.

Final competences

- 1 To have gained in-depth understanding of a specific set of issues in the comparative study of cultures and cultural differences and encounters, with a focus on Europe and Asia.
- 2 To be able to independently read and analyze texts in the relevant domains of study.
- 3 To have the capacity to formulate research questions and problems in the comparative study of cultures and about cultural differences between Europe and Asia.
- 4 To possess the skills required to formulate ideas based on reflection on experience in written form and further elaborate them in a conversation.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

- Central themes, questions, and problems will be introduced and discussed during lectures.
- During seminars texts will be analysed in detail.
- The independent work takes the form of reading and analysing texts with the help of reading questions, in preparation of lectures and seminars.

Lecture recordings will be made available.

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Reader course Europe and Asia: for every class the necessary texts (primary sources and scientific articles and chapters) will be provided on Ufora.

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Additional information: The course material will consist of texts made available on Ufora: (a) Primary sources written by Seneca, Epictetus, Benedict, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, and others. (b) Scientific articles and chapters by several contemporary authors.

References

Course content-related study coaching

Support via Ufora. Feedback sessions concerning assignment, by appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

For the exam, students will write a short and schematic paper, which they will have to elaborate on and discuss with the teacher during the oral assessment. The schematic paper will focus on reflection on experience: how do insights from the literature studied in the course allow the students to gain insight into their own experience?

Calculation of the examination mark

20% assignment and 80% oral assessment.