Culture, Art and Technology: Invention of the Person

CAT 1C
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:50
Pepper Canyon Hall 106
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Overview:

How did you get to be the way you are? Most people believe that they ended up being who they are naturally, that they were born to be become either men or women, Americans or Thais, black, white, Latino, or Asian (or all of the above). It looks simple, but in fact, it’s much more complicated than that. None of these things just occur naturally – not your nationality, not your race, not even your gender. Who a person is – your identity – is constructed from the building blocks of your culture.

In this class, students will explore several aspects of culture: the technologies that shape our conceptions of who we are, and the arts that give life meaning. We will start with some of the cultural sources that give people notions about who they are, and examine them “holistically” – that is, we will explore their histories and the social and political contexts in which they arise. This class will look briefly at the art and technology involved in science, politics, advertising, and religion, as they contribute to the invention of the person. When the class is done, students should have a better sense of what it means to be a person in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century.

This course is designed to help you:

- Understand what it is to be human in terms of human physical, mental, social and cultural characteristics and in terms of their relationship to the larger world in which they have developed and lived.
- Understand how human beings use culture to express themselves and their nature, as well as how they use culture both to solve, and, inadvertently to generate problems concerning their relations to nature and to each other.
- Understand art and technology as particular instances of culture, with similarities and commonalities as well as differences.
- Understand culture, art and technology in terms of their interactions, development over time, uses in different societies, and their effect on human characteristics and capacities.
- Understand the ways that art and technology shape how people think about what it means to be human.
CAT 1 is also intended to help you learn how to take an interdisciplinary approach to complex issues. This includes enabling you to:

- Gain an understanding of how and why scholars in different fields formulate questions and problems as they do, and how they go about assembling, assessing and analyzing evidence as they make and test claims; understanding the main purposes of scholarly argument, and appreciating the inquiry-driven nature of scholarly work.
- Learn to read more acutely.
- Learn that your work in this sequence, like that of professional scholars, is not mainly about memorizing information and giving back pre-formulated answers, but about first crafting and pursuing thoughtful, fruitful questions to see where they might lead and then seeking out meaningful answers to such questions.
- Learn to examine problems and subjects from more than one disciplinary perspective in order to gain a more complete and deeper understanding of it.
- Bring appropriate and critical questions to bear on your own thinking and writing through a process of writing and revision, so that your writing and composition in other media become a means of discovery as well as communication.

Finally, CAT is intended to empower you start take charge of your own education, as well of your own life. It does this by helping you:

- Exercise responsibility and self-reliance.
- Understand and apply reflexivity, so that you learn to apply ideas to yourself and your situation in the world.
- Experience and develop skills relating to collaboration, working in teams and across cultures.

**Materials:**

For this class, you will need:

CAT 1 Reader (This reader has readings for *all* sections of CAT 1.)

*Human Natures*, by Paul Ehrlich
Course Requirements:

To learn effectively, students need to participate actively and consistently in their own educations. Students accomplish this several ways: by working actively with the readings they have done, and by thinking actively in class. To this end, students will be asked to submit brief written assignments almost every week.

Attendance and engagement are expected of all students, and readings should be completed before class. Students’ grades will be determined this way:

- Mandatory section participation 20%
- In-class assignments 10%
- Short response papers 40%
- Final project 10%
- Final exam 20%

- Unexcused late assignments will be docked 1/3 (one-third) of a letter grade for each day late (e.g. A becomes A- the first day late, B+ the second day late, etc.). All papers must be typed, double-spaced, in 10 to 12 point fonts, and, if more than one page long, stapled.
- Make-up exams must be arranged as soon as possible after illness, injury, or family emergency.
- The policy on make-up finals follows UCSD policy, since there are strict calendar deadlines established by the University for the submission of grades at the end of a quarter.
- Sudden long-term illness, injury, or family emergency may necessitate an incomplete for the course, or withdrawal from it. Excuses and incompletes must be negotiated with your TA and the course instructor(s) prior to the final exam.

Academic Integrity

**Acting in accordance with UCSD guidelines on academic integrity:**

*Academic stealing* refers to the theft of exams or exam answers, of papers or take-home exams composed by others, and of research notes, computer files, or data collected by others.

*Academic cheating, collusion, and fraud* refer to having others do your schoolwork or allowing them to UCSD has a university-wide Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, published annually in the Catalog (pp. 62-64 for 2002-3), online at http://registrar.ucsd.edu/records/grdbk3.html

All students must read and be familiar with this Policy:

**Receipt of this syllabus constitutes an acknowledgment that you are responsible for understanding** present your work as their own; using unauthorized materials during
exams; inventing data or bibliography to support a paper, project, or exam; purchasing
tests, answers, or papers from any source whatsoever; submitting (nearly) identical
papers to two classes.

Plagiarism refers to the use of another’s work without full acknowledgment, whether by
suppressing the reference, neglecting to identify direct quotations, paraphrasing closely or
at length without citing sources, spuriously identifying quotations or data, or cutting and
pasting the work of several (usually unidentified) authors into a single undifferentiated
whole.

All suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to UCSD’s office of
academic integrity. Students found to have violated UCSD’s standards for academic
integrity may receive both student conduct sanctions and grade penalties. Sanctions may
extend up to and include suspension or expulsion, and grade penalties may include failure
of the assignment or failure of the course.

Students will be required to submit all papers both to TurnItIn.com and (in printed
form) to your TA or the professor. At some point in the near future, log on and set up an
account.

Students with special needs:

Students with physical or learning disabilities should first work with UCSD’s Office for
Students with Disabilities to obtain current documentation, then contact instructor and
TA’s to arrange appropriate academic accommodations. This should be accomplished as
soon in the quarter as possible. To be fair to all students, no individual accommodations
will be made unless the student first presents the proper documentation.
Schedule (subject to change)

Sept. 21: Introductions: Seeing in the Dark

**Part I**: Being a Person: What Are the Questions?

Something Fishy

Sept. 26: *These articles can be found in the course reader.*
   “Not a Real Fish,” Roger Keesing
   “The Convenience of Being ‘Reasonable,’” Benjamin Franklin
   “Learning to See,” Samuel Scudder
   “Technology: Practice and Culture,” Arnold Pacey

The Truth About “The Truth”

Sept. 28:
   “The Core of Art: Making Special,” Ellen Dissanayake
   “Anecdote of the Jar,” Wallace Stevens
   “Shakespeare in the Bush,” Laura Bohannan

**Part II**: Engineering Us: The Art and Technology of Modern Living

The Art of Inventing Genders

   “The Blot and the Diagram,” Lord Clark
   Oct. 5: *Lessons from the Intersexed*, Suzanne Kessler, ch. 2

The Technology of Creating Consumers
   Oct.10: Selection from Marx, *Capital*
   Selection from Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*
   Theodor Adorno

Science and Inventing Race

   Oct. 19: *Continued*

The Art of Nationalism

Oct. 24: *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson, chs. 1 & 2
   “Geo-Body, History, and Nationhood,” Thongchai Winichakul
   “The Wheels of Freedom: Bicycles in China,” Fred Strebeigh
The Politics of Morality

Oct. 26: *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay I, sections 1-14, Friedrich Nietzsche
   “Earth: Nature and Culture,” Yi-Fu Tuan

**Part III:** Different Premises → Different Conclusions: Visions of Reality

Evolution: Mind and Body
   Oct. 31: *Human Natures*, Paul Ehrlich, Introduction ch.1
   Nov. 7: *Human Natures*, chapters 2&4
   Nov. 9: Ehrlich, ch. 6
      *Interpretation of Cultures*, ch. 2, Clifford Geertz
      “Speech Sounds,” Octavia Butler

Religious Beliefs and the Art of Reality

   Nov. 14: Ehrlich, ch. 8, *Calliope’s Sisters*, ch. 3
   Nov. 16: “The Light’s On but there’s Nobody Home: The Psychology of No-Self,” Guy Claxton
   Nov. 21: Selections from *Global Healing*, Sulak Sivaraksa
   Nov. 23 – Thanksgiving break
   • Your project will be due this week.
   Nov. 28: *In God's Image After All*, Paul Ackerman, ch. 5

   Nov. 30: Finishing up

Exam week: Final Exam